An Owner’s Manual to:
DON’T FEAR THE FEET: CLIPPING YOUR DOG’S NAILS

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ABOUT THIS SERIES

At the AKC, we know better than anyone that your dog can’t be treated like a car or an appliance, but we’ve named this series "An Owner’s Manual" because sometimes you probably wish your lovable companions came with one.

These concise guides give you the tools, tips, and direction to be a responsible and confident dog owner who brings out the best in your dog. Give them a test drive!
GETTING STARTED
THAT WIGGLY DOG

Nail trimming seems to be an anxiety-laden experience for many dogs. Start trimming claws during a dog’s early years so he becomes accustomed to the process. Some dogs will sit in your lap or on a table while you clip their nails, but many need some form of restraint.

One way to handle a wiggly dog, suggested by veterinarians, is to place him on a table and stand on the side of the table opposite to the nails you plan to trim. Drape your arms and upper body over the dog to gently restrain him. Keep your left forearm over the neck to prevent the dog from lifting his head. Hold the paw in your left hand and trimmer in your right.

If your dog is too wiggly, place the dog on his side while you drape your upper body over the squirming pet. If that doesn’t work, you might need a helper.
There are several types of nail trimmers, including scissors and guillotine types. The guillotine type is easiest to use on dogs.

A dog’s nails should be trimmed so that they just clear the floor.
WHAT TO DO
• Pick up a paw and firmly but gently place your thumb on the pad of a toe and your forefinger on the top of the toe on the skin above the nail.
• Push your thumb slightly up and backward on the pad while pushing your forefinger forward. This extends the nail.
• Clip only the tip of the nail, straight across.
• Avoid clipping past the curve of the nail or you risk hitting what is called the quick. A nick there is painful and will bleed.
routine paw
MAINTENANCE
what to
LOOK FOR

Nail clipping is a good time to examine the paw pads for injuries and sores, particularly in the winter when a dog’s paws are exposed to salt and de-icing chemicals. Examine areas between toes for foreign objects, such as pebbles and small pieces of broken glass. If you spot a cut or wound on your dog’s paw, clean it with an antibacterial wash and, if necessary, wrap it with a light bandage. Of course, if the cut is serious, see your vet for treatment.

Your dog’s pads can become dry and cracked. If that happens, apply a pad moisturizer recommended by a vet. Avoid using a human hand moisturizer because it can soften the pads too much. While moisturizing, consider giving your dog a deep paw massage. Start by rubbing between the pads on the bottom of the paw and then rub between each toe. The massage will relax your dog and promote better circulation. Routine paw maintenance should include trimming paw hair to prevent matting. Simply comb the hair out, especially from between the toes and trim it even with the pads.
At the risk of stating the obvious: Protect your dog’s feet from extreme conditions in summer and winter. Avoid walking your dog on sunbaked pavement or blistering hot beaches. After winter walks, wash your dog’s paws to remove rock salt and chemicals used to melt ice on sidewalks and streets. Vaseline helps to protect paws from salt. Dog booties are another option.

If your dog is spending an inordinate amount of time licking his paws, it should be considered a red flag that something is wrong. Check the paws for irritants. Some dogs are susceptible to contact allergies to certain grasses. Washing off the dog’s paws after a romp in the grass would be a good idea.

Paw biting and licking also can be a symptom of a food or inhalant allergy. In such cases, a consultation with a vet could uncover the specific cause and what treatment or preventive measures should be taken. Such breeds as Beagles, Bichon Frise, French bulldogs and Poodles seem particularly susceptible to allergies.

Yeast growth on paws is a common problem, particularly in hot and humid weather. The condition is extremely itchy and can be alleviated by washing the paws daily with an anti-fungal shampoo, reducing the carbohydrates in the dog’s diet and adding probiotics and possibly digestive enzymes to the diet.
Obsessive paw-licking and chewing also might indicate that the dog is suffering from an obsessive compulsive disorder. Often called lick granuloma, it’s a form of self-trauma in which the dog continuously licks a small area where the paw becomes raw and inflamed. This behavior is related to stress, boredom or anxiety.
• Clean the cut or wound with a diluted antiseptic.
• Apply a small amount of antiseptic cream to the affected area.
• Wrap the paw in soft gauze to provide a cushion for the pad.
• Apply a pressure bandage, such as a vet wrap, to the paw up to and including the wrist joint, but leave the front toes exposed.
• Ensure the bandage isn’t too tight. You should be able to insert two fingers between the bandage and leg.
• If your dog licks or chews at the bandage, wrap Anti-Lick Strips about the bandage or spray it with Bitter Apple.
The AKC is a not-for-profit organization and the largest purebred dog registry in the world. We are the sports-governing body for over 22,000 dog events a year, including conformation (dog shows) and exciting sports like agility, obedience, rally, tracking, lure coursing, earthdog, herding trials, among others.

But the AKC is so much more. Here are just some of the ways we support and enrich the lives of dogs—purebreds and mixed-breeds alike—and their families.

**AKC Humane Fund**, supports breed rescue activities, assists shelters that permit domestic-abuse victims to bring their pets, and educates dog lovers about responsible dog ownership.

**Canine Good Citizen®** program: A 10-step test that certifies dogs who have good manners at home and in their community. Over 600,000 dogs across the United States have become Canine Good Citizens, and 42 states have passed resolutions recognizing the program’s merit and importance.

**AKC Reunite** has brought more than 400,000 lost pets back together with their owners.

The **AKC Canine Health Foundation**, funds research projects and clinical studies. Since 1995 the AKC has donated over $24 million to the CHF. (The AKC is the only registry that incorporates health-screening results into its permanent dog records.)

**AKC** conducts thousands of kennel inspections annually to monitor care and conditions at kennels across the country and ensure the integrity of the AKC registry.

We offer the largest, most comprehensive set of DNA programs for parentage verification and genetic identity to ensure reliable registration records.

AKC supports one of the world’s largest collections of dog-related fine art and artifacts at the **AKC Museum of the Dog**.

We have the world’s largest **dog library** at AKC headquarters in New York, both of which are open to the public.
THANK YOU FOR READING

We hope this information was valuable to you in helping your puppy live a long, healthy, happy life. Below, find additional books in our Owner’s Manual series designed to strengthen the bond between you and your furry family member.