

Grooming Your Dog

Canine Health



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Grooming is an important part of dog care. Regular grooming can prevent many issues before they begin, like severe matting. Be certain to research the grooming needs of your chosen breed, and consider carefully whether or not you have the time and patience to properly groom your dog, or the financial resources to make regular visits to a professional groomer.

Why Groom? All dogs need regular grooming, from the smoothest Doberman to the fluffiest collie. Even hairless breeds require regular skin maintenance to look and feel their best. Brush your dog at least once a week to remove dirt and dead hair. Long coated breeds need daily brushing, plus a regular trip to the groomer. During shedding season, even short coats can shed a lot of fur. Regular brushing can save you a lot of housework.

If you have chosen a long-coated or double-coated breed, you have made a lifetime commitment to regular brushing and visits to the groomer. Neglecting this responsibility can seriously harm a dog's health. Water trapped beneath a matted coat can cause infection and hot spots. Severe matting, also called felting, should only be addressed by a professional groomer or vet, since removing the skintight mats can be very tricky.

Training for Grooming Teach your puppy to enjoy the grooming process from the very beginning. You can also use these same steps to train an older, fearful dog. Training sessions should be short and upbeat, especially for puppies.

After preparing your brushes and other tools, put your dog on a leash, and place on a sturdy table or on top of a washer or dryer. (Cover the surface with a bath mat or other non-slip surface.) Praise and reward your dog for simply standing still.

As your dog becomes more confident, rub your hands all over its body, legs, tail, and tummy. Spread your fingers and run them through its coat. Give frequent treats and use a happy, upbeat tone of voice. If necessary, have someone else hold the leash so your hands are free. Use a nylon muzzle if you are afraid of being bitten. (For a truly aggressive dog, have a professional trainer work with you.)

Lift your dog's lips and look at its teeth. Open its mouth and look inside. Look in each ear. Lift the tail. Pick up each paw. Run your fingers between the toes. Every time your dog accepts what you are doing, praise and reward it with a treat. Remember, keep sessions short and upbeat, and always end on a positive note.

Continue this routine until your dog is relaxed throughout. Then graduate to running the back of the brush all over its body. As your dog relaxes, begin brushing very lightly. Carefully avoid pulling any fur. Your dog will need to learn to accept some tugging eventually, but start gently. Teach your dog to roll over or to stand on its hind legs while you brush its tummy. Don't forget the treats and praise!

Once your dog or puppy is comfortable with the grooming process, make sure you groom your short-coated dog at least once a week, and your long-coated or double-coated dog daily.

Equipment Needed

- Bath mat
- Combs and brushes
- Treats
- Nail clippers
- Dog toothpaste (not human)
- Flea Comb
- Dog Toothbrush or fingertip brush (not human)
- Styptic powder
- Muzzle (if needed)
- Leash and collar

Additional Supplies

Smooth Coated Dogs – Grooming glove, Rubber curry
Short-Coated Dogs - Slicker brush, Curry brush (rubber scrubber), Shedding blade (optional)
Long-Coated and Double-Coated Dogs - Slicker brush, Pin brush, Wide-toothed comb, Mat cutter, Undercoat rake, Scissors

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Grooming Your Dog	<p>Assemble all the tools you will need for your grooming session. Don't forget the treats! Prepare your grooming area, making sure that the dog will be standing on a non-slip surface.</p> <p>Once your dog is safely leashed, bring it to the grooming area. Use a wide-toothed comb and a de-matting comb, if needed, to free the coat of mats. When removing mats, always hold the base of the mat while combing through it. If the mat must be cut out, avoid cutting your dog by keeping your hand between the scissors and the skin. Use a fine-toothed comb for under the chin and tail, and around the ears. Using the proper brushes for the coat type, brush the entire coat in the direction hair growth.</p> <p>To brush out the undercoat on a longhaired or double-coated dog, brush the hair on the back and sides toward the head. Use your hand to lightly hold the coat down, and brush gently with a slicker brush or undercoat rake back toward the tail, pulling the hair from beneath your hand as you go. Continue moving your hand up the dog's body from the rear, brushing out the dead hair. This is called line brushing, and is especially important for breeds like collies, keeshonds, and Pomeranians.</p> <p>Once your dog is free of mats and well combed out, it's ready for the bath. Refer to PETCO's Bathing Your Dog Care Sheet for tips and advice on bathing.</p>
Clipping Toenails	<p>Toenails should be short enough not to click on the floor when your dog walks. Clipping nails is necessary for the health of the foot, and the comfort of the dog. A long, split toenail invites infection. The dewclaws, small claws not on the paw, but further up the leg, also need to be kept short. Elderly and less active dogs don't wear down nails as quickly as young active dogs. It is a good idea to have your groomer or veterinarian demonstrate proper nail clipping for you, if you haven't done it before.</p> <p>Always use sharp clippers designed for dogs. Toenails are living tissue, with a blood-filled vein, or quick, down the center. You can see the quick in a white or clear toenail, but generally not in a brown or black one. Begin by trimming just the tiniest tip off the end if you can't see the quick. It's easier to go back and cut more rather than cut too far, which is painful for your dog. If you regularly clip your dog's toenails (every week), the quick will gradually recede from the end, and you can work his nails back to a good length. If you accidentally cut into the quick, dab styptic powder on the nail and apply pressure with your finger until the bleeding stops. Use cornstarch if you don't have styptic powder, although it will not work as well as the styptic powder.</p> <p>While your dog is learning to accept toenail clipping, give him a treat after every toe, and just do one foot per sitting. With patience and lots of treats, your dog will soon be standing with its paw in the air, waiting for you to get started!</p>
Cleaning the Anal Area	<p>Long coated dogs often get mats in this area because feces stick to their fur. Clip excess hair away with scissors or grooming clippers. If you see your dog scooting its rear on the ground, it may have impacted anal glands, a very uncomfortable condition. Your groomer may be able to clear them. Severe impactions or infections require a vet visit.</p>
Brushing the Teeth	<p>Brush your dog's teeth as part of your regular grooming routine. Dental disease can be expensive to treat, and can lead to serious health problems or even organ failure. Use toothpaste made specifically for dogs, and a dog toothbrush or fingertip massager to stimulate your dog's gums and remove excess tartar from the teeth. Because canine toothpaste is enzymatic, it is not necessary to scrub the teeth, merely make certain that the toothpaste coats all the tooth surfaces. Dogs with chronic bad breath may have unhealthy teeth and gums, or a more serious internal problem. Breath fresheners are available, but you need to treat the cause, not just the symptoms. Take your dog to your veterinarian to determine the exact cause.</p>