



YOUR DOG'S FOOT & NAIL HEALTH

WHY IS FOOT AND NAIL HEALTH IMPORTANT?

A dog spends its whole life on four feet, so it is important to take care of their feet and nails. When a dog runs around outside, they come into contact with grass, pebbles & other organic matter; indoors they walk on carpets, cloth and other materials. This can result in nail & foot injuries, accidents & other more serious problems and diseases. Foot injuries & accidents can cause sores, lameness, infection and licking and chewing the feet. Nail trimming is equally important; long nails can also lead to lameness, injury, ripped & ingrown nails & skeletal problems.

HANDLING YOUR DOG'S FEET, LET'S JUMP IN FEET FIRST!

As a dog owner, it is important that your dog get used to having their feet handled regularly to check for injuries & foreign bodies and to trim their nails. Getting your dog accustomed to having their feet handled is best accomplished when the dog is young, but older dogs can learn too. Start by gently handling your dog's foot, praising when you are holding its foot, make sure to touch the pads, between the pads, between the toes and the nails. When you are done, give tons of praise and a treat. Soon, with perseverance, you should be able to touch & handle your dog's feet without difficulty and your will dog accept it without any concern.

CHECKING YOUR DOG'S FEET FOR INJURIES

*First, look at your dog's foot; check for any obvious signs of injury or disease such as growths, sores, swelling or discoloration (note that discoloration of the fur around the foot can be a sign your dog is licking or chewing its feet). Check for any obvious signs of discomfort & pain such as lameness, licking & chewing (which can signal pain or discomfort) and feet which are tender to the touch.

*Gently palpate your dog's foot; watch your dog for signs of discomfort when handling the foot, feel for foot abnormalities, growths, or "hidden" sores & injuries which may not be seen at first glance.

*Check between the toes; look for any cuts or injuries, matting, seeds, twigs or foreign bodies. It is important to remove any seeds, matts or foreign bodies from between toes as they can result in injury, infection or even toe amputation! Sores or injuries should be looked after promptly to prevent any complications.

*Check the pads of the feet. A pad should be smooth; watch for dry cracked pads & pad abnormalities. Inspect the pad for any injuries, cuts, scrapes and/or wear on the pad. Pad abnormalities or injuries should be referred to your vet for proper treatment.

*Check between the pads for injuries or sores; any hair which grows between the pads should be carefully trimmed away as it can result in matting. Most groomers will trim the pads of the feet to keep matting at bay.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS, WEATHER CARE FOR FEET

In the rainy, wet weather make sure to wipe your dog's feet, wet feet can cause infections and irritation. Snow & ice can be harmful, clean ice and snow off your dog's feet, check between the pads as ice can build up, causing irritation & injury. De-icing salts can be toxic and harmful to your pet when swallowed. It is important to remove these toxins from feet & pads, especially after walking on the sidewalk or concrete which have often been treated with de-icing salts.

In the summer, watch your dog on the hot concrete & surfaces, pads can be burned in minutes. To keep pads from being injured, it is best to walk your dog in the early morning or late evening or on the soft summer grass where it is cool. For dogs which travel in the back of pick up trucks, make sure your pet is protected from the hot truck floorboard and metal surface, these can give severe burns to tender feet & pads.

TOUGH AS NAILS, NAIL CARE AND TRIMMING

It is very important to maintain & check your dog's nails regularly. Many times, we see long, neglected nails which are ingrown, broken or infected. Overgrown nails are not only unsightly but also cause great pain and discomfort and can lead to more serious injury and even permanent injury or lameness! Cutting a dog's nails is often an owner's worst nightmare but is a necessity in dog ownership. Talk to your dog groomer about cutting your dog's nails. They will be happy to oblige in showing you how you can cut your own dog's nails or if you are too squeamish to do so, will tell you how often they recommend your dog should come in for regular nail trimming. Regardless of whether you or your groomer will be cutting your dog's nails, it is still important to check your dog's nails regularly for any split or broken nails, torn nails or injury and infection of the nail or nail bed. Watch for licking, bleeding, injured or discoloured, nails or nail beds.