



Always Helpful Veterinary Services

Education for both ends of the lead!

The Importance of Short Toenails

Toenail care is critical to your dogs' health and comfort. Long toenails cause an animal to stand in a "goat on a rock" posture, leaning over the front legs with the hind legs forward beneath the body, like a goat standing on a point of rock, or like an upside down triangle. Flexor tendon tension from contact of the nails with the ground gives inaccurate information about the ground surface angle, creating this leaning and unbalanced support of the dogs' weight. The chronic postural abnormality of "goat on a rock" predisposes dogs to back, hip, stifle and hock problems from inappropriate loading forces in both stance and movement as the legs are not strengthened, balanced or used correctly. When the toenails are long, this inaccurate input to the tendon and joint receptors alters all function, mechanical and physiologic. This can result in emotional change as well; a postural stress is constant and can be painful and disconcerting.

When toenails are trimmed properly and not touching the ground, the dog tends to "stack," meaning that the legs from the elbows and the hocks to the ground are vertical, with the hind feet behind the hips, in a position of mechanical advantage. Weight bearing forces are at their most when the bones are vertical, so standing that way at rest allows them to grow strong for that task and for movement as well. Forces in movement are also reduced, as the stride placement around the normal weight bearing stance can be more accurate for reduced acceleration forces in stopping, turning, and landing.



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