

Our pets are important members of our family and they need grooming too. When approached with the right attitude and the time, grooming your pet is a labor of love. There are just a few tasks you need to master at home and performing them will give you the opportunity to spend some quality time with your pet.

If you own a pet that is easy to groom you may be able to do much of its grooming at home. In addition to simply brushing your pet, you will also want to be able to trim nails, clean ears, and bathe your pet. These techniques are not difficult to master and they are essential to the health and well-being of your animal.

Many breeds, however, need routine trimming every month or so which requires intricate techniques such as clipping, scissoring or thinning. That kind of grooming is not only time consuming, but it also requires an expert and the use of professional tools. If that is the case, consult your PETSMART groomer. Even then, there will be times when you need to bathe your pet immediately, or clean his ears. And, you do need to brush your pet often for good health.

Getting Ready

The most important tool you need for grooming is love. Pick a time when you don't have to hurry. Be confident

Looking Good!

Between visits to a professional groomer, keep your dog dandy and your feline fancy with a few simple tools and tips.

by Barbara Denzer

and calm. Your pet will pick up immediately on your emotions and react accordingly. Avoid loud music, distracting activities going on with other family members, and bothersome noise like vacuum-cleaning. Be ready to focus totally on your pet. Animals love it when you talk to them, so this is the time for a good chat. Be reassuring and loving: Tell them what you are doing. It's very helpful to have another member of the household provide an extra pair of hands to assist you. Find a table or counter in a warm, draft-free area that is a convenient height for you, and cover it with a soft, absorbent towel. For bathing, you will want a bathroom or laundry area with a counter top and sink. Assemble all your equipment ahead of time so you can give all your attention to your pet (see Products and Tools List).



Nail Clipping

Let's start with nail clipping. Again, it may be very helpful to have a partner or helper to assist you in holding your pet. Have the assistant hold the leg steady while you clip. There are several types of nail trimmers; ask your PETSMART associate to recommend the best type for your animal.

Lift the paw, and softly squeeze the pad of the foot to expose the claw. Take a close look; you are going to clip only the clear portion of the claw. Beyond that is the "quick," which will bleed profusely if you cut it. Using special nail cutters made for animals, clip the point of the nail. If you nick the quick (which hurts the animal — be careful) and cause bleeding, take a cotton swab dipped in Kwik' Stop septic powder and apply it to the end of the nail. When kept short, the nail can be properly maintained without bleeding or discomfort to the pet. If you are hesitant about trimming nails, ask your groomer to trim the nails while you watch.

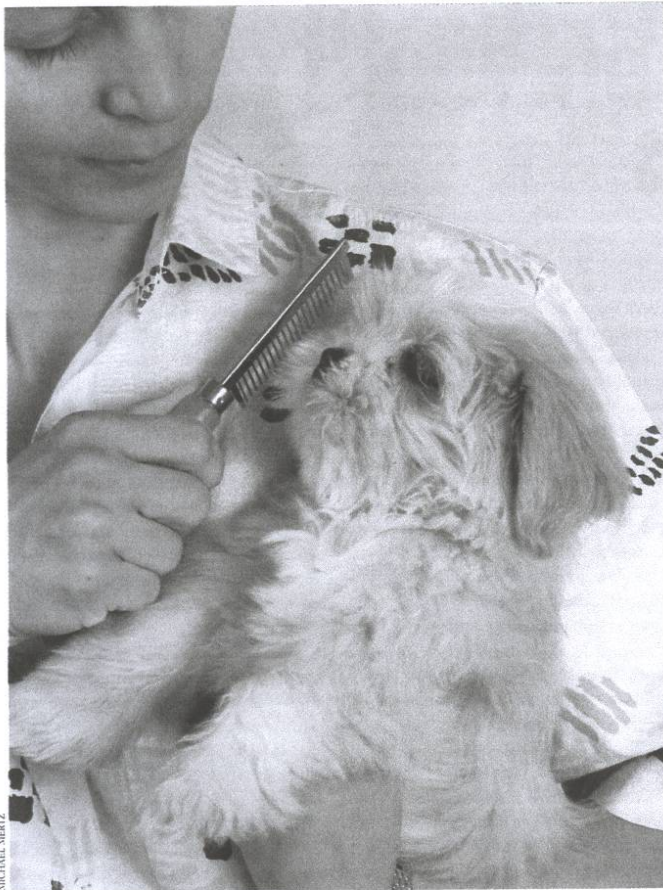
Cleaning The Ears

Ears can become infected by dirt and debris or infested by ear mites, so it's important to routinely clean them. Using a medicated ear cleaner (which will control ear mites and ticks, and relieve itching), put a few drops on your fingers and massage gently into

Products and Tools List

Professional groomers may have equipment that you don't have, but the tools you will need are readily available at PETSMART. You may even have some of them around the house already. It is helpful to have the following equipment on hand:

- Nail Clippers (have a PETSMART associate help you choose the right ones for your particular pet)
- Kwik' Stop septic powder to stop the bleeding should you cut the nail too close
- Medicated Ear Cleaner
- Shampoo selected for the skin type of your animal
- Coat Conditioner for long-haired pets
- Flea & Tick Shampoo (if fleas or ticks are a problem)
- Comb
- Absorbent Terry Towels
- Washcloth
- Cotton Swabs or Cotton Balls for cleaning ears
- Brush
- Wire Slicker Brush to remove the undercoat
- Camera (optional) — for great photo opportunities when you are finished



MICHAEL MERTZ

the inside of the ear. Do not go too deeply into the ear canal. Wipe the ears clean with your soft washcloth or cotton balls. If flea or tick infestations have caused your pet to scratch its ears repeatedly or you see excessive hair or any dark, crusty substance in the ear, it's time to see the vet.

Brushing & Grooming

Most pets love the time you spend brushing them, as you know from your purring cat or your dog that brings you his brush. Not only is this a pleasant time with your pet, it also stimulates the circulation, improves the appearance, and serves a valuable purpose, stimulating the oils in the coat, which, in turn, reduces shedding and dry skin.

For long-haired animals the first rule

of home grooming is brush, brush, brush! Mats that form in long hair are unsightly, and if your pet tries to lick through them and pulls the skin, they can be painful. Before you brush, get a steel comb with wide teeth and gently comb out mats. For really tough mats, there are special grooming sprays with silicones which can be used to help break through the mats. Baby powder may also help. Once the mats and tangles are removed, use the brush. Although different methods of brushing may be necessary for different breeds, the basic premise is to brush from the skin out. But be careful not to scrape the skin excessively with the brush or you risk giving the pet "brush burn."

If you brush only the top coat you'll miss the dead hair, dirt and tangles

underneath. A "slicker" brush, a flat, metal brush with very-fine metal bristles, removes the undercoat. In cases of extreme static, you can use a coat conditioner spray with antistatic properties to help control the electricity. After you brush, comb through again.

Bath Time

Although you may wish to take your pet to the professional groomer for bathing and clipping, there will always be times when he gets into something and needs a bath at home.

Before bathing, prepare your shampoo area and get your shampoo. Many different quality shampoos are available at PETSMART. If you are bathing a cat, make sure you are using a product made specifically for a cat. Many dog products, particularly the insecticide products, contain ingredients at levels which are too strong for a cat.

If your animal has flea bites, dermatitis, eczema, oily skin, flaky skin or dry skin, you will need to select a shampoo specifically formulated for that problem. If you need a flea shampoo, you can choose between chemical solutions and botanicals, natural alternatives to chemicals. If your pet's coat is dull and dry, you need a high-protein shampoo to restore moisture and make the coat shine. In any case, read the labels carefully and follow the directions on the bottle.

It's important to keep your pet warm, comfortable and out of drafts. Animal systems do not like extreme temperature changes. Use lukewarm water. Shield the pet's eyes with your hand to keep lather out of the eyes. Use a tearless shampoo on the face just in case a splash gets out of control.

To avoid getting water down into the ear canal, place a couple of cotton balls in the ear, being careful not to push them too deeply into the ear canal.

Fill the sink or container with enough water to almost touch the pet's stomach when he is standing in the water. Putting a towel or some kind of mat in the bottom of the sink gives the animal firm footing and something to hang on to. For uncooperative cats or small dogs, a neat trick is to wrap their body tightly in a towel, leaving their head exposed. Then

stand them in the water — towel and all. If necessary, you can actually lather the towel and rub the lather into the pet. Usually, the animal relaxes, allowing you to remove the towel and rub the lather directly into the fur. Begin lathering the tail and work toward the head, making sure to get the soap down to the skin. Pay special attention to areas such as the feet and pads, the armpits, under the stomach, tail and neck, and around the sanitary area. Clean the face last. Rinsing is very important. Soap residue can cause itching and dull coat. Use lots of water to rinse thoroughly. Squeeze excess water out of the coat and dry your pet immediately with a soft, absorbent towel. During the winter, keep your pet inside for 24 hours after a bath.

You're a Home Groomer Now!

With the time, proper preparation, the correct tools, and a positive attitude, most people can give their pets basic grooming at home, and go to the professionals on an occasional basis. Practice these simple skills on a regular basis as part of your pet's general health care routine.

And don't forget to take that picture!

Barbara Denzer is a free-lance writer and director of marketing for Cardinal Laboratories, Inc., manufacturer of pet care products and presenter of the Cardinal Crystal Grooming Achievement Awards, a program that honors professional groomers.

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