



SAN FRANCISCO
SPCA

Dog Grooming

A dog with a clean, healthy coat feels better and is healthier. It's worth investing time making your dog comfortable with grooming procedures and then grooming regularly, and worth investing money in the right tools. Different kinds of brushes and combs are designed for specific coat types and tasks. Here are some general suggestions:

Longhaired Dogs:

- Wire Pin Brush (with pins long enough to penetrate to the skin)
- Slicker Brush
- Medium to coarse "greyhound" style comb
- Flea Comb
- Matt-busting tool
- Undercoat rake
- Shedding blade (optional – if you want to cut down on shedding)

Medium Coated Dogs:

- Wire Pin Brush
- Slicker Brush
- Fine to medium "greyhound" style comb
- Flea Comb
- Shedding blade (optional – if you want to cut down on shedding)

Short Coated Dogs:

- Slicker Brush
- Hound Glove
- Flea Comb

All dogs also need the following:

- Nail trimmers and Quick-Stop (to stop bleeding if you hit the quick in the dog's nail – try not to – it hurts him and will bleed horrendously)

Brushing, Combing, Trimming and Nails



Brushing not only makes your pet's coat look nice and shiny. It is vital for skin and overall health and provides you with the opportunity to spend some quality time with your dog. You will be able to check your dog closely for any problems during brushing. Move the hair aside and examine the skin closely for signs of flea, ticks or skin irritations. Check for mats, tangles, dandruff, etc. When you brush, do a section at a time, *brushing down to the skin* on thick-coated dogs. To avoid coat breakage, only brush clean coats and mist

with water or a mixture of water and coat conditioner. Mats and tangles can be carefully removed with de-matters and rakes or, if necessary, carefully cut out. If you are finding lots of mats, it's a sure sign you are not grooming frequently enough. Don't bathe until all mats and tangles are out. Combs are useful for the fine coat that grows around ears and for feathering.

Spend time with puppies and newly adopted dogs to get them gradually and gently used to grooming procedures. Go slowly and patiently and dispense plenty of praise and high value treats. Learn where he likes to be combed and brushed and where he doesn't. All dogs have sensitive areas that need to be groomed a little more gently and carefully than others. By paying special attention to these areas, you will help make your dog more comfortable while being groomed, and he will not resist future grooming sessions. You will also become familiar with areas that he enjoys having groomed. This is helpful if you need to calm him during stressful times such as veterinary visits.

Short and medium-coated dogs must be brushed once a week and have their nails trimmed. It's also a good idea to scissor overgrown hair that grows between the foot pads and, if desired, around the foot to give a nice, tidy appearance. Don't worry if you botch it the first time. It'll grow back and you'll get better with practice. Even if you decide not to trim feet, check between foot pads during grooming for foxtails (common in California), ticks, bumps and debris.

Wipe tearstains with a cotton ball moistened with warm water. Check inside the ears for debris, ticks or signs of inflammation. Wipe with an ear cleaning solution for dogs, if desired, or a mixture of white vinegar and hydrogen peroxide. Dogs with skin folds, such as bulldogs, Pekes, Shih-Tzus and chows need these cleaned, preferably daily, with a moist cotton ball, and then dried with a dry cotton ball to avoid dermatitis and fungal infections. Trim nails every week or two. Brush teeth weekly with products for dogs to avoid tartar build-up, which not only causes bad breath but can necessitate professional cleaning under general anesthetic if allowed to build up.



Longer coated dogs should be brushed more often, ideally every day. *No dog should have to endure mats or a dirty, itchy coat.* If long-coated dogs dirty themselves during elimination, strategic trimming can prevent this in future.

Bathing

It's a myth that you should rarely bathe your dog. Show dogs are usually bathed weekly and are in fantastic condition. Bathe to your heart's content. The key is to brush often (daily for some dogs) to keep the natural oils distributed in the coat. The other key is that when you shampoo, *rinse thoroughly and dry thoroughly.* In the case of a long or thick-coated dog this usually means using a dog blowdryer (which doesn't deliver heat – very important, only powerful air) and drying right down to the skin (brush as you blow to “fluff” the dog). Nails are easier to trim after bathing as they're softened up.

There are lots of “self-service” bathing stations in pet stores these days if you don't want to make a mess of your own bathroom or don't want to use the yard. Rub a dub dub!