

## GROOMING YOUR POODLE

There are many different ways to groom your poodle. There is the show trims and the pet trims. Only three trims are allowed in the conformation show ring but you can have them trimmed almost anyway for obedience, (the exceptions being some specialty obedience shows). Although as a breeder I have a great appreciation for the show trim it looks rather unusual to most people. The show trim does have a history in the breed. Standard Poodle were originally bred as water retrievers. The long "lion mane" was designed to keep the dogs vital organs warm when they swam in cold water. The puffs on the feet were to keep the joints warm, the puff on the tail so you could see the dog while it was swimming in the water. The rest was shaved to keep him from getting water logged and to prevent sticks from catching in the hair.

**SHOW CLIPS:** There are only three clips that are acceptable for the show ring (in Canada and the USA).



### Puppy Clip

The first of these is the Puppy Clip. A Poodle under a year of age may be shown in the Puppy Clip with the coat long except for the face, feet and base of tail, which are shaved. Scissoring is allowed to even up the hair and remove any straggly hairs. Dogs one year old or older must be shown in either the English Saddle Clip or

Continental Clip. The Continental is the most popular show trim for Standards as it is designed to show off their good hindquarters.



### Continental Clip

In the Continental Clip the hindquarters are shaved with pompons on hips, these are optional but it is unusual to see the trim without them. The face, feet, legs and tail are shaved leaving bracelets on the hindlegs, puffs on the forelegs

and a pompon at the end of the tail. The rest of the body must be left in full coat.



### English Saddle Clip

In the English Saddle Clip the hindquarters are covered with a short blanket of hair except for a curved area on the flank and two shaved bands on each hind leg. The face, forelegs and tail are shaved, leaving puffs on the forelegs and a pompon at the

end of the tail. The rest of the body must be left in full coat.

## PET CLIPS



### Kennel or Sporting clip

One of the most popular of the trims not allowed in the show ring is the Kennel or Sporting clip. This clip is similar to the Puppy Clip but the coat is clipped closer to the neck and body and the legs are left less full.

The shorter coat requires less brushing, and looks great on all Poodles. I have always wished that we could show them in this trim as many great dogs are never shown because there is so much care required to keep the hair in show condition. It is also almost impossible for the average person to maintain and trim a dog for show.



### Dutch Clip

Another trim for pets is the Dutch Clip. The head is clipped, sometimes leaving a mustache on the end of the nose, and the ears are clipped, leaving only a fringe at the bottom. The topknot is rounded off. The chest, stomach and back of

the dog are clipped, leaving the long hair on all four legs either squared off above the shoulders or coming to a point higher up. Feet and tail are clipped.

## CLIPPING YOUR OWN DOG

General hints regarding clipping are these: make sure you have good quality clippers and scissors. Never force the clippers or use dull blades, because you can scrape the skin and cause clipper burn. Poodles with whites, grays and browns, have more sensitive skins than do the blacks, and that a dog that is regularly clipped does not scrape as easily as one left unclipped for a long while. Sores made by scraping can get infected very easily and at times need to be treated with an antibiotic or fungicide.

I recommend the No. 10 or a No. 15 Oster Clipper blade for puppies or dogs that are not trimmed regularly or the have sensitive skin. A No. 30 or higher is normally only used in show trims and should not be used by inexperienced groomer as they can burn the skin.

## EQUIPMENT

Most grooming equipment can be picked up at a good pet store or at a dog show. Some groomers will order professional type of equipment for you. Ask for there help if you are not sure what to get. (I do not buy anything from stores that sell puppies or kittens, but this is a personal chose).

**Clipper and Blades:** Good clippers are costly and should be cared for, they will last longer and the blades will stay sharper. A good set of Oster clippers cost about \$175 and blades anywhere from \$25 to \$40. Never use clippers on a very dirty dog or you will have to sharpen the blades. Clippers must be oiled and greased inside regularly. They will break if you drop them and it always seems that they get kicked off the table by a dog so never leave them on the table. It is convenient to have a number of blades for your clippers. They can be changed in the midst of clipping if they get too hot, and whatever size blade you choose to use is always ready. The blades should be changed rather often, since a dull blade pulls the hair and tends to leave the coat ragged. The small carbon brushes and springs wear out quickly in an old clipper, making the machine rattle when it is run; as they are easily replaced by unscrewing the small knobs on the side of the machine, these extra parts should be always on hand.

**Scissors:** A good pair of scissors cost \$50 to \$75 and should be chosen carefully. I prefer "double ducks" with a 7 inch blade. There are many on the market so test them out and see how they fit your hand, all scissors have a difference feel.

**Brushes and Combs:** I use different brushes and combs depending on whether the dog is in a show clip or a pet trim. For a show clip I only use a wooden handled bush with long flexible steel pins (some call these wig brushes). I use an English comb called a "greyhound" this is a steel comb with long fine teeth. Everyone has a preference and it depends on what you are used to. For my pets I normally use a "cocker" slicker brush. They are silver with a red handle. I find they don't scratch the skin like some slicker brushes do. I never use a slicker brush on a show coat; it tends to split the ends of the hair. Any good steel comb will work on pet trims.

It is important to brush out all the mats and tangles before you bath the dog, as they will only get worse once they are wet. Bathing tends to tighten up the knots.

**Nail Clipper:** I use the guillotine type of nail clipper but they all seem to work well. The most important thing when trimming nails is to not get them to short. Take off a little once a week. If you do plan on grooming your own dog regularly have some "quick stop" on hand to use in case you nick the dogs quick (you can purchase this at most pet stores). The quick is a small blood vessel running through the nail. If you trim the nails often the quick will recede. Clipping the nail too short and hitting the quick is not life threatening to the dog but it will make it harder to do his nails the next time. It is painful for them if you cut into the quick and should be avoided.

**Bathing:** Bathing your dog can either be a nightmare or a pleasant experience for both of you depending on how you go about it. I have a raised bathtub (it's easier on the back) with a non-slip floor. It is necessary to have a long shower hose with good water pressure. The biggest mistake most home groomers make is not getting out all the shampoo. It really makes no difference what shampoo you use, but you have to make sure you rinse them really well. Leaving soap in the hair will dry out and irritate the skin; this is why a lot of them tend to scratch (assuming they don't have fleas).

Speaking of fleas, regular shampoo will not kill them or the eggs. You must use a shampoo specifically for ticks and fleas. Read the labels, some will kill only the fleas on the dog and some will kill the eggs and adult fleas as well as one that jump on later. I use a light cream rinse on the dog when I bath because it makes the coat easier to brush later. When you towel dry the dog don't rub the coat against the grain this will encourage knots. Just squeeze the coat with good absorbent towels. I bath my dogs every two to three

weeks, more often if they get dirty. I have my Standards in the house and like them to be clean.

**Drying:** I use a stand up commercial dryer for my dogs but they are very costly, (\$400 and up). For pets a good hand dryer will work just fine. If the weather is warm you can partly air dry them and just use the hand dryer to fluff them up at the end. If you do use a commercial cage dryer make sure that the animal does not get to hot especially if they are older, they can get heat prostration even from a dryer.

**Ear Cleaning:** Some poodles tend to have ear problems for a number of reasons. They have heavy leathers and not much air gets in, making it a perfect environment for breeding bacteria. It seems that once you have ear problems they are very hard to clear up, they seem to re-occur. Poodles also tend to grow hair in their ears again keeping them from "breathing". I will tell you what I do with my dogs but it may not work for all. I clean their ears every time I groom or once every two weeks. I remove "pluck" any hair I can reach in the ear canal with my fingers. I wipe them out with a light mixture of vinegar and water (very diluted as the vinegar will burn) making sure that the ear is dry when I'm done. If you think they are damp inside (after bathing this could happen) use a hand dryer to dry them out. (Wet ears grow bacteria easier than dry ears). I tend not to dig at them with q-tips if possible; this will drive the wax further into the ear canal. I find that the more you dig at the ear the more infections you cause. If the dog does have an ear problem talk to your vet about the best way to treat it. Never let the ears get really bad, as I have heard of dogs rupturing their eardrums by excessive head shaking because of bad ears.

If you do develop a chronic ear problem send me an email ([dpoodles@telus.net](mailto:dpoodles@telus.net)) and I will send you a recipe for a great ear fixer. I have used it for the past year and have had no ear infections.

## GENERAL

Grooming is one of the biggest expenses in owning a poodle. If you can afford it and don't like dog hair in your house or bathtub have them groomed by a professional shop. Pick your groomer as carefully as you would pick your hairdresser.

If the cost of regular grooming is to costly for you, have a groomer do it every second time, this will save you a bit of money.

If you want to do all your own grooming get a good book and some help from other who do it themselves.

I prefer to see a Poodle cut right down than to see them unkempt, matted and dirty. Keeping them clipped very short is a necessity for dogs that live on farms, bushy area, or if they are use for hunting.

A good grooming book and video are:

The Complete Poodle Clipping & Grooming Book

(by Kalstone) \$35, The Poodle (Oster video 30 min.) \$47

If you can't find these books in your local area they can be ordered from: Dogs in Canada, 89 Skyway Avenue, Suite 200, Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada M9W 6R4, Phone (416) 675-5511 EST Fax (416) 675-6505 Attn Book Dept. (Note pries are in Canadian currency)



For excellent and entertaining information on this topic, also please visit <http://www.poodlehistory.org> - Hair-dos through the ages The photograph of a recumbent Swiss Standard Poodle enjoying a hand-dryer in 1925 was contributed there by Rosa Engler, 3 February 2003.

In Australian show rings the clips most commonly seen are British Lion, English Saddle, Continental, and Puppy, those referred to as Scandinavian trims and Junior Lion are also used.

For assistance with a basic pet trim, please also see our grooming article in this issue of National Dog by Leigh Pieterse on the preparation of companion Griffon Bruxellois as it is equally relevant to Poodles.