



Grooming and Coat Care

To properly maintain your dog's coat you will need some basic grooming supplies. These include a good quality steel pin brush, coarse steel comb, soft slicker brush, nail clippers, a good pair of trimming scissors, and a hemostat (to remove the hair from inside the ears). A grooming table will make your job a lot easier and prevent your back from aching. Once you have the proper equipment, you will need to learn the correct method of brushing. Many reputable breeders will offer you assistance in learning correct coat care.

To groom your dog, position him on his side on the grooming table. Using your pin brush start at the withers and brush against the grain of the hair so that you can see the skin. Brush in a line, a few hairs at a time, always getting down to the skin. Remember, this is a double coat consisting of a soft undercoat and a coarse outer coat. Correct brushing lifts and fluffs the hair as the brush removes loose undercoat and debris. Correct brushing should be a slow and gentle motion to avoid pulling out too much coat. A great hint to prevent the coat from splitting: lightly spray the dog's coat with water or hair conditioner before brushing!

When you have a line the length of the dog, go back and start a little further with a new line, again getting down to the skin. Now, brush the legs, starting at the foot and brushing in the direction of coat growth. Use the comb for more difficult areas and the slicker brush for the ears and muzzle. The slicker brush may also be used to fluff the legs. Once that side is complete, flip the dog over and start again with a new line running down the length of the dog. When finished, stand the dog on the table and trim the coat on the feet so that it is even and barely touches the table. Use your scissors to trim between the pads and to trim the rear for cleanliness.

If you encounter a mat, first separate it with your fingers. Then, gently comb the hair a little bit at a time until the mat begins to separate. Continue with the same technique of pulling the mat apart and combing a little bit more until the mat has been completely removed. Remember, you must get down to the skin and remove all clumps of hair. Keep in mind that the dog who is having mats removed from his coat is not feeling comfortable about this process either. If you can not finish after a few hours, take a break and return when rested. It will benefit the both of you!

In general, a young puppy needs very little grooming; however, this is the time to teach him to lie on the table and stay still while you brush. This fun and easy grooming time early on will help prepare him and you for the weekly grooming sessions required by an adult dog. Regular grooming is extremely important in maintaining healthy skin and coat. Long-standing mats lead to serious skin and health problems and are extremely uncomfortable for the dog. A dog that is matted can take many hours to properly groom. Patience and a positive attitude are essential in caring for a dog with a matted coat. When a dog is heavily matted, it is often kinder to shave him and start over.