

COAT AND SKIN CARE FOR ALL DOG BREEDS

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A well cared for dog is a feast for the eye. For a soft and shining coat, a complete and well balanced diet is of vital importance, but also a regular coat and skin care dose the trick.

GROOMING

A tangled and matted coat forms a perfect breeding place for skin parasites and fungal infections. Not removed old hair can irritate the skin, and dirt, grass seeds or other foreign objects can get stuck in the coat. Flea and tick sprays and powders can not reach the source. And, under the mats the skin can not properly breathe. All lead to itching and scratching. The skin gets damaged and easily infected. Just cutting the mats away is not a good solution as the old hair will not be removed and still can cause irritation. Coats as those from poodles' form an exception, they need to be cut. Grooming your dog's coat a few minutes per day will help to keep it free from skin and coat problems. Simple brushing removes old hair and dirt; it stimulates the blood circulation and also the production and secretion of the dog's natural skin oils (its own protection against skin parasites and fungal infections and against cold and heat); and it help the skin breath.

During the grooming skin problems can be caught in their earliest stages and the dog can be checked for parasites, such as fleas, ticks lice or mites.

How to groom

You may start grooming your pet at a young age to let it get used to it. When brushing and/or combing it is best to start with the shoulders or hindquarters, because these are the least sensitive parts of the body. Slowly work your way back-or forward, then downward to the softer parts and the legs. Be aware, many dogs appear to be reluctant of having their tail groomed. Take care you reach the skin and brush every part of the body. Often forgotten parts are behind the ears, under the armpits and tail and under the belly and abdomen.

Do not groom too rough or you may scare your dog or injure its skin. A dog learns quickly that by growling or snapping it can avoid grooming sessions. When you groom too soft you may brush only the upper layer of the coat while the under layer get more and more tangled. Thus, brush gentle though firm in the direction of the hair-growth with short firm strokes, while holding the skin tight with one hand.

Grooming material

Not only long and half-long coated dogs are entitled to a grooming session, also smooth-coated ones need grooming.

For long and half-long coated dogs a comb with smooth round teeth and a brush with natural bristles or wire-pin brush are suitable. Rough-coated dogs can be brushed with a rubber brush; a moist towel can be used to remove dust and old hair.

Grooming frequency

It may be that not everyone has the time to groom the dog daily, however, each dog is entitled to be brushed at least once a week by you or by a professional groomer.

BATHING

Also bathing helps removing old hair and cleans coat and skin. It is also another perfect moment to check the dog for parasites or other disorders.

How to give a bath

Before giving a bath brush the coat carefully, making sure all tangles and mats are removed. These become worse when wet and it will be impossible to rinse out all the shampoo and dirt. Then wet

the coat carefully. Check if you have really reached the skin, as many coats are water-resistant. Once the coat is completely wet massage the shampoo over the whole body. Make sure you reach every part that includes the dog's genitals, in between its toes and right under its tail. Be careful no soap will come in your dog's eyes, ears or mouth. Once the whole body has been shampooed you can start rinsing it out. Check with your hands if all the soap is gone as dried soap dulls the coat and can irritate the skin. After the bath you can rub your dog dry with a towel, dry it with a hair-dryer or let it air-dry. However, always keep in mind it makes several hours for a dog's coat to dry by air, therefore choose a hot period of the day and be aware of draughts.

Bathing frequency

Bathing frequency varies widely among dogs. It depends on differences in coat, on the grooming frequency and on the individual; some dogs dirty themselves quicker than others. In general a clean and regular groomed coat may be bathed every month to 6 weeks. Be careful for too much bathing, as the natural skin oils will be removed, leading to a dry and flaky skin.

Shampoos

Most human shampoos are on the acid side for a dog's skin and, therefore, not suitable. This is because a human skin has a lower pH than a dog's skin. Although, there are some human shampoos on the alkaline side and thus may be suitable. Coconut-oil shampoo is an example. But as there are several shampoos, specially made for dogs, on the market it is advisable to use those.

RANK-CONFIRMING

Bathing and grooming are not only good for the dog's health; it is also rank confirming. For it is the boss who decides when, how and where to give a bath and how long the action will take. Further, the dog has to put itself in all kinds of submissive positions (as laying on its side or back) to be able to reach all places.

Besides all this, it allows you to give your dog a few moments of special attention, enough to establish a pleasant bond.