

Carole Bryant, Naturopath

(ATMS & HATAA accredited)

- nutrition • herbal medicine • homoeopathy • flower essences • iridology • craniosacral balancing • massage
- manipulative muscle therapy • kinesiology • reflexology • reiki • Theta Healing
- Thought Field therapy • Neuro-Linguistic programming
- plus for pets: • Tellington TTouch (Companion Animals) practitioner • canine craniosacral balancing
- behavioural dog trainer • Tellington TTouch (Horses) practitioner-in-training

ABN 28 275 787 633

CARING FOR YOUR DOG'S FEET AND NAILS

It is a good idea to get into the habit of checking your dog's feet and nails on a regular basis. This can easily be combined with a routine grooming session that also includes a check of eyes, ears and teeth.

Nails that are too long can be painful and may cause injuries to your dog's feet over time by placing unnatural stress on the bones of the feet.

Most dogs wear the nails on their hind feet down more than those of the front feet so the nails on the front feet need more frequent trimming. The nails on the hind feet may only need trimming occasionally.

Most dogs have dewclaws on their front feet (a fifth nail near the "ankle" that doesn't touch the ground and therefore doesn't wear down naturally). In some breeds the dewclaws are removed shortly after birth. Less common is for dogs to have dew claws on the hind feet and even less common is to have double dew claws. Dew claws on the hind feet are often prone to injury and are sometimes surgically removed if they cause problems.

When trimming your dog's nails you need to trim off the excess nail, taking care to avoid cutting the "quick", the living part of the nail that has a blood supply. Aim to remove just the hook at the end of the nail (see illustration at end of article).

Dogs' nails can be white (semi transparent), striped, brown or black. White or striped nails are easy to manage as the pink "quick" is visible making it easy to avoid cutting it as you trim the nails. Dark brown or black nails are more difficult as you can't actually see the quick.

How can you tell if your dog's nails need trimming? If there are obvious hooks on the end of the nails or if you can hear the "click" of toenails as your dog walks across a hard surface, they need trimming. Pay particular attention to dew claws as these can grow so long and curved they can curl back and puncture the dogs skin, which as you can imagine is very painful.

How often you need to trim your dog's nails will depend on the shape of your dog's foot and the amount of exercise your dog gets. Dogs with flat feet or long toes tend to have nails that need trimming more often. Dogs with tightly arched feet or dogs that get lots of exercise usually need their nails trimmed less often.

There are two basic styles of nail clippers available. One has a scissor action, while the other is a guillotine design. Which one you choose is a matter of personal preference. Scissor type nail clippers come in a range of sizes, so take care to choose a size that is suitable for the size

Webbers Arcade, 133 Prince Street, Grafton, 2460 Ph: 02 66439035
Email: naturopath@berigorafarm.com.au Website: www.berigorafarm.com.au

.... natural health care for people, pets & livestock

Carole Bryant, Naturopath

(ATMS & HATAA accredited)

- nutrition • herbal medicine • homoeopathy • flower essences • iridology • craniosacral balancing • massage
 - manipulative muscle therapy • kinesiology • reflexology • reiki • Theta Healing
 - Thought Field therapy • Neuro-Linguistic programming
- plus for pets: • Tellington TTouch (Companion Animals) practitioner • canine craniosacral balancing
- behavioural dog trainer • Tellington TTouch (Horses) practitioner-in-training

ABN 28 275 787 633



Scissor type nail clippers in 2 sizes

in turn then repeating the process until you get them as short as you would like avoids the nails becoming hot (which as you can imagine is very uncomfortable for your dog). One advantage of using a grinder is that it leaves the nails nice and smooth with no sharp edges.

If you aren't confident enough to attempt nail trimming on your own, ask your vet or groomer to show you how to do it (take your clippers with you so they can show you how to use them correctly). Always buy the best quality clippers you can afford, they will repay you by staying sharp and lasting for many years.



Mini grinder/engraver

files made for dogs are curved so that it is easy to file both edges of the nails smooth in one action. This can work well providing your dog's nails aren't too long to start with and it can be a good way to keep your dog's nails short once they have been trimmed to a reasonable length.



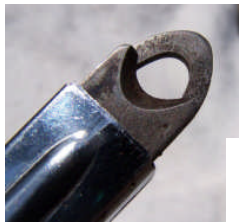
Dog nail file – note the curved surface

of your dog. Before using them on your dog, practise using the clippers on a twig the same diameter as your dog's nails until you get the hang of using them.

If you aren't confident using nail clippers you might find it easier to use a small hobby grinder/engraver with a sanding attachment. I bought a cheap one of these from a hardware store and it works very well. If using a grinder to trim your dog's nails, trim a little off one nail then move on taking a little off each nail in turn. Then go back and take a little more off each nail. The grinder can get quite hot and taking a little off each nail



Guillotine style nail clippers



Carole Bryant, Naturopath

(ATMS & HATAA accredited)

- nutrition • herbal medicine • homoeopathy • flower essences • iridology • craniosacral balancing • massage
- manipulative muscle therapy • kinesiology • reflexology • reiki • Theta Healing
- Thought Field therapy • Neuro-Linguistic programming
- plus for pets: • Tellington TTouch (Companion Animals) practitioner • canine craniosacral balancing
- behavioural dog trainer • Tellington TTouch (Horses) practitioner-in-training

ABN 28 275 787 633

It can also be a good idea to file the nails after cutting them to smooth off any sharp edges. This is important if your dog has contact with small children or elderly people whose skin can be easily damaged by your dog's nails (although you will of course have taught your dog to sit to gain attention instead of jumping up!).

Depending on the shape of your dog's feet and toes and the amount of exercise he gets, you may need to trim his nails every few weeks (and perhaps even weekly if you are using just a file to keep them trimmed).

However, many dogs dislike having their feet touched or handled, let alone having their nails trimmed and many owners put the whole nail trimming issue into the "too hard" basket. One reason so many dogs dislike having their nails trimmed is that they have either not been conditioned to accept having their nails trimmed or they have been forcibly restrained to have their nails trimmed. If you were held down while someone cut your nails, you probably wouldn't be very happy about it either so it's not surprising that the whole nail trimming issue is a big drama for those dogs that have had a bad experience in the past.

With a little careful preparation you can convince your dog that nail trimming is no big deal but before you can actually trim your dog's nails, you must first prepare him so that he is happy for you to handle his feet and nails. Condition your dog to enjoy this by rewarding him with his favourite treat for allowing you to initially stroke a little way down his legs (do all four legs – giving one treat as you stroke each leg). Repeat this, and in a series of small stages, each time move further down the leg; then right down to the foot; then lift the foot; then feel between the toes; then feel the nails; then sit the clippers next to your dog; then snip the clippers in the air near the feet; then snip a tiny bit off the end of your dog's nail; and eventually trim all the nails. Reward your dog for every stage of the conditioning process (in dog training language this is called shaping – teaching an exercise or behaviour by working towards your goal in tiny steps, rewarding each step along the way). If your dog is particularly anxious about the whole nail trimming deal, you might need to take a few days or even a week or two to work through the conditioning process. However, soon your dog will be hoping you will trim his nails so that he can earn a reward and nail trimming will no longer be a big deal for either you or your dog.

When checking feet and nails, also remember to check between your dog's toes for any hidden sores, embedded grass seeds, etc and check the pads for nicks, cuts and cracks. Dry, cracked pads can indicate a lack of essential fatty acids in your dog's diet. [Berigora Farm Pad Conditioning Wax](#) is excellent for nourishing dry pads and brittle nails and can be helpful for minor injuries to the pads. If your dog does lots of exercise, check the pads after exercise and apply [Berigora Farm Pad Conditioning Wax](#) to maintain the pads in top condition.

Webbers Arcade, 133 Prince Street, Grafton, 2460 Ph: 02 66439035
Email: naturopath@berigorafarm.com.au Website: www.berigorafarm.com.au

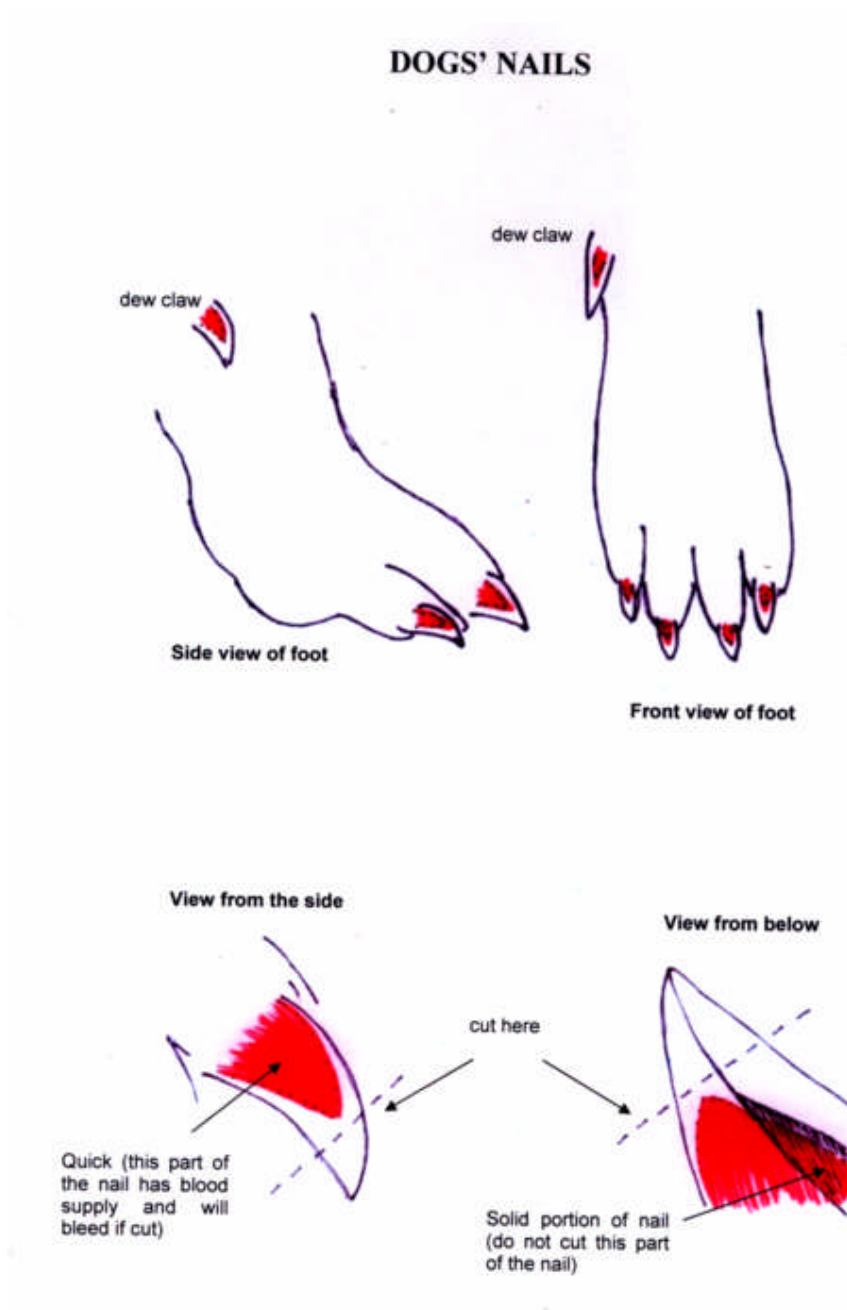
.... natural health care for people, pets & livestock

Carole Bryant, Naturopath

(ATMS & HATAA accredited)

- nutrition • herbal medicine • homoeopathy • flower essences • iridology • craniosacral balancing • massage
- manipulative muscle therapy • kinesiology • reflexology • reiki • Theta Healing
- Thought Field therapy • Neuro-Linguistic programming
- plus for pets:* • Tellington TTouch (Companion Animals) practitioner • canine craniosacral balancing
- behavioural dog trainer • Tellington TTouch (Horses) practitioner-in-training

ABN 28 275 787 633



Carole Bryant©

Webbers Arcade, 133 Prince Street, Grafton, 2460 Ph: 02 66439035
Email: naturopath@berigorafarm.com.au Website: www.berigorafarm.com.au

.... natural health care for people, pets & livestock