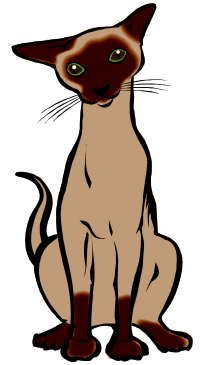




NAIL TRIMS FOR CATS BY: CHRISSY METZGER VMD



I thought I'd keep it simple this month and help our clients with a fundamental of cat care: trimming claws. Some clients may laugh and say "no way", but I do think every cat owner should at least try to trim nails as long as they don't get hurt.

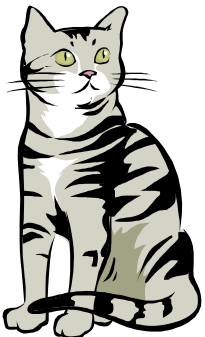
Keeping nails clipped serves many purposes from making happy clients with intact curtains to making happy cats with comfortable pads. This topic is especially relevant in light of the recent effort by several Los Angeles area cities to have declawing declared illegal. For the record, the American Veterinary Medical Association considers declawing an unnecessary medical procedure and we at NVH try to address the issue of 'claw frustration' by helping to educate our clients about alternatives to declawing like nail covers, deterrent sprays, designated scratching areas and of course nail trimming!

Start training your cat to have her claws trimmed as a kitten. The earlier you start the less stressful future trims will be. Consider rewarding your cat with a treat during or immediately after trimming. The best time to trim your cat's claws is when she is relaxed or sleepy. Never try to give a pedicure right after a stressful experience or an energetic round of play.

Your cat should be resting comfortably on your lap, the floor, or a table. I prefer to have them facing away from me and if possible make it a two-person job. Hold a paw in one hand and press a toe pad gently to extend the claw. Notice the pink tissue (the quick) inside of the claw. If your cat becomes impatient, take a break and try again later. Even if you can clip only a claw or two a day, eventually you'll complete the task. Oh and don't forget the dewclaw or thumb nail.

Many people hold the clippers in the same orientation that they would to cut their own nails, thus cutting across the highest part of the nail. This tends to make the nail more subject to splitting or fraying and I think it's likely a less comfortable method. It is better to hold the clippers in a vertical position—that is, up and down, or at a 90° angle to the paw so that the claw is trimmed across the flattest part of the nail.

If you accidentally clip into the quick, don't panic. Apply pressure with your fingertip, the claw may bleed for a moment, but it will usually stop very quickly. If the bleeding hasn't stopped after a minute or so, touch a styptic pencil to the claw end or pat on styptic powder to help stop the bleeding. You can purchase styptic products at the pet store.



How often you need to clip your cat's claws depends somewhat on how much of the tip you remove, but usually a clipping every ten to fourteen days will suffice. If your cat absolutely refuses to allow you to clip his or her claws, it is not worth the effort, heartache or potential injury. Make an appointment with our technicians or a professional groomer. Special nail trimmers are available from pet stores, but sharp nail clippers for humans work just as well. Fun fact: go to You Tube and type in Trimming a Cat's Claw for a great video example!!