

Grooming Your Pet Reduces Shedding and Allergies

All dogs require some basic care and grooming. **Toenails** should be trimmed on a regular basis. If you look underneath the nail, cut off the hollow part. Or, as the dog is standing, cut evenly with the ground. If you cut a nail too short, dip it in cornstarch to staunch bleeding. Groomers or vets will trim nails for just a few dollars if you are reluctant to do it yourself or if the dog objects. **Ears** should be checked and cleaned if needed. Use an unscented baby wipe to wipe clean. If the ear has an odor, discharge, is red or angry looking, your vet can prescribe treatment. Your vet is also the ideal place to buy flea products. The products available from the vet tend to be more effective and safer than many over the counter treatments.

ALLERGIES

There are products available that help if a family member is allergic to your pet. *Allerpet* is a liquid you wipe over a dog or cat that helps to reduce dander. It is readily available at pet stores. Keeping your pet clean and brushed also helps, as do air cleaners that remove pollen and dander from household air.

SHEDDING

All dogs shed. Double coated breeds (collies) shed more but many short-haired breeds (labs, shepherds) are also world class shedders. Breeds that don't shed *much* (poodle) require regular haircuts and more frequent brushing. Dogs typically will go through a coat change, or a big shed in the spring and fall. They will knot more easily and require extra brushing during the transition, usually lasting about a month.

BRUSHING

Set aside a special place to brush your dog. Dogs often think the middle of the living room is for play, and will jump around and make brushing difficult. A bathmat on the washer, or outdoors on a picnic table are typical solutions for smaller dogs. Ideally, you can tie the dog's leash to something so he doesn't just walk away. Use a fairly short tie to cut down on squirming. In winter, you can dilute a capful of dog conditioner in a spray bottle with water and mist dog before brushing to prevent static shocks.

Basic tools include a slicker brush and comb. Part the hair so you can see to the skin, and brush in the direction of coat growth all the way to the skin. Follow with the comb to be sure there are no tangles. Pay special attention to areas where mats are likely, like armpits or behind ears. For short-haired shedding dogs, a rubber curry or shedding blade will help pull out dead hair. For longer haired dogs, such as a collie, an undercoat or mat rake can be effective. Grooming tools can be purchased at pet stores or online at pet supply companies.

BATHING

After the dog is brushed out, he is ready for a bath. Use a shampoo designed for dogs, rather than one for people. Pet stores have wide selections of deodorizing and moisturizing products.

Find a way to attach a hose to cold and warm water. Pouring cupfuls of water over the head doesn't rinse dogs well enough, and a cold water only bath, even on hot days, will cause the dog to jump around and resist bathing. Again, if you can tie the dog with a short leash, it will leave your hands free and keep the dog in place. Work the shampoo through in the direction of coat growth. Scrubbing back and forth can knot hair.

Pat or gently squeeze with a towel to dry. Dogs think it is funny to be wildly rubbed with the towel, or to roll all over the carpet, but this can also knot their hair and make for extra brushing. You can use a hair dryer set to a warm or cool setting, but not hot.

Clean, brushed dogs are more fun to pet, shed less, and smell better – plus they feel better too!