

# Vet's Corner

## Nails – Depending on the type of exercise they do, and where they do it, greyhounds may or may not need their nails trimmed.

Nails that are too long are at risk of “catching” or breaking, causing pain to the dog. The ideal nail length is that the nails sit 1-2mm off the ground when the dog is standing on a firm flat surface. This can be easily checked by standing the dog on a concrete or lino floor and attempting to slide a sheet of paper between the end of the nail and the floor. If this cannot be done then the nail is too long and should be trimmed. If the nails are very long, and especially if they are black, trimming should be conservative, because you cannot see where the quick ends so do them “little & often” otherwise you may well hit the sensitive quick and draw blood. Regular filing of the end of the nail will cause the quick to steadily retract so the nail can be continually shortened until it reaches the desired length. A battery or electric operated sanding tool, eg Dremel is the method of choice as it reduces the risk of cutting the quick and you can shorten, shape and smooth the nails much better than a standard clipper. These can be obtained at Mitre 10, there are also cheaper versions of the dremel on the market.

### Infection of the Nails (Paronychia)

This commonly occurs when sand or dirt becomes embedded in the nail bed, causing inflammation followed by infection. It is reasonably common in racing dogs but less so in pets. Treatment in the early stages consists of thorough soaking in warm soapy water followed by thorough cleaning using an old soft toothbrush, brushing away from the dog. In more severe cases an antiseptic or antibiotic

ointment may be necessary and occasionally antibiotics by mouth may be needed. In racing dogs it is common practice to wind a narrow strip (3mm) of elastoplast around the nail just below the nail-skin junction, to act as a mechanical barrier to further dirt or sand gaining entry.

### Pad Problems

**1 Dry Cracked Pads** – This is a common problem in young greyhounds but less so in older dogs. Treatment consists of rehydrating the pads by soaking them in water for 10 minutes then massaging in neatsfoot oil or lard/mutton fat or any ointment that contains animal fats or oils. This will need to be repeated twice daily for 10-14 days before the pads become softer, and more pliable.

**2 Corns** – This term covers two distinct problems. They are either fibrous scar tissue produced by old healed cuts and abrasions, or they are ingrown viral warts. The latter cause is by far the most common and is caused by the same virus that causes “cauliflower warts” elsewhere on the feet. The virus has an incubation period of 6 weeks from time of exposure to time of appearance of the wart or corn. Pressure and abrasion prevents the normal wart formation on the surface of the pad and so a corn develops pressing into the deeper layers of the pad, forming a flat, white, circular, painful area. The best treatment for corns is surgical removal by a veterinarian.

**3 Cut pads** – These are readily visible but careful cleansing and observation is essential as foreign objects such as sand, glass or bits of metal can penetrate and remain there while the pad heals over. However, the dog will be persistently lame and will need an x-ray to see whether there is a foreign body in the pad. Contrary to popular belief, glass will show up on x-ray provided a relatively low power is used.

When a dog has painful paws, it can affect his entire body. Just like humans with painful feet, dogs with painful paws tend to shift their weight to reduce the pressure and pain. As a result, there is added stress on the neck and spine, as well as on the legs bearing the extra weight. And just like us, constant discomfort can also make your dog feel miserable so please check your dog's paws regularly and if necessary consult your veterinarian for professional advice.

*Dr Malcolm L Jansen BVSc*

... before



... after

