



Maintaining a Long, Full Coat

by Leslie Shriner

Nothing looks so striking as a long-coated dog, traditionally styled and in good condition, walking down the street or just sitting in its bed or basket being admired by friends and family.

Unfortunately, nothings looks so pitiful and neglected as a long-coated dog bulging with mats; and it takes a surprisingly short time for the first image to become the second. Maintaining a long or full coat takes commitment to brush almost every day and knowledge of how and even when to brush, as well as regular visits to the groomer. At my grooming shop I have special tools, shampoos, conditioners, etc. so that I can send your pet home in top condition. **However, in order to maintain that beautiful full coat you must follow these essential guidelines:**

- ▲ **The dog's head, back of ears, neck (remove collar), and armpits must be combed daily** because they mat the fastest and hurt the dog most to remove the mats later.
- ▲ **The whole dog should be brushed every three days** (including the base of tail, legs, and feet).
- ▲ **After using the brush, use a comb to be sure you are removing tangles at the skin.** A groomer can't save the coat if only the outer layers are brushed out.
- ▲ **Always brush/comb BEFORE you bathe your dog.** Mats tighten when they dry after being wet.
- ▲ **Anytime your pet gets wet, be sure to brush/comb thoroughly after it dries.**
- ▲ Anytime you can't get a comb through the dog's coat, about every four to six weeks, I need to brush out and condition your dog's coat to keep it in good shape.

One of the most common problems for full-coated dogs is dry skin and coat. Dry coats are prone to static; and rough, dry hair shafts rub together to mat much faster than well-conditioned hair, especially in winter. The reasons for the dryness are numerous and if the case is severe, your vet should be consulted. However, a dietary supplement of essential fatty acids frequently, though gradually, resolves the problem for many dogs. You can ask the vet what supplements s/he recommends to determine if a nutrient deficiency could be causing the dryness.

Inevitably, you may find your lovely, full-coated dog has gotten matted in spite of your best efforts. At that point there are three options:

1. **Dematting**, the uncomfortable process of splitting up and combing out mats. This option is only open for dogs who are tolerant and not too sensitive; and it carries an additional charge.
2. **Shave down**, which drastically changes the dog's appearance. Most people dread this idea; but the dog avoids the discomfort of dematting and the hair will eventually grow back.
3. **A combination of shaving what can't be saved and dematting what can.** The dog may look uneven for a while but will return to full coat sooner than one shaved down.

I know we can work together to keep your dog looking and feeling great! It only takes a few minutes of your time each day; but it makes the difference between a great looking dog and a sad looking one.
