

Westosha Veterinary Hospital

Nail Trim Desensitization/Counter Conditioning Handout

Animals benefit from a loving touch. When an animal is forcibly *restrained for a nail trim, they realize they are helpless and cannot do* anything about it. They finally give up. But that doesn't mean they are any less anxious. In fact, they are likely to be more afraid. Forcible techniques don't help, except to intensify fear. The outcome of force may cause a previously content and amicable dog or cat to have other problems. The goal is to implement techniques that help to make the pet more secure.

This service is for anyone who has a dog that puts up a fight to have his/her nails clipped. We are going to condition your pet to actually be happy (or, at least tolerant) when those clippers come out, because we are going to desensitize him/her to them, and use classical conditioning to make him/her start to drool when he/she sees them. Yes, it will take a little time to do, but if you count up all the minutes spent fighting with a dog over nail clipping, in the long run you will save hours & hours. We as pet owners and veterinary professionals should take the time – and we're only talking 10-15 minutes per session or so – to desensitize the dog rather than to allow the anxiety to heighten with each visit.

The initial nail trim desensitization visit will focus on finding a treat that your pet really enjoys and a position which makes him/her feel relaxed and comfortable. When your pet is happy and relaxed, we will start counter conditioning by gently handling the feet while rewarding with praise and treats. Once he/she is consistently focused on the reward, we can move to the next step of introducing the nail clippers by gently tapping on each nail and finally trimming the nails. This process will take several 15-20 minute sessions in order to work up to trimming the nails. We will schedule follow up visits weekly until you have a happy relaxed pet. It is important to continue these techniques at home so your pet will continue to have an enjoyable experience in the future.

Initial Nail Trim Desensitization Appointment (30 minutes)- \$30.00

Follow up Nail Trim Desensitization Appointments (20 minutes)- \$22.00