

Learning to Brush Your Pet

While cockleburrs, foxtails, fleas, and ticks are the bane of the country dog... over bathing, coat dryness and neglect of brushing and combing.

When that cute little puppy arrived at your home, you probably went to your local department store and purchased a new dish, bed, collar, and possibly a brush and comb. Although the bed, dish, and collar are still in use, the comb and brush are most likely gathering dust in some closet.

It may not be your fault that your first attempts at combing and brushing were unsuccessful. It could be that you didn't know the fine points of handling your pet during brushing. More likely, you purchased inappropriate equipment, making your efforts unfruitful and tiresome.

Good equipment is key...

Poor equipment is often the reason pet owners fail to give their pets once or twice weekly brushings. For success in coat maintenance, throw out your worn brush with bent or missing bristles. A gentle slicker brush is needed for basic grooming. These brushes contain hundreds of soft short bent wires mounted in a firm rubber backing. A good quality brush won't hurt your pet.

Another essential piece of equipment is the comb. A solid metal comb with combination coarse and medium teeth will do nicely. Buy your equipment from your pet care professional. You aren't likely to find the right kind of equipment in your local supermarket.

Brushing for Pets Health...

Brushing is essential to a healthy, glowing coat. It terminates mats and tangles, removes dead hair, dirt, and burrs, and distributes the natural oils, producing a healthy skin tone.

The Right Work Surface...

Where should you work on your pet? The floor is your pet's playground and should be used as a last resort. A sturdy table or the top of your washer or dryer will offer a solid surface and a comfortable working height for you. A rubber bath mat provides a non-slip surface for your pet.

Working on a surface like this teaches your pet that you are serious about its care. Plus, it resembles the conditions that your pet encounters in the grooming shop.

Controlling Your Pet...

You must have a serious attitude while working on your pet. A firm "NO" should suffice when your pet bites at the brush or comb, or tries to charm you with playful antics.

Begin by working in one area. Don't allow your pet to twist and turn as you "hit or miss" in your brushing attempts. Your pet will definitely win at that game, and you'll exhaust yourself while vowing to never "brush" again.

Mats, Tangles, and Burrs...

Mats, tangles and burrs should be worked in small sections, separated with your fingers if necessary. Begin with the coarse teeth of the comb. After the coarse teeth slide through an area of fur, use the medium teeth to finish.

Anti static grooming sprays, coat conditioners and powders can reduce coat breakage; however, use these items with caution around the eyes. Serious mats are best left to the groomer's expertise.

The Brushing Begins...

Take your pet's head in your hand and begin by gently, but thoroughly, combing the whiskers, ears and head. Look your pet in the eye and say a firm "no" if it begins to misbehave. Through this exchange, you can gain an understanding with your pet that will last through the brushing session.

Now, move to the legs. The legs are probably the most neglected part of the home grooming process. Alternate the comb and brush operation so you can locate the little snarls that quickly turn into big ones.

Brush up or down, but work in small sections and work down to the skin. A serious fault of the pet owner grooming is the overworking of the top coat and neglecting the hair nearest the skin. Lift the legs outwards to get at the inner leg. Proceed to the tail and back.

Finishing...

Terriers and long-coated breeds should be finished by combing in the direction of the hair growth. A fuller appearance can be achieved on the poodle, bichon and bedlington by brushing against the hair growth. Now, reward your pet with a special treat.

What's the Alternative...

Poor coat condition usually results in a shorter clip on your pet and a larger grooming bill. If you find that you just don't have the time or desire to brush your pet, more frequent professional grooming is recommended to prevent matting and tangling.

A shorter, more manageable clip on your pet may be another alternative. Your professional groomer will be able to assist you in making the best decision for you and your beloved pet.

How Often Should My Pet Be Groomed?

The duration of time between professional grooming can vary greatly between dogs of the same breed. Coat condition, hair type, density, and climate are just some of the variables. A lot depends on how much home grooming you are willing to offer to your pet.

Here are some guidelines suggested by grooming authorities. Your professional groomer can be more specific about your pet. If you don't brush and comb regularly, choose the earlier time frame.

Afghan	3-6 weeks
Airedale	6 weeks
Bedlington Terrier	4-6 weeks
Bichon Frise	4 weeks
Bouvier	8-10 weeks
Brittany Spaniel	8-12 weeks
Cairn Terrier	6-10 weeks
Cocker Spaniel	8-12 weeks
Collie	6 weeks
Dandie Dinmont Terrier	6-8 weeks
Golden Retriever	8-12 weeks
Irish Setter	8-10 weeks
Kerry Blue Terrier	4-8 weeks
Lakeland Terrier	6-8 weeks
Lhasa Apso	3-4 weeks
Maltese	4 weeks
Old English Sheepdog	4-6 weeks
Pekingese	6-12 weeks
Pomeranian	12-16 weeks
Poodle	4-6 weeks
Schnauzer-miniature	6-8 weeks
Schnauzer-standard	8 weeks
Schnauzer-giant	10 weeks
Scottish Terrier	6-10 weeks
Shih Tzu	3-4 weeks
Silky Terrier	6-8 weeks
Skye Terrier	4-8 weeks
West Highland White Terrier	6-8 weeks
Wire Fox terrier	6 weeks
Yorkshire Terrier	4 weeks