



Grooming at the Show

At the show, start by dampening the coat on any grubby areas with water or waterless shampoo and work in our favorite drying whitener. Beware of the too frequent use of any colored products without washing or rinsing them out, as the coat can "grab" the color. Sometimes, permanently. On the privates or any area "dirtied" by urine or feces, my choice is baby powder cornstarch. Otherwise there are many choices from cornstarch, rice flower etc. to a milk of magnesia mixture.

For cleaning around the mouth we have used lemon juice, with or without salt, mixed with cornstarch to whiten the beard. Any time you strip the hair of it's natural oil it is wise to use a conditioner to prevent the hair from re-staining even worse. All of which must be thoroughly removed by the time the dog goes into the ring. Do not skimp on the amount of time you spend grooming at the show. Your dog will be relaxed and ready to show if you do not stir him up by quick and hurried movements. Plus, if you are not harried you will take more time to speak kindly to interested spectators. And, you are more likely to be willing to "Mentor" another who is a novice exhibitor.

When the coat is clean, begin the line brushing, then stand the dog up and finish my trimming of the rump and feet. When trimming the feet brush up the hair so it is standing out. Lift up the hair and comb down one inch. Trim this to even up the straggling ends and leave a nice round look. Comb out and lightly down the next inch and trim that to blend. Do another inch or two to finish blending so the leg looks like a pillar and not snow shoes.

Remember when doing the back feet to have the dog stand with the feet well under his body because if you trim when the feet are back when he moves his feet into a natural position he will have his toes showing. I do not trim all the way around the back feet after I do the first inch or so, as that would take away from the well let down hock look which calls for the hair to be shorter at the pad level and longer at the rearmost or highest part of the hock. When doing the rump use thinning scissors first around the rectum. I trim this area to be about 1½ inch long and blend outward and upward, leaving the hair longer as I go. If you leave the skirts too long your dog will look like he has a full pants problem.

Ask someone to show you how to pull a coat. Those of you who have shown horses will know what I mean. This is useful in areas on which you do not wish to leave a scissors mark. I finish by what I call volumizing. Using your hands and forearms, brush the coat up, down, back, and forwards - this forces air into the coat. Finish with the hair in the direction

you want it to go. A little light back combing to support the angles and you are finished.

I do not have the room in this article to cover all the "tricks of the trade" nor to deal with problem areas of conformation. These problem areas best described as the parts of the dog you would like to change so that your dog reflects the type of OES you prefer, and they are as varied as the people who bred the dogs. It would be far better to educate or re-educate the judges, into being able to tell what is really under the hair, than it is to pull out all the stops to make your dog a replica of what you think the best OES that ever lived looked like. You can fool yourself into thinking that the groomed dog you see will be genetically programmed to pass on the look that was created. But, you cannot fool Mother Nature. I estimate that 20% of the exhibitors are good enough to make any dog "look" like a winner. For the remaining 80%, education of Judges is your best offense.

Now go hug your dog and get started.