

The Importance of Grooming Your Pet

The Benefits of Grooming

Grooming does more than make your pet look good. Regular brushing, bathing, and—if necessary—trimming can help keep your pet's skin, haircoat, and/or feathers healthy. Regular grooming also helps you be aware of changes in your pet's body that may require veterinary attention, such as skin conditions. Time spent grooming can strengthen the relationship between you and your pet.



Brushing

Brushing helps to remove dirt and loose, dead hair and to prevent mats and tangles. How often you need to brush your pet depends on the species and the length and thickness of his or her hair.

If you find a mat in your pet's hair, do not pull on it. Pulling will be painful for your pet, and he or she will not want to be brushed again. Also, do not try to cut mats out—you may end up accidentally cutting yourself or your pet. Special brushes and combs are available to help split and remove mats; alternatively, consult your veterinarian or a reliable groomer. Sometimes mats must be professionally clipped to resolve the matted hair.

Bathing

Many pets benefit from an occasional bath to remove dirt and excess skin oils that can sometimes cause skin conditions and unpleasant odors. How often—or if—you should bathe your pet depends on the species and the type of hair he or she has. Some animals need regular bathing to keep their skin healthy. Others may be overly stressed by bathing. To avoid removing too much natural skin oil, which can cause dry, itchy skin, use a non-soap based shampoo.

Bath Time

- First, thoroughly wet your pet, making sure their haircoat is saturated down to the skin.
- Apply non-soap based shampoo avoiding pet's eyes and ears (non-soap shampoo will not lather like regular shampoo)
- Rinse with warm water, making sure all shampoo is gone.
- Towel dry

Clipping and Cleaning

Nail trimming is another important part of grooming your pet. Keeping your pet's nails appropriately trimmed can help avoid some painful conditions (e.g., torn or overgrown nails) as well as accidental injury or damage to you, your pet, and your possessions. Trimming the nails also gives you an opportunity to examine your pet's feet for problems like swelling, cracked pads, or mats of hair. Ask your veterinarian for tips on how to trim your pet's nails safely. Horses' hooves should be trimmed by

professional farriers; however, picking stones and any other objects out of your horse's feet is an essential part of daily care.

Some pets—usually dogs—may benefit from having their ears cleaned regularly. Talk to your veterinarian if you think your dog may need his or her ears cleaned.

Regular toothbrushing is recommended for dogs, cats, and some other pets to help reduce periodontal disease, which is being recognized as a widespread problem in pets. Bad breath is a common sign of dental problems. If possible, it is best to start brushing your pet's teeth when your pet is young to get him or her used to it. Ask your veterinarian about how to introduce your pet to toothbrushing. Small pets with continuously growing teeth (e.g., rabbits) may sometimes need their teeth trimmed by a veterinarian.

Certain breeds of dogs need their haircoat clipped regularly. You may want to seek out a good professional groomer for this part of taking care of your pet.

Get the Right Tools

Many kinds of brushes, combs, and clippers are available, and using the right ones will make grooming your pet easier for you and more enjoyable for him or her. Horse grooming requires some specialized tools, such as hoof picks. Talk to your veterinarian about what you need to groom your pet properly.

Brushes

Curry - used for short coated dogs, such as labs, pointers and chihuahuas. Brush against the coat grain to loosen dead hair and skin, then brush with the grain to remove the loose hair.

Universal - used for the long coated and double coated breeds, such as golden retrievers, samoyeds and collies. Brush against the coat grain, making sure to get down to the skin. This will help remove dead undercoat and prevent mats from forming. Brush with the grain to remove the loose hair.

Slicker - used for curly coated breeds such as poodles, lhasa apso and shih tzu dogs. Brush against the coat grain to loosen hair and dead skin, then brush with the grain to remove the loose hair.

Grooming Rake or Furminator® - used for all coats, come in different sizes and styles. Brush with the grain to remove dead undercoat hair or to carefully remove mats. You can then use one of the brushes above to collect and remove the loosened hair.

Grooming Basics

- Regularly grooming your pet helps you be aware of changes in your pet's body that may require veterinary attention.
- Brushing and bathing can help keep your pet's skin and haircoat or feathers healthy.
- Toothbrushing is recommended for dogs & cats to help reduce periodontal disease, which is being recognized as a widespread problem in pets.