

# GROOMING YOUR DOG

## A GUIDE TO GROOMING

Although it's often overlooked, grooming is an important part of your dog's health program. Routine brushing and combing removes dead hair and dirt and prevents matting. Because it stimulates the blood supply to the skin, grooming also gives your pet a healthier and shinier coat.

### WHEN TO START

Start regular grooming when you first bring your dog home and make it a part of his routine. Purchase a good-quality brush and comb and get your dog used to being handled. Praise your dog when he holds still and soon he will come to enjoy the extra attention. Some breeds have special grooming needs, so ask your vet or a professional groomer for advice on particular equipment necessary for your pet.

### BRUSHING

Your dog's skin and hair coat reflect his overall health and nutritional status. Many dogs maintain a healthy skin and hair coat with minimal assistance; others – especially some long-haired or curly-haired breeds – require regular brushing. For most dogs, a good brushing once or twice a week will do the trick.

### BATHING

The need for bathing depends on the breed of dog, his skin type and hair coat, owner preference and just how dirty your pet gets. Bathing your dog every month or two isn't unreasonable, but some dogs will need more frequent cleanings. A good rule of thumb is to bathe your pet only when his coat gets dirty or begins to smell "doggy."

When bathing your dog, make sure to rinse all the soap out of his coat. If he has persistent problems with scratching or flaky skin, he may need a special medicated shampoo or have a skin problem that your veterinarian should examine.

### SKIN PROBLEMS

Skin problems – including fleas, ticks and mites or allergies and infections – are common among dogs. Most conditions are manageable with early detection and treatment. If you notice excessive scratching, hair loss or flaky skin, contact your veterinarian. If your pet is continuously exposed to fleas and ticks, speak to your veterinarian about products to minimize the impact of these parasites on the skin. Remember that a consistently poor hair coat with lots of skin flaking may indicate a deeper medical problem.

### EARS

Ears may also require cleaning, especially in dogs with oily skin or allergies. This is a delicate task and is probably best left to your vet. However, if your dog is easy to handle (and there is no chance that you will be bitten), you can learn to do this chore yourself. To remove excessive wax and debris from the ears, consider an ear cleaning every two to four weeks. Ask your veterinarian about products you can use at home, and be sure to ask for a demonstration of proper ear cleaning techniques.

### NAIL TRIMMING

While clipping nails is a painless and simple process, it takes practice and patience to master the skill. Ask your vet to show you the correct technique, then get started by getting your pet used to having his paws handled. Once you start using the clippers, go slowly: Try clipping just a few nails in one sitting. Maintain a regular schedule and be persistent. Your pet will eventually develop patience and learn to cooperate.