

# Care of the SKIN, COAT, NAILS & EARS



## Skin Care . . .

Skin is the heaviest single organ of the body, accounting for about 16% of the total body weight.

The skin has many functions: it prevents water loss; it serves as a sensory organ; it protects the body from impact and friction injuries; it is elastic to allow for swelling; it protects against ultraviolet rays from the sun. The skin's glands, blood vessels and fatty tissue participate in thermoregulation, metabolism and excretion. The skin is also the body's first defense against disease.

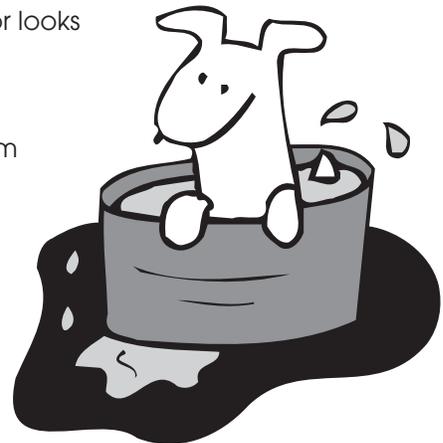
Proper care of your pet's skin and coat is very important to his overall health. Skin and ear problems are among the most common reasons for pet owners to seek veterinary care.

Check your pet's skin often and look for sores, lumps, bald spots, reddened areas and fleas. Call us if you find any abnormalities. Brush your pet regularly to prevent mats and tangles. Start when your puppy is young with short sessions and a soft brush. Reward your puppy with a treat when he sits still. Try to pick a time when he is quiet and sleepy, not when he's wanting to play!

How often you bathe your pet will depend on your lifestyle. Once a month is a good rule of thumb for an indoor dog. When your dog smells or looks dirty it's probably time for a bath.

Be sure to use shampoos made for pets. Human soaps and shampoos are formulated for human skin pH, which is different from that of dogs. Human shampoos usually cause dry, irritated itchy skin in dogs.

If you need to bathe the face, place a little bland ophthalmic (eye) ointment in each of your pet's eyes before bathing to avoid irritation from soap. Use lukewarm water to bathe your pet and be sure to rinse thoroughly with a spray attachment. Soap residue will cause red, itchy skin. Towel dry your dog and then blow dry on low if needed.



If you don't have the facilities to bathe your dog yourself most groomers and veterinary clinics are equipped to do it for you. Owners of poodles, schnauzers, cocker spaniels and other breeds that need regular clipping usually see their groomer every six to twelve weeks.

Parasites such as fleas, or skin problems such as seborrhea or allergies, usually require bathing with a special therapeutic shampoo. We can help you choose the product that is best for your situation.

Many pets are prone to dry, flaky, irritated skin, especially in the winter when the air is dry. Special shampoos, oil rinses and vitamin-fatty acid supplements are all used to alleviate this problem. Your pet will also have a thicker, shinier haircoat when he or she is eating a good quality diet.



## EAR CARE . . .

Regular ear cleaning should also be part of your routine with your dog. Dogs with upright ears, such as German Shepherds, will only need occasional cleaning. Their ears receive plenty of air circulation and resist infections.

Breeds such as Cocker Spaniels and Springer Spaniels often develop serious and chronic ear disease. We recommend regular and thorough cleaning at least once weekly in these breeds. Instill a few drops of an ear cleaning solution made for pets. Massage the base of the ear to squeeze the cleaner down the entire length of the ear canal. Then wipe out any excess with a cotton ball.

If green, yellow or brown discharge appears on the cotton ball, or if the ear canal seems red, sore or swollen, **contact us right away**. Ear infections are very painful to your dog, and are most easily treated if caught early.

If your dog swims often, regular use of ear drying solutions will help prevent infection from too much moisture in the ears. It is also a good idea to place cotton balls in your pet's ears before bathing to avoid getting soap in the ears. Don't forget to take the cotton back out again.

## NAIL CARE . . .

Some dogs wear their toenails down from walking on hard surfaces and never need to have them clipped. Most of us aren't so lucky and our pets have nails that need regular trimming.

If your pet has white toenails, you will be able to see the pink blood vessel inside the nail. Do not cut back so far as to damage this vessel. It hurts and your pet will bleed. With dark toenails it's best to let us show you how to trim the nails. Many people prefer to let us or the groomer trim the toenails.

Toenail trimming will be far easier if a puppy is introduced to it slowly and patiently from a young age. The feet should be handled gently multiple times a day and the nails clipped here and there or filed short with a nail file. Let the puppy get accustomed to it before you hold him down and make him sit still for all his nails all at once. Whether or not you plan to trim the nails yourself you should still go through this process. Your veterinarian or groomer will charge you more for nail trimming if your pet has to be muzzled or requires multiple people to hold it down for the procedure. A little training early on makes nail trimming a quick and painless task for all concerned.

## SPECIFIC GROOMING RECOMMENDATIONS . . .

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