

GROOMING YOUR DOG OR CAT FACT SHEET

Grooming is an extremely important, and often misunderstood, art/science. Your professional groomer would like you to understand more about this service which can improve your dog's health, appearance, and social acceptability. The following questions are the most frequently asked, and the answers should help clarify some of the more common misconceptions about grooming.



Why should I have my dog groomed?

Most pet owners confuse “grooming” with “clipping”. Clipping (which is commonly done to poodles, spaniels, terriers, as well as to mixed breed dogs), is only one procedure in the grooming process. Grooming also includes combing and brushing, clipping nails, plucking hair from ears and parasite control (many groomers feel that teeth cleaning is best left to veterinarians). Although the most obvious result of these procedures is an improved appearance, the major benefits to your pet are increased comfort and social acceptability, and perhaps even improved health.

Should my cat be groomed?

Longhaired cats need combing occasionally to prevent matted fur. Some cats also need bathing at times, if they are not capable of achieving the neatness that is usually attributed to cats; this is most common in older cats. Check to see if your groomer provides this service for cats.

Do all dogs need grooming?

All dogs need an occasional bath, but it is more important to keep your dog combed and brushed, especially if they have long hair. Matted hair can

**DID YOU
KNOW?**

Did you know cats need grooming too, even short-haired ones? Cats shed constantly and can swallow large amounts of fur, which contributes to hairballs.

easily cause skin problems and unnecessary discomfort for your pet. If neglected for too long, it might eventually necessitate a lengthy grooming session, which could be uncomfortable for your pet, and expensive for you. Regular brushing, on the other hand, improves skin tone and circulation, and makes his coat healthier and more attractive. Longhaired dogs should be brushed out properly at least once a week. It is best to start regularly brushing your dog as a puppy, this with acclimatising your dog to the process, and make it a pleasant experience for you and your dog.



Which kind of brush should I use?

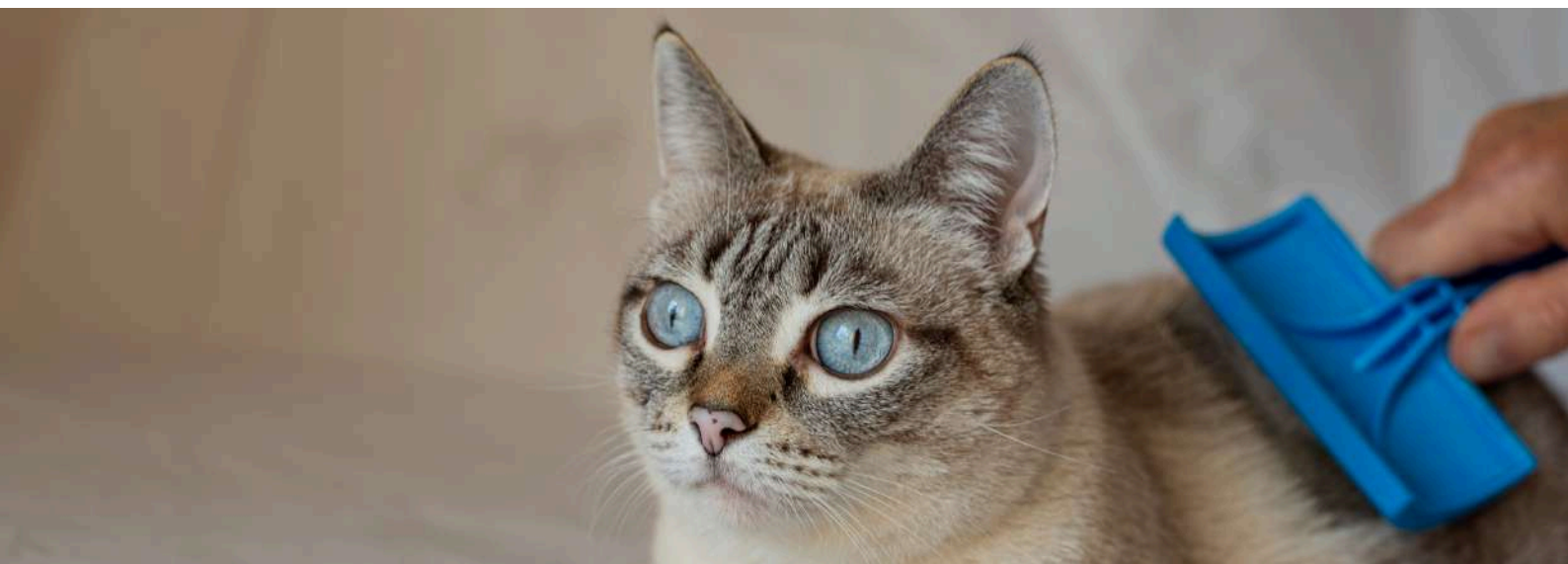
That depends on the type of coat. Ask your groomer about which equipment is correct for your pet.

My dog has a very strong odour. Bathing doesn't seem to help. Why?

It is possible that your dog's teeth, ears, skin health, or anal sacs/glands are responsible for the problem. Your groomer can help you to determine the nature of the problem and refer you to your vet if necessary.

My dog scratches all the time, but I can't find any fleas on him. What's the problem?

Scratching is often caused by dry skin rather than fleas. This could be the result of excessive bathing, dry climate, nutritional deficiency, or the wrong type of shampoo. Discuss this problem with your groomer. One of the most common causes of scratching in pets is allergies/atopy. Pets, just like people, have various allergies that can cause them to itch and scratch. Unfortunately, this is just a common thing we see in domestic pets and there is nothing you have done to cause it. When people get allergies, they typically get inhaled allergens which result in runny eye, nose and sneezing. Dogs and cats get contact allergies which results in itching, scratching and redness of skin. These issues are best discussed with your veterinarian as there are multiple treatment options available to control and relieve allergens in you dogs and cats.





Why do my dog's nails get so long?

Often, this is because your dog is not walking on hard surfaces often enough to keep them worn down. You should have them checked at least once a month. Walking on concrete will help wear them down naturally, but if you find that they are too long, get your groomer to trim them regularly for you.

I worry that my dog will not allow the groomer to brush or clip them, as they hate it when we try. What should we do?

Most dogs tend to be on their best behaviour with groomers, especially when they sense the firm yet gentle touch which marks the experienced professional. It is rare for a groomer to encounter a dog with a drastic temperament problem.

In these infrequent cases, the groomer may ask the owner to have his or her veterinarian administer a mild tranquiliser prior to grooming. This protects the pet from injuring himself and enables the groomer to complete the grooming quickly. Often, a dog who reacts badly to grooming at first will learn to accept and appreciate the process as he becomes more at ease with the groomer, and as he realises how much better he feels after grooming. Younger animals (puppies) learn to accept grooming faster, and enjoy it more, as opposed to a pet that is not groomed until of adult age or that is groomed infrequently.

I have my dog clipped every six months, but he doesn't look as good as my neighbour's dog. Is that my groomer's fault?

Your neighbour probably has a regular six to eight week appointment with the groomer, and keeps her dog well brushed between appointments. This kind of regular attention enables the groomer to devote more time and effort to beautifying the dog, rather than de-matting and trying to salvage a neglected coat.



Should I bath my dog before taking him to the groomer?

One of the worst problems that confronts professional groomers is that of working on a dog that has been bathed without being brushed out completely. The result of such a practice is a coat which is so firmly matted that clipping is sometimes the only solution. Ask your groomer if bathing at home prior to grooming is recommended, and always brush your dog properly before bathing.



How old should a dog be before he has his first grooming appointment?

Even though a three-month-old puppy is not usually in need of grooming, he should be taken to your groomer to get him used to full grooming gradually. In this way, he will learn to accept grooming as a happy experience that he will enjoy.

Summary of Points:

- Your professional groomer is best qualified to advise you about the type of grooming (and any equipment) that is best recommended for your individual pet.
- The earlier in life you start regular grooming routines for your pet, the better as it will help them adjust and enjoy the process.
- Regular grooming will ensure that you (or your groomer) are able to detect any potential health problems going on with your dog as early as possible and seek veterinary treatment.
- Good health and good looks go hand in hand with good grooming!

For more information, contact the Pet Industry Association Australia by emailing us at info@piaa.org.au

