

GUIDE TO HOME PET GROOMING



Chris C. Pinney, D.V.M.

How to keep **dogs** and **cats** looking and feeling their best

How to bathe, brush, comb, and clip a pet's coat
—with special tips for different breeds

How to treat **canine** and **feline** hair and skin problems

Proper nutrition and its effects on your pet's appearance

More than 100 helpful full-color illustrations

BARRON'S



Chris C. Pinney, DVM

Guide to
Home Pet Grooming

**Everything about your Pet's Skin and Coat, Including
Nutrition, Basic and Advanced Grooming, and the
Latest Information on Parasites, Allergies, and Other
Common Skin and Hair Coat Disorders**

Photographs by Dennis Dunleavy, Jill Mathis and others
Illustrations by Sandra G. Pinson



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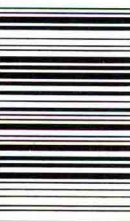
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Foreword

Congratulations! You've just taken the first step toward a healthier pet. Using the *Guide to Home Pet Grooming*, you'll learn the easy and correct way to care for your dog or cat's skin and hair coat. You'll also learn about common skin diseases and disorders, and how to recognize and manage them before they get out of control.

As applied to dogs and cats, *grooming* is a much misunderstood term. Grooming involves more than the weekly trip Bo Bo makes to the local doggie beauty salon, or the decision about which color nail polish Fifi should wear with her red satin sweater. Grooming is not only a way to cosmetically "beautify" dogs and cats and maintain breed standards, but also a significant part of your pet's preventive health care. Did you know that, by far, the majority of pet health problems seen by veterinarians involve in one way or another the skin or hair coat? Many of these problems could have been avoided if the owners had recognized the need for routine grooming—not at the local grooming shop, but in the pet's home environment. Pet owners can use grooming techniques to help maintain and improve their pets' overall health. It is no accident that beautiful coats and supple skin seem to come naturally to healthy animals!

The *Guide to Home Pet Grooming* concentrates on those grooming fundamentals that pet owners can apply in their own homes, including brushing; bathing; ancillary care of the eyes, ears, nails, and teeth; nutrition; and external parasite control. A section is included that covers dermatopathies, or disorders of the skin and hair, complete with photos and the latest scientific information. Also included are sections on professional grooming techniques for dogs and cats (for those wishing to learn how to keep their pet's coat looking good between trips to the grooming salon) and on first aid for grooming injuries.





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Chapter 1

A Question of Grooming

Many misconceptions exist regarding home pet grooming. Let's dispel a few here and now by answering the three most common questions asked by pet owners regarding this subject.

Question 1: Animals in the wild never get groomed by people. Why do I need to groom my pet?

The key word here is "wild." Mother Nature takes care of her own very well in the wild. For example, shedding cycles, which are based on the natural change of seasons, occur in a timely manner in the wild. Natural terrains not only help wear down the nails, but also remove and comb out dead hair from the coat as animals move through thick underbrush and trees. Unlimited exercise and a diet as nature intended certainly contribute to healthy skin and hair coat. And, very importantly, the anatomic features of wild animals, such as hair coat length, tend to be naturally adapted to geographic location and climate.

If you apply the above examples to the average house pet, the reasons

for routine grooming should become crystal clear. The artificial lighting found in the home and elsewhere often disrupts or changes the natural shedding cycle of a pet. In comparison with natural terrains, carpets and grass are hardly as effective at wearing down toenails or removing dead hair. When it comes to a pet's diet and exercise, table scraps and poorly formulated pet foods often take the place of a well-balanced diet, and the daily exercise program may be a mere ten-minute walk around the block. And finally, dogs and cats are often poorly adapted to the climate and environ-



Grooming allows you and your pet to spend that all-important time together.

ment they're kept in. This can lead to increased stress, skin allergies, and other related health problems.

It is not my intent to imply that every wild animal is the picture of perfect health and immaculate grooming, while our poor pets suffer from neglect and hair mats. But I think you get the point. Pet dogs and cats cannot and should not be compared to their wilder counterparts. They must be treated and cared for differently.

Aside from the fact that pets whose skin and coats are kept in top-notch condition by routine grooming look good and feel good, there are two other reasons to groom. First, though you may not realize it, your pet savors every second spent with you. That affection may not be as obvious as you would like it to be, but it exists nonetheless. By grooming on a regular basis, you will help fulfill this basic need of your special friend. Second, while working on your pet you can be on the lookout for any abnormalities that may signify an underlying disease process. Many diseases of pets, such as infections, parasites, diabetes, and cancer, can manifest themselves outwardly as skin and hair coat disorders. Therefore, by routinely inspecting your pet you are more likely to discover these problems early, which could, in itself, be lifesaving.

Question 2: How often should I groom my pet?

Dogs and cats should be brushed daily to help remove dirt and dead

hair. This daily brushing will stimulate the production of natural skin oils and help spread them throughout the hair coat, thereby keeping it shiny and lustrous. Try to devote five to ten minutes daily to this task.

As far as bathing is concerned, pets with normal, healthy skin and coats need only be bathed "as needed." Use your judgment on this. When your indoor pet begins to smell like an outdoor pet or starts to accumulate dirt or dandruff, it is probably bath time! Beware though: Bathing a healthy dog or cat too frequently, especially with the wrong type of shampoo, could remove natural oils and predispose your pet to dry skin and related skin problems. For animals with normal skin that require more frequent bathing (that is, more than twice per month), you should use only hypoallergenic or soap-free products when shampooing.

If your dog or cat suffers from skin parasites, such as fleas and ticks, or from such skin ailments as allergies or seborrhea, the bathing frequency will probably need to be increased. During flea season it may be necessary to bathe a pet weekly, using a safe flea and tick shampoo. If your pet is suffering from a skin infection, your veterinarian may prescribe daily baths with a medicated shampoo. Now you may ask, "But didn't you say that bathing my pet so often will dry out his skin?" I did indeed, but I was referring to those healthy pets not affected with skin problems. For dogs and cats with skin disease, the benefits of properly treat-

ing such a condition far outweigh the risks associated with dry skin. Furthermore, properly formulated medicated shampoos prescribed by your veterinarian should moisturize, not dry out, the skin, even with daily bathing.

In addition to brushing and bathing, your pet's ears, eyes, teeth, and nails will also require periodic attention. By giving your dog or cat a mini-physical examination weekly, you will be able to assess your pet's health and grooming status (see page 35). Be sure to use the examination checklist provided for this purpose and, if indicated, perform any specific grooming task at that time.

Question 3: I've heard that cats don't need as much grooming as dogs. Is that true?

While it is true that most cats are more efficient at grooming themselves than are dogs, this does not exclude them from grooming. There are some differences between the two species that bear noting.

Because they do quite well at keeping themselves groomed, cats almost never need routine cleansing baths. Thank goodness, since as a general rule, most cats do not care to be bathed! Since healthy cats have these meticulous grooming habits, an unkempt, greasy hair coat should alert you that your cat may be ill and needs to be examined by a veterinarian.

Feline skin is thinner and, in many cases, much more sensitive than canine skin. As a result, greater gen-

teness and care must be taken when brushing, combing, or removing mats to prevent injury or irritation to the skin surface. Because cats are so efficient at grooming themselves, you might think that cats hardly ever need brushing. This isn't true. One excellent reason for brushing your cat regularly is to reduce the incidence of gastrointestinal upset due to hairballs. It does not matter whether a cat has short or long hair, hairballs can still develop. Furthermore, if fleas, which are known carriers of tapeworms, happen to be ingested along with the strands of hair during self-grooming, your cat could develop a tapeworm infestation. As you can see, brushing your cat on a regular basis is important not only for aesthetic reasons, but for medical reasons as well.

