

GROOMING FOR YOUR DOG AND CAT

Written by Shaid
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It is as important to keep your pets groomed as it is to feed them a healthy diet and keep up with their medicals. Consider grooming needs BEFORE choosing a pet. A Labradoodle pup may look fluffy and cute, but has a high maintenance coat and you need to prepare to invest in the time and tools or pay a groomer regularly. Dogs in the wild were rife with parasites and often had skin conditions which resulted in shorter life spans than our pets do.

Brushing removes dead skin cells, dirt and debris and prevents matting. Mats are uncomfortable and can restrict range of motion. They provide a breeding ground for parasites and bacteria. Certified groomer and owner of the *Dog Gone Beautiful Dog Spaw* in Lunenburg, Aidan Brame, has had the horrible experience of grooming a dog that was so matted, maggots were living on him.

A professional groomer's training and experience indicate that if a pet is severely matted, it is possible to dematt, but that shaving is the most humane option as dematting can take hours and is painful.

Regular grooming sessions also provide a great opportunity to bond with your pet since most enjoy the attention.

Different types of coats need varying amounts of attention and many require clipping or shaving. Short-haired dogs and cats may never need to be groomed whereas a spaniel may be a lot easier to look after and more playful when his coat is short. Long-haired pets can also be prone to feces getting stuck in the fur. If you do bathe your pets, choose a high quality PET shampoo – never use human shampoo or dish or laundry soaps. These can irritate the skin. Bathing is an opportunity to inspect your dog for parasites, growths, “hot spots” or other irritations and any changes in their skin coloration which may need to be checked by your vet.

Also vital is keeping the nails trimmed. This has to be done regularly since nails can curl into and become embedded in the pads of the feet which is uncomfortable and can easily become infected. Long nails can also cause an unnatural gait which may result in damage to joints.

It is important to research groomers before choosing one. Ask friends or family (and your vet) for a referral and then go speak to the groomer before making an actual appointment. You should feel comfortable asking him/her questions and they should be open and informative with you. You want your pet to have a positive experience and to not hate going to the groomer and you certainly want to make sure the groomer is a fully trained professional who cares about your pet's wellbeing. There was a recent item in the UK news where Trudie, a cocker spaniel, died after a groomer confined her with a heater.

Some things you may want to ask before making a grooming appointment: Is he certified by a grooming school (vs an online course) and is he a member of any of the Professional Grooming Associations? What kinds of products are used (quality hypo-allergenic ones)? How often is equipment sterilized? Does the shop look clean and organized and smell fresh? How will your dog or cat be restrained? Can you stay and watch? Is there a safe spot for a break or pottying?

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How many animals are being groomed at once – is it a production line or does a certified groomer take the time to be thorough and gentle? Many pro groomers use a hydro-surge which surges soap, water and air to stimulate the skin and lift the coat resulting in a very thorough bath. It massages the skin and is soothing as well as highly beneficial for dogs that have dermatological issues. Will the groomer show you how to maintain the coat, nails and ears between full grooming sessions? Does he take time to greet your pet and adjust tone of voice as needed to keep your pet calm? Your pet needs to sit as still as possible to avoid being injured. Even the best groomers will occasionally nick an animal. Will the groomer stop if your pet shows signs of stress and/or is too upset to be groomed safely?

Aidan says it is very important for her to take the time to build relationships with her furry clients. She gets to know how to handle each animal resulting in sessions that are more enjoyable for them both.

The grooming process is invasive and it can be stressful. A good groomer becomes familiar with returning pets and will notice changes in their body and skin. Aidan recently found a cyst on a dog which turned out to be a cancer requiring surgery. They often find fleas, lice, ticks, ringworm and dermatological skin issues that the owner was unaware of.

Your pet's teeth also need attention. There is no chew toy or treat that is as good as using an appropriate pet toothbrush and pet paste. If you are consistent and patient, they do like the taste and will become accustomed to the process. Brushing not only prevents periodontal disease and bad breath, you may never have to pay for dental surgery or de-scaling.

Cleaning your pet's ears may be needed, however, it is best to get direction from your vet. Over-cleaning or using too much force can result in more infections, not less.

A well-groomed pet is happier and healthier AND he smells better around the house!