

# grooming your dog

## *canine health*

Grooming is an important part of dog care. Regular grooming can prevent many issues, like matting, before they begin, helping to cut down on shedding and distributing the dog's natural oils onto their skin & coat to help keep them healthy. Be sure 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 grooming salon. During shedding season, regular brushing can save you a lot of time spent cleaning the house, even on the short-coated breeds.

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 harm a dog's health. Water trapped beneath a matted coat can cause infection and hot spots. Severe matting should only be addressed by a professional groomer or veterinarian since removing skin-tight mats can be painful.

### **Equipment needed for all breeds:**

- Bath mat
- Treats
- Dog toothpaste
- Dog toothbrush or fingertip brush
- Leash and collar
- Combs and brushes
- Nail clippers
- Flea comb
- Styptic powder



Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

## **Additional supplies:**

### **Smooth-coated dogs:**

Grooming glove, rubber curry brush

### **Short-coated dogs:**

Slicker brush, curry brush (rubber scrubber), FURminator

### **Long-coated and double-coated dogs:**

Slicker brush, pin brush, metal comb, undercoat rake

## **Training for grooming:**

Teach your puppy to enjoy the process from the very beginning. You can also use these same steps to train an older 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 them 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. This will only work for small dogs; for larger breeds, you will want to work with them in an area that is not considered their area. For example, outside on the patio or in a laundry room.

As your dog becomes more confident, rub your hands all over their body, legs, tail, paws and tummy. Spread your fingers and run them through your dog's 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.

Lift your dog's lips and look at their teeth (but don't get your face too close). Look in each ear. Pick up each paw. Run your fingers between your dog's toes. Every time your dog accepts what you are doing, praise and reward 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 their 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 their hind legs while you brush their 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 twice a week.

If your pet shows any signs of fear or aggression, stop the process and contact a professional pet stylist, who will know how to work with your dog safely. Also, work with a dog trainer or animal behaviorist to

help you and your pet overcome these obstacles.

## **Grooming your dog:**

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.

Once your dog is safely leashed, bring them to the area in which you have accustomed your dog to being groomed.

For smooth and short-coated breeds, gently run the brush over your pet's coat. This will help to loosen any undercoat and also help distribute your pet's natural oils back onto the skin and coat's surface.

For long-coated breeds, start with brushing the coat. Start with the back half of your dog and at the bottom of the leg working in layers, using your other hand to hold hair out of the way. Begin gently brushing in the direction the coat grows, continuing up the leg. Once the rear legs are done, begin working on the back from tail to neck, again in layers. Then move to their front legs and finish with their face. Once the brushing is completed and all tangles are removed, double-check using the metal comb: the comb should easily go through the coat and not get stuck. If the comb gets stuck, there is a tangle or mat. If the brush cannot easily remove the tangle or mat, take your pet to the groomer. If you over-brush an area you may risk injury to your pet's skin.

For double-coated breeds, follow the same process as with the long-coated breed, but in this case you are removing excess dead coat that should easily come out if ready. Do not work an area too long. If you over-brush trying to get out as much hair as possible, you run the risk of injuring your pet's skin. Dogs lose their undercoat seasonally. During the shedding seasons (spring and fall). Brush your pet more often than twice a week until the majority of the shedding has stopped. These breeds will always shed, just more so during those two seasons.

Once your dog is free of mats, excess shedding coat and well-combed, they're ready for the bath. Do not bathe your pet prior to removing any tangles, matting or loose undercoat. The shampoo will get caught inside of the tangles and matting and could cause a reaction with your pet's skin. Refer to Petco's Bathing Your Dog Care Sheet for tips and advice on bathing.

## **Clipping toenails:**

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 your dog. A long, split toenail invites infection. The dewclaws, small claws not on the paw but further up on the inside of 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.

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 (it is the pink center) in a white or clear toenail, but in a brown or black nail, it will be grey in the center. 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 their 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, about 10 to 15 seconds for minimal bleeding. Use cornstarch if you don't have styptic powder, although it will not work as well as the styptic powder.

While your dog is learning to accept toenail clipping, give them a treat after every toe, and just do one foot per sitting. Start with the back paws and work your way to the front paws. With patience and lots of treats, your dog will soon be standing with their paw in the air, waiting for you to get started!

#### **Cleaning the anal area:**

Long-coated dogs often get mats in this area because feces stick to their fur. Check this area every few days, and use a hypoallergenic baby wipe or damp towel to keep clean. If mats begin to build up, take your pet to your professional groomer. If you see your dog scooting their rear on the ground, they may have impacted anal glands, a very uncomfortable condition. Your groomer or veterinarian may be able to clear them. Severe impactions or infections require a veterinarian visit.

#### **Brushing the teeth:**

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 their teeth; simply 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.