



How to care for your dog at home

A Simple Guide

Upper Hound
DOG GROOMING

Introduction

It's not always possible to visit the groomers, so here's a few simple ways to care for your dog at home. Remember to be patient, not just with your dog but also yourself.

We recommend using natural products and advise that home grooming is kept to the very basic needs of the dog. One of the best way's to do this is with regular brushing. Brushing alone removes debris, promotes healthy skin and prevents knots.

The equipment needed for each process is listed at the end of this document. Enjoy caring for your dog and please contact us with any questions you may have at: support@upperhound.co.uk

Lots of love,

Kate Jemison

Upper Hound Dog Grooming

Bathing

Keeping your dog squeaky clean



Bathing

1. Set up

Make sure you have all the equipment you need before you start, then close the bathroom door and secure your dog in the bath or shower area.

2. Water

Check the water temperature on your wrist to make sure it's tepid and not too hot. Fill a mixing bottle (or drinking bottle) with water, leaving about 2 inches spare at the top.

3. Shampoo mixture

Dilute the shampoo into the mixing bottle, (if possible check the shampoo instructions for a dilution rate first.) Replace the lid and give it a good shake. For particularly hairy or grubby dogs, you may need to use more than one bottle!

4. Pre-rinse

If your dog is particularly dirty, it's best to pre-rinse them using the shower before applying any shampoo. Pay close attention to the under belly, inside of the legs, their groin and feet.

Note: If you have a double coated dog, please read the section on Shedding before bathing your dog.

5. Shampoo technique

When applying the shampoo, keep to a routine. Avoid rubbing back-and-forth as this can tangle and damage the coat. Work your fingers through the fur creating a lather.

Start from the tail, down the back legs (including the inside), over the back and under belly to the chest and front legs. Then wash the head and ears. This direction allows you to safely assess your dog's temperament during their bath, and by washing the head last reduces the risk of soap collecting in their eyes.

6. For extra filthy dogs

A second shampoo is often needed for greasy or dirty coats, in which case repeat the process again.

7. Washing the head and ears

Finally, ensure the head is wet and apply some diluted shampoo – paying close attention to the muzzle/beard and the ends of the ears (especially with spaniels!) Dogs will naturally close their eyes, but do try to avoid them, as well as the ear canal, mouth and nose. It's important not to spray water into their nostrils, this is particularly important with breeds that have a short muzzle, as they can struggle to breathe.

If your dog has face folds, you can use a soft flannel to wipe between these folds. We often use cotton pads as well, apply some leucillin solution then give them a good wipe clean. Please note, once your dog is dry you will need to repeat this with dry cotton pads to make sure there's no moisture sitting in the folds because this will encourage bacteria. You could wipe a small amount of 100% virgin coconut oil into the skin as this is antibacterial, but please do check with your vet if you have any concerns.

Rinsing

How to rinse thoroughly



Rinsing

1. Rinse routine

Set a medium water pressure, keep the shower head close to the skin and allow the water to penetrate the coat. Ensure the water temperature is tepid and not too hot.

Rinse thoroughly, this time starting from the head. It's important to start here as it is the highest point of the dog – otherwise soap will just be moved around and not rinsed away. The water should soften any debris collected under the eyes, with a wet cotton pad you can wipe them clean.

Once the water is running clear from the head, check long ears with a gentle squeeze. If the water is dirty and soapy continue to rinse until clear. Then, return back towards the tail and down the legs.

2. Rinsing technique

Push the water through the coat with your hand until it runs clear and the fur sounds “squeaky” – this means the shampoo residue has been removed. Check the armpits, belly and groin – then under the ears and chin to ensure all soap has rinsed away.

3. Coat care

Apply conditioner if required, leave for a few minutes and follow the rinse routine again. (Please note you can also comb or use a rake to work the product through long coated dogs.)

4. Remove excess water

Gently squeeze any water out of the coat with your hands, then use a blotting motion with a thick towel to remove any excess. Do not rub the fur back and fourth as this will cause tangles and damage the coat.

Drying

How to dry thoroughly



Drying

You can leave your dog to air dry which takes up to 24 hours. Once dry, they will need brushing. You can use a hair dryer to dry your dog and brush as you go. Apply de-tangling spray if desired.

1. Set up

Secure your dog on a table, the floor or if small enough on your lap. You may want to place a towel underneath them.

2. Drying routine

Once you have your dog's cooperation, introduce the dryer using the same routine as the shampoo. Keeping to this routine will prevent water being blasted back onto an area you've already dried. Start from the tail, down the back legs including the insides, over their back and under belly to the chest, front legs, and lastly their head. During this process look for fleas, ticks and grass seeds.

3. Drying technique

The key is to fully dry one area before you move to the next. But avoid holding the dryer completely still. You'll need to keep the air moving to ensure it's not too hot. Use circular or small left and right movements. Also comb through the fur with your fingers to monitor the temperature. (If you're feeling confident try using a slicker brush at the same time as drying, and fluff dry the coat as you go. This will save time and leave a straight, knot free finish.)

4. Drying the head and ears

Dogs can be sensitive about having their heads dried. Take care to protect the ear canal by using your hand or drying around any exposed areas. Start at the back of the head and work forward. If your dog will allow it, then gently hold their chin or muzzle to move and position their head as you dry. If your dog has long fluffy ears or a beard, it can be useful to slicker and comb it through to separate wet hair before using the dryer on such areas.

Brushing

How to brush your dog



Brushing

1. Assistance

If someone can help ask them to dry while you brush each area, then work over the sections of the dog together. Otherwise you can dry the dog and then brush through afterwards. You are aiming for the hair to be as straight as possible. Note: As a guide long, curly and wool coated dogs will need brushing every day, double coated every few days and smooth coated weekly.

2. Slicker Brush

Make sure you're using a slicker brush. When brushing, you will need to get to the root of the hair. If you just brush across the surface you won't de-tangle the coat. Your brush strokes should be light and rapid (2-3 per second). Be consistent, methodically work in sections from the lowest point upwards (for example start at the foot and work up the leg) until each area is fully brushed before moving to the next. You can also brush backward against the lay of the fur and then brush it back into place. Brushing this way loosens and removes dead hair and tangles.

Always check the dogs skin, using a brush with metal teeth on one area can easily scratch and make them sore. Lightly try on your own arm to practice the pressure and movements.

3. Comb

After using the slicker brush try the comb. If the fur catches through the narrow teeth of the comb, you will need to go back to the slicker and repeat until the comb no longer catches.

4. Check over

Once the coat looks fluffed and no tangles can be felt, do a final check especially the collar/harness area, tail, inside of the legs, armpits and feet.

Note: If you can't comfortably remove a knot using a slicker brush and feel there's no option but to remove it, then you may be able to cut it out with a pair of scissors. We don't encourage this and advise using scissors sparingly.

One way to remove a small knot is to put a comb in your dog's hair between the tangle and their skin, (do not pull or tug at the skin) then cut the knot out with a small pair of safety scissors. (There is a link under equipment to some safety scissors). As mentioned, regular brushing is the best way to care for your dog and to avoid accidents until you can get to the groomers. If your dog is seriously matted which is causing pain, there are groomers that work within a veterinary practise that are available for emergencies.

5. Brushing rather than clipping at home

Keeping your dog tangle free is priority. If you are concerned about hot weather, please be advised that clipping your dog short is not necessarily the answer, especially with double coated breeds. Dogs fur is like a thermal regulator (it insulates them in winter and slows down the process of heat absorption in summer.) Think of it like a parasol protecting you from the direct heat of the sun. The less sun and heat that reaches the skin the cooler the dog will be, and safer from getting sunburnt. If you shave the fur short you are taking away that protection. With regular brushing you open up the hair by separating the strands which then allows air flow through the coat. This will feel like taking off a fleece and putting on some light linen. Shade, plenty of drinking water and limiting exercise to early mornings or evenings, are ways to help your dog keep cool.

6. Brushing the head

The key to grooming the head is being gentle. The skin around a dog's face are particularly sensitive and you need to take care not to harm their eyes or ears.

If your dog has long facial hair — a fall over the eyes or a beard — put your fingers through the long hair and gently comb it out so that your dog's sensitive skin is protected from the sharp teeth of the comb or slicker. If your dog will allow it, to protect their eyes you can also cover them with your hand and brush their face at the same time. Make sure to lift long ears and brush under and behind them, this is an area prone to getting tangled.

7. How to brush a shedding - undercoat

For double coated dogs, especially if they are 'blowing' their coat, you will need to use a firm slicker brush, narrow tooth comb and a rake to work through their coat before the bath. (See equipment.)

Pay close attention to the shoulders, chest, back end and above the tail as these areas shed the most. If you don't remove as much dead hair as possible before the bath, you'll struggle to get the water through the impacted hair. You won't reach the skin to wash the dog properly, plus it will be virtually impossible to dry the dog after.

Once the pre-bath brush is complete, follow the bathing routine to remove more shedding hair. Using a comb or rake can help to push the shampoo through the coat. Ideally repeat this process with a conditioning treatment too.

8. How to brush a shedding - smooth coat

A great way to remove loose hair for a smooth coated dog is by using a rubber brush called a “Zoom Groom”. You can use this gentle and affective brush during their bath and after they have been dried. Pay attention to the shoulders, back end and above the tail as these areas shed the most. Work in circular motions following the direction of hair growth. Once the dog is dry you can rough the coat up with your hands to stimulate the follicles and release more hair.

Face Tidies

Ways to manage the fluff



Face Tidies

1. Eyes and visor tidies

The main issue owners will have, is the hair around their dogs eyes. Your decision with how to deal with this is individual to you. We are trained to scissor around dogs eyes and feel this is not something we want to encourage, not only can it be tricky, it can be dangerous.

If your dog is calm and sits exceptionally still, you may decide to remove some of the hair from in-front of their eyes using a pair of safety scissors with rounded tips. (Please see equipment)

2. Using scissors

First practice holding your dogs head still while using a scissoring action with your fingers. Only use scissors if you are confident your dog will cooperate. Pull the hair up in-front of the eyes ready to be trimmed. Support your dogs head and gently rest your fingers or scissors across their nose in-front of one eye and take a few small snips, then repeat on the other side.

3. Alternative options

An alternative is to let this hair in-front of their eyes grow and fall down naturally, this takes time but you can use your fingers to manipulate the hair downwards as it grows.

Otherwise, we would like to suggest that bands and bobbles be used. As the hair grows the visor hair above the dogs eyes can be tied back in two small bands, one above each brow - or for longer hair, pulled up into a single top knot. All you need to do is section the hair and secure with a small band. Adjust the top knot so that the skin is not pulled tight, as this will cause discomfort. This is a safe practical solution until you are able to return to the groomers.

Ear Cleaning

How to safely clean the ears



Ear Cleaning

Some dogs naturally have healthy clean ears and may never need them cleaned, while others require regular cleaning to prevent the build-up of dirt that can lead to an ear infection. If your dogs ears have a very bad odour, discharge or look inflamed please seek veterinary advise.

1. Clean dirt away

Apply a natural ear cleaning solution to a cotton pad, such as Leucillin.

2. Positioning

Stand or kneel to the side or slightly behind your dog with assistance if needed. Hold the ear back and with your finger or thumb at the centre of the cotton pad gently push and wipe inside the entrance of the ear.

3. Don't over clean

You may need to use 2 or 3 cotton pads, paying close attention to any small folds within the ear. Take care not to make the area sore.

4. Don't cross contaminate

Move to the other ear. Use new cotton pads for each ear to prevent the spread of bacteria and infection.

5. Hairy ears

If your dog suffers with hairy impacted ears, this would require the vet to pluck them. In the mean time check they are not getting matted inside with debris and wax. After you clean them, try to gently separate the hair with your fingers so it's not stuck inside the ear.

Pads & Nails

How to look after the feet



Paw pads

1. Check over the pads

Before trimming the pads first check for skin tags, moles, and debris such as grass seeds.

2. Positioning

Hold the foot firm and steady, but gently. You may also need to kneel with the dog or ask someone to hold them. Whatever you choose, make sure it's the position your dog feels comfortable in. If you need assistance, ask somebody to hold a treat to help distract them.

3. Using the clippers

Check the blade is set to a medium length as per clipper instructions. Hold your dog's paw firmly in one hand and use pet hair clippers (or safety scissors, if you insist) with the other hand. you'll need to gently spread the paw toes apart, and then clip the hair in between. Avoid digging the blade - use a scooping motion, the skin between the toes can be easily cut if you don't take care with the angle of the clipper. Continue clipping the paw hair until it is level with the dog's pads, or just slightly below and check between the toes. This will prevent any matting or build up that could occur. Do not remove all the hair though, because it serves as protection for the skin between the paw pads.

Please note: The clippers suggested for trimming paw pads are not suitable for clipping the actual dog. These are not the same as the professional clippers used in salons.

4. Remember

Please consider that the clipper blades get hot if you're taking a while to use them - so test by resting the blade on your own skin to check the temperature as you go.

Nail Maintenance

1. Don't panic

The idea of cutting your dog's nails may be a bit nerve-racking at first. If this is the case, you may want to consider purchasing a nail Dremel (nail grinder.)

2. How often

The frequency of nail trimming will ultimately depend on how active the dog is and how much their nails get naturally worn away. A helpful guide is every 4 to 6 weeks.

3. Why use a nail Dremel (nail grinder)

A nail grinder is a safer and slower tool than nail clippers. The major advantage to using one is that it avoids the possibility of accidentally cutting into the "quick" and is virtually pain free, although you will still need to be cautious.

The major disadvantage to using a nail grinder is that many dogs don't like the sound or sensation, so it's important to find a small quiet one. Note: Be careful not to hold the grinder on the nail for too long as this creates friction and the heat will cause discomfort.

4. Before you start

The first thing you want to do is make sure there is no hair in the way. If your dog has long hair, you need to hold it away so there's no chance it can get caught in the spinning mechanism. If your dog has long hair on their paws and between their toes, it's best to trim them first to lessen the risk of

catching it.

Determine how much of the nail needs to be removed. It's safest to work in several small increments to reduce the chance of getting too close to the quick.

You may want to sit on the floor with your dog, have them in your lap, or ask someone to hold them on a table. When lifting their legs make sure they are comfortable at all times and not over stretched or awkward.

5. How to use the nail Dremel

Remember to be calm and reward your dog afterwards. It may also be helpful for somebody to provide a treat that the dog can lick during the process as a distraction.

Working on one nail at a time, gently apply the grinder to the underneath of the nail tip, and slowly bring it up and over the top of the nail using a slight pressure. Then work back down to your starting point again. Keep moving and lift on and off if needed - don't hold the file in one position as the friction can create heat which will cause discomfort.

Repeat this process several times until you've removed the sharp tip, but not so much that you grind into the quick and make the nail bleed. Complete the entire process on each of your dog's nails.

6. Try a scratch board

You can keep your dogs nails in check by using a "scratch board," this does involve a small amount of training but is a great addition to nail maintenance.

Ways To Calm Your Dog

Exercise first

It's said a tired dog is a happy dog. If they can burn off some energy before their groom they are generally more accepting. It's a good idea to tire them out before and play with them after as praise.

Soothing atmosphere

Playing relaxing music can add another layer of calm.

(You may want to watch the video that goes with this music as it's quite lovely.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clJ6o62Phr0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDXCch-CVfE>

The scent of good ol' Lavender

Lavender really does help to sooth and calm dogs. Natural lavender from the garden is best, pure oil in a diffuser can also be a good way to fill the air with relaxing properties. (Please note we do not encourage using synthetic aromatherapy oils, and some oils are very toxic to dogs.)

Body Language

Please check this RSPCA link on dog body language. These signs are important when doing any grooming activity.

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/webContent/staticImages/UnderstandingDogBehaviour.jpg>

It might take a while for you and your dog to get comfortable with home grooming, and that's OK. Your dog will have their own perceptions and feelings about being groomed so it's important to build a relationship based on trust. Sometimes, your stress becomes their stress. Remember to breath and be positive, your dog will notice if you have a 'concerned frown'. Keep smiling because it reassures them everything is OK.

Don't give up at the first sign your dog isn't keen on something. As long as they are comfortable be patient with them, if you can't brush your dog all over in one session then work on a section a day. Little and often will help to desensitise your dog and make it part of their daily routine.

Don't rush and choose a suitable safe place and time to do your grooming. (no phone interruptions or time restraints.)

Final tips

With cheeky and playful dogs they need to know what is expected of them. When you want to do any grooming, position them using a table or on top of their crate, this will help them to understand it's not play time. Keep your tone calm and positive - but no baby talk until the end!

Sometimes it helps if one person does the grooming while another distracts the dog by talking calmly, stroking or gently tapping them.

Another tip is to let your dog see the brush, nail clippers or grooming equipment that you're using. By introducing it then leaving it out to be seen makes it a normal part of the environment. (maybe next to the treat tin!)

Finally whatever you are doing, stick to a routine. For dogs that don't like being brushed this will help them to understand the process, by using a routine they know how long they are expected to cooperate, and for those that love it, they'll know how much more there is to enjoy!

Bathing Equipment

Dog & Puppy Shampoo

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/puppy-shampoo>

Hypo Allergenic Shampoo

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/hypo-shampoo>

Mix bottle - this could be a recycled drinking bottle

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/mix-bottle>

Bathing Suction cup

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/bathing-suction-cup>

Bathing Collar

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/bathing-collar>

Absorbent towels

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/absorbent-towels>

Rake (FURminator rake) for long coated dogs

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/furminator-rake>

Comb - with wide and narrow teeth

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/comb>

Drying Equipment

Hair dryer

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/hair-dryer>

Absorbent towels

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/absorbent-towels>

De-tangling spray for dogs (not essential)

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/detangling-spray>

Brushing Equipment

Slicker Brush - Head and face

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/slicker-brush-head>

Slicker Brush

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/slicker-brush>

Comb - with wide and narrow teeth

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/comb>

Cotton pads

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/cotton-pads>

Leucillin cleaning solution

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/leucillin>

Deshedding Brush Equipment

SHEDDING UNDERCOAT

Rake (FURminator rake)

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/furminator-rake>

Comb (with wide and narrow teeth)

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/comb>

Slicker Brush

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/slicker-brush>

SHEDDING SMOOTH COAT

Large Zoom Groom

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/large-zoom-groom>

Small Zoom Groom

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/small-zoom-groom>

Face Tidy Equipment

Slicker Brush - Head and face

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/slicker-brush-head>

Safety scissor - set

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/safety-scissor-set>

Salson Safety scissor

<https://rcl.ink/Mem>

Top knot bands

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/top-knot-bands>

Ear Cleaning Equipment

Cotton pads

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/cotton-pads>

Leucillin or natural ear cleaning solution for dogs

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/leucillin>

Pad & Nail Equipment

PAD TRIM EQUIPMENT

Small pet clipper

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/small-pet-clipper>

NAIL FILE EQUIPMENT

Rechargeable nail Dremel/grinder

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/pet-nail-grinder>

Scratch pad

You could also consider making this from home

<https://share.upperhound.co.uk/scratch-pad>

Please also check out: Nail maintenance for dogs on Facebook