

**35 Things that dog lovers
should know about
Grooming
by Kathy Salzberg**

From the beginning

- 1. Start them young.** Begin grooming when you acquire your puppy, usually between 8-12 weeks of age. His Mother kept him spiffy, now it's your job!
- 2. Tweak and Tickle.** Accustom your pup to your touch and desensitize him to the grooming process by holding, petting, and playing with him before you introduce the brush and comb.
- 3. Baby that coat.** Unless your dog is short or smooth-coated, his wooly puppy coat will change color and texture as the adult coat comes in, at around 6 to 8 months of age.
- 4. Stand for attention.** A pup should stand when being groomed, preferably on a table. With his leash and collar on, pull him toward you, lifting from underneath, and say "Stand". Praise and treat reinforce this lesson.
- 5. Do it Daily.** Set aside 10 minutes a day for grooming, increasing the time as your pup gets used to it. Schedule sessions after a walk or romp when he's less energetic.

Caring for Teeth

- 6. Periodontal disease is epidemic.** Caused by plaque, a cement-like substance that sticks to the teeth and causes bacterial growth under the gum line, gum disease, leads to teeth loss, dental pain, and halitosis. By age 3, more than 80 percent of dogs develop this disease.
- 7. Start brushing.** First, use your fingers and a gauze pad to massage teeth and gums in a circular motion, a little at a time. Next, introduce a toothbrush and **toothpaste made for dogs.** Spend 30 seconds per group of three or four teeth. Daily brushing is best, but brush at least three times a week.
- 8. Toys and treats add some fun.** Hard chew sticks and dental bones supplement brushing and keep your pet from devouring table legs. Dry Kibble and hard biscuits help, too.

Trim those toenails.

- 9. Like shoeing a horse.** To trim toenails, stand next to your dog with your back toward his head. Lift the rear paw, then clip the hooked nail tip. Repeat the procedure for front paws, hovering over your pet.
- 10. Remember dewclaws,** the thumb-like nails inside the front and sometimes rear legs.
- 11. If you nick the quick,** the vein inside the nail, a dab of styptic powder will instantly stop the bleeding.
- 12. Trim nails once a month** and you'll notice that you only need to clip the tip each month.

Brushing

- 13. Brush, then bathe.** Thoroughly brush your dog's coat before you bathe him. Mats increase and multiply when wet.
- 14. Get organized.** Before you fill the tub, assemble your supplies; cotton balls, ear cleaner, shampoo, conditioner, towels, and pet cologne. Bath water should be comfortably warm.
- 15. He's all ears.** Clean your dog's ears with a cotton ball moistened with ear cleaner before his bath and at least once a week. A little wax is normal, but a dark discharge, foul odor, or inflammation may indicate ear infection.

- 16. No more tears.** Avoid getting soap in your dog's eyes. A drop saline solution in each eye before the bath provides extra protection.
- 17. Rinse again.** To get your pet squeaky-clean, lather well and rinse thoroughly. Shampoo left in the coat will cause itchy skin and irritation.
- 18. Fluffing is an art.** Groomers blow-dry full-coated pets, directing the airflow to the section of coat being brushed. Short-coated pets can be toweled and air-dried, but longer coats need fluffing to look gorgeous and for proper styling.

Safe and stress-free

- 19. Don't leave me.** Whether on the table or in the tub, never leave your dog unattended. He could severely hurt himself if he jumps.
- 20. No heavy metal.** Keep the environment stress-free by playing classical or New Age music. Dogs hear sounds at a much higher frequency and louder volume than we do.
- 21. Use the right stuff-** products made just for dogs. If your pet reacts badly to any grooming product, rinse immediately and call your veterinarian.

Groomer's Top Tricks

- 22. Brush, then comb.** Brush the coat thoroughly, then comb to find any tangles you missed.
- 23. Lift up, Brush down.** On full coats, especially on legs, you'll brush more effectively if you lift coat sections, working your way up, then brushing down, penetrating the hair all the way to the skin.
- 24. Follow a pattern.** Starting at the same spot each time, brush your way around your dog's body. Get all the way to the skin to prevent mats, nasty tangles that grow and spread until brushing them becomes impossible.

Professional Help

- 25. Find the right groomer.** When you visit a salon, it should look and smell clean, the groomers should be friendly and knowledgeable, and you should observe pets being cared for with kindness.
- 26. Special needs count.** If you have a pup or canine senior citizen, your groomer should do the job promptly. Sitting around the salon all day can be stressful for such pets.
- 27. Keep vaccinations current.** Your pup shouldn't go to the groomer until he's had his second series of core vaccinations, administered at four-week intervals. Before mingling with canine buddies, he should also be vaccinated against Bordetella (kennel cough).
- 28. Listen to the experts.** If your dog is severely matted, don't ask your groomer to brush it out. Dematting is a long, painful, and expensive process that leaves skin irritated. Have your dog's coat clipped short and start over.

Smart and consistent

- 29. No more goobers.** To keep eye stains and gunk at bay, wipe the eye area daily with warm water, tear stain remover, or eye cleaner on a cotton ball.
- 30. All dogs need grooming.** Most pet owners can handle basic grooming on short and smooth-coated breeds, but if yours is a high-maintenance beauty, he will require professional grooming on a four to eight week basis.
- 31. Scheduled maintenance.** Set aside a specific time for grooming or tie it to another activity, such as training. Longhaired dogs require daily brushing, while two to three times a week will manage most shorter-coated breeds, a weekly brushing or currying will suffice. Puppy cuts make home maintenance easier for breeds such as the poodle, Yorkshire Terrier, Lhasa Apso, and Shih Tzu.

- 32. Show and tell.** Ask your groomer to recommend the right tools and show you how to use them. Used too forcefully, wire slicker brushes can cause a painful irritation called slicker burn. Even in experienced hands Dematting tools can be dangerous.
- 33. Give him the once-over.** As you groom, examine your pet from head to tail. Check ears, paws, teeth, and skin, looking for lumps, rashes, sores, cuts, and discharge, as well as fleas and ticks.
- 34. Build the bond.** Grooming sessions help you bond with your pet. In the wild, his ancestors groomed each other to express affection and acknowledge hierarchy within the pack.
- 35. Be positive.** If you treat grooming with an upbeat attitude, your dog will, too. Ask, “Do you want to get groomed?” in a cheery voice and speak lovingly as you work. End each session with a tasty tidbit so he’ll come back for more.