



Routine Care—The Basics

Trimming the Nails

Your dog's feet need regular attention by keeping the nails short. When the nails are neglected, they keep growing and eventually cause the feet to spread, which puts stress on the dog's wrist joint and impedes fluid movement. If they are neglected long enough, the nails can even grow around and into the pads of the feet, causing the dog great pain. Long nails are also harmful to your furniture, rugs, hosiery, and clothing.

You can trim the nails yourself or have them done by a groomer or veterinarian. If you trim them at home, you'll need special nail clippers designed for dogs. Because these come in different types and sizes, ask your pet supplies dealer to help you select the right style for your breed and show you how to use them. At the same time, you should purchase a small container of styptic powder called Kwick stop.

Most dogs can be trained to stand for nail trims. Have one person hold your dog under his neck while a second person trims the nails. Set your dog on a sturdy surface. Before you trim the nails, try to locate the "quick," the pink area in the center of each nail. It contains the nerves and blood vessels, and if you cut into this area, the nail will bleed. The quick is easy to see if your dog's nails are transparent, but harder to see if they are black. To keep from cutting the nails back too far, trim each nail a little snip at a time, stopping just when the dark fleshy center of the quick is first visible in the nail. If you do cut a nail too short and it bleeds, don't panic. Put a little styptic powder on a cotton ball or damp q-tip, and press it over the cut nail for a few seconds. If your dog has dewclaws, a toe on the inside of each leg, be sure to trim them like the others. Because dewclaws do not touch the ground, they do not wear down and can grow into the foot if neglected.

Care of the Ears

All breeds need their ears cleaned occasionally. Breeds with thick, hanging ears, or very hairy ear canals will need frequent care and are more prone to ear infections than dogs with erect ears.

To clean the ears, we recommend using an ear cleaner like Oticalm or Epiotic. A dog's ear canal is L-shaped; it curves downward and then horizontally to the eardrum. You can squirt some of the ear cleaner into the ears or place a cotton ball soaked in ear cleaner into the ears and massage. Then let the dog shake his head. This helps to loosen debris in the ears. You can then use cotton balls or q-tips in the ear to remove the debris. Wipe up and out of the ear. Never dig deep into the ear. A light swabbing is sufficient if there are no other signs of trouble. If, however you notice an excessive accumulation of

debris, any inflammation, a foul odor, the dog violently shakes or scratches its head, or carries it at an angle, he will need to be seen by your veterinarian.

Some breeds, including Poodles, Bichons, Bedlington Terriers, and others, have hair that grows down into the ear canal. This hair should be plucked out every four to six weeks, depending on the dog, to promote air circulation and to reduce wax buildup or the chance of an ear infection. Your groomer or veterinarian can do this for you.

Care of the Teeth

Clean teeth and healthy gums are important to every pet's general health. Poor oral hygiene can cause life-threatening problems. Between veterinary checkups, you should inspect the teeth and clean them periodically to remove plaque, a sticky and invisible film that consists of food particles, saliva, and bacteria. If you don't clean the teeth, plaque collects between them and around the gum line and mineralizes into a hard, brown substance known as tartar. The gums, irritated by the tartar buildup, become swollen and inflamed, and the pet's breath smells. The teeth can even loosen in their sockets and eventually fall out.

To clean the teeth, use flavored toothpaste for dogs and cats (which contains abrasive agents and is totally digestible). We carry one made by C.E.T. Use a soft toothbrush, brushing the teeth as you do your own on the outside surfaces. Use gentle circular scrubbing strokes as your dog chews on the tooth brush. Don't worry about the inside surfaces of the teeth. Most dogs will not tolerate the inner surfaces being brushed. If your dog objects to the brush, there are finger brushes available made for dogs and cats.

If there is a heavy buildup of tartar, your veterinarian may have to anesthetize the dog and remove the accumulation with an ultrasonic scaler. You should then begin a program of regular home care. With a regular regime of tooth and mouth care you will add years to your dog's life and save money in the process!

Bathing

How often should you bathe your dog? It depends on several variables: breed, type of hair and skin, how often the dog gets dirty, and the climate in your area. For the average dog, though, a bath every 3-4 weeks or so keeps it looking good and smelling clean. The exceptions to this rule are harsh double-coated breeds. When their coats are brushed thoroughly and regularly, they need only a couple of baths a year.

No matter what kind of hair your dog has—short or long—the hair should be thoroughly brushed before bathing. On short-coated breeds, brushing helps loosen and remove the dead hair. On long hair, brushing helps to remove tangles or mats.

You can use your own bathtub or, if your dog is small, a sink or laundry tub. Put down a non-skid mat for surer footing. Since most dogs will not stand still in the tub dripping wet, try to assemble the necessary supplies in advance. You'll need a hand held spray attachment or small bucket for wetting and rinsing, a sponge or washcloth, a few clean towels, shampoo and conditioner.

Use a mild shampoo designed specifically for dogs. Stand your dog in the tub and wet him thoroughly with warm water. Pour a little shampoo on the hair and work up a lather, starting at the tail and back legs, and working forward to wash the neck and head last. Wash the face with the washcloth.

A thorough final rinse is important. Begin at the head; spray down the neck and back to the tail, over the sides of the body and down the legs. Rinse all the suds out of the hair, otherwise the coat will feel gritty, look dull, and the skin can get excessively itchy and dry. Some longhaired breeds need a conditioner after a shampoo to eliminate static electricity and make the coat more manageable.

After rinsing, squeeze as much water as you can out of the long hair, then let the dog shake. Wrap the dog in a bath towel and pat until dry. If you want to speed up the drying process and make the coat look 'plush,' use a hair dryer set on warm. As the air blows on the wet hair, brush it from the skin outward. Keep your dog in a warm, draft-free area until completely dry.