

## GROOMING

### GENERAL

Your poodle's claws need to be trimmed each time it is washed, if not more often. Use the pliers-type clippers and try to cut a small piece off at a time to avoid quicking the nail, which will result in bloody footprints all over everything as well as hurting and frightening your dog.

After you have washed your dog, or any time it has become wet such as from swimming, use a syringe to put a few ml of a 50:50 vinegar (white vinegar or apple cider vinegar) and cheap vodka into the ear canals. Massage the ears and let the dog shake the solution out. This helps the ears to dry and prevents yeasts from growing in them. From time to time, the hair in the ear canals is likely to get excessive, and you will see a small mat forming in the entrance to the ear canal. Carefully tease out this mat in one piece with tweezers or ear forceps – this should not hurt unless there is an ear infection. You do not need to poke forceps or tweezers down the ear canal in order to try to remove ear hair completely. As long as the ears are kept clean, this should not be a problem.

Sometimes poodles can get ear mites. Symptoms are an odd smell and a brown wet substance in the ears. You can buy over the counter medicines to treat this.

Check your dog's teeth regularly and ensure you have appropriate things for your dog to chew, such as cow hoofs and antlers. You can use a toothbrush with dog toothpaste to brush your dog's teeth, and you can buy descalers to remove tartar from the gum line. Puppies will grow adult teeth and shed their puppy teeth at around 3-5 months of age. Usually this will cause their breath to stink. Occasionally some deciduous teeth will not come out and will need to be removed by a vet.

Brush and comb your puppy's coat every few days. The coat at this age will not need it, but the puppy must become accustomed to this since it will be necessary as an adult. Handle the feet and trim claws regularly, and get the puppy used to having the mouth checked.

From between 6 months and 8 months your puppy is likely to begin coat change. The coat change usually lasts well past the dog's first birthday, and is usually complete by 18 months to two years. During this time the puppy coat sheds out and the harsher adult coat begins to develop, and the coat will usually mat heavily and have all the disadvantages of a puppy coat (soft and floppy) but none of the advantages such as ease of maintenance! Your puppy will need regular, thorough brushing at this stage, or alternatively some owners opt to keep their poodles in a very short trim until coat change has passed.

### WASHING

Your poodle will need to be washed and groomed about every month, or about every six weeks if it is in a very short trim.

Adult poodles normally have very thick, water-repellent coats. Getting shampoo into poodles with long coats thoroughly is hard work. An effective labour-saving method that not only reduces the physical exertion of washing poodles, but reduces the amount of shampoo and water needed, is to use a recirculating pump. You can obtain a [dirty water submersible pump](#), attach an extra-long washing machine hose to it using a Jubilee clip, and stand this in your bath (make sure to use a circuit breaker when you plug it in). The idea is then to put just enough warm water in the bath that the pump will run, stand the poodle in the bath, rub shampoo roughly over the coat with no need to work it in well or get a good lather, and use the hose to recirculate high-pressure water with shampoo dissolved in it into the dog's coat.

If you are intending that your poodle will only ever have a short coat, you do not need to use a recirculator, but you can still wash your dog this way if you want.

I recommend using professional dog shampoos and conditioners as they produce good results and are reasonably priced. I would not advise using generic 'dog' shampoos you can buy from a pet shop, as they tend to be formulated more for the other kinds of dogs who have greasy double coats that tend to smell, and the shampoos have a very strong fragrance to overpower the smell. Because poodle coats have little odour but are good at absorbing odours they are exposed to, these shampoos tend to leave an unpleasant and overpowering smell, and the oil-stripping properties can be quite harsh on poodle hair.

While your puppy is young, you don't need to use a conditioner, since puppy coats tend to be soft and conditioner only makes them more so. The puppy should be washed when it needs it with a mild shampoo, such as Chris Christensen Day to Day. You can dilute this shampoo and put it in a spray gun bottle, to make it easier to apply.

When the puppy begins coat change, usually any time after 6 months, it will probably need to be washed more often (possibly as much as once a week if it is in long coat) to reduce matting. You should start using a conditioner to help keep the matting down, such as the Chris Christensen Day to Day conditioner.

A dog who is fully grown and whose coat change has finished can usually go four weeks between washes. If you are showing your dog, before a show you can wash it with special shampoos and conditioners such as Chris Christensen Spectrum One to give the best coat texture.

## **DRYING**

Unless you are intending to keep your poodle in a very short, simple trim, it is worth obtaining a stand dryer to dry your poodle's coat properly after it is washed. To dry your dog properly, you need to brush the coat as it dries. This removes any loose coat and knots and helps to prevent mats from forming. It will take about an hour to completely dry an adult poodle in a pet trim (assuming areas of long coat on legs, neck, and tail) and the drying time increases with longer coats, but it is worth spending this time after washing your dog, because it will mean less knotting and brushing in between washes as well as a nicer finish on your dog. Don't leave dogs in long coat to 'drip dry' or the thickness of the coat is likely to mean it won't dry properly and the dog will likely smell musty and get matted. For the people who claim it's 'high maintenance', it is surely more enjoyable to spend an hour with your dog stood on a table, being brushed as warm air is blown on it, once every four weeks. than it is to spend several minutes every day getting out and using a vacuum cleaner to clean up the hair shed from a dog with a 'low maintenance' coat!

When you dry your poodle, direct the air stream from the dryer into the coat so the hair parts. Brush the coat to separate the hairs with either a slicker brush or a pin brush until the area is dry. If you find knots or minor mats forming in the coat, which you should be able to see when the dryer is separating it, use a detangling spray. Spray onto the knotted areas, allow to soak in for a few minutes while drying another area, and then carefully separate and brush out the knot. Once the dog is completely dry, go through the coat thoroughly with a comb to remove any tangly bits that might remain. After the poodle has been dried is also the right time to scissor the coat.

## **CLIPPING AND SCISSORING**

It is a good idea to have two kinds of clippers and a few different blades. A good mains-powered

clipper should be used for most areas of the body, but a rechargeable clipper is easier to use on areas like the face and feet. Clipper blades are numbered, with closer blades that leave shorter coat having the highest numbers. The three most useful blades to have are:

#30 or #40 for clipping the face and feet.

#10 for clipping the undercarriage, base of tail, around the bottom and 'private parts'.

#7 for 'shearing off'. This blade leaves a short blanket of coat, just enough not to look shaved. Often it is used on the body with the legs and neck blended in to the clipped area by scissoring. It is generally the 'go to' blade when taking off a show coat. Puppies and young dogs who have not filled out yet can look shockingly thin if they are clipped with this blade. Any areas of your poodle you use this blade on are unlikely to need any maintenance between monthly clips and washes.

There are other blades available, but what many people do rather than buying dedicated longer blades is to buy 'snap on combs' that fit over a #10 blade to clip longer lengths.

Unless your poodle is really filthy, it's usually a good idea to do basic clipping before washing. It means you don't have to try to dry difficult areas like the feet and you are not using the clippers on coat that might be damp. Oil the blades when you have finished clipping.

There are a few basic ways of trimming your poodle, generally known as 'pet trims':

A gundog clip is the whole poodle clipped to an inch or less, with no longer coat left on even the head or ears. The face, feet, etc. might be shaved closer or not. Poodles in this trim tend to look a bit like Pointers with short curly coats, and people not familiar with the breed may not realise they are poodles.

A clipped body with longer coat on the ears, head, and tail is sometimes called a kennel clip, or a lamb clip if the coat on the legs is left longer. The longer coat is shaped and blended into the clipped body with scissors. The coat on the neck is either left longer and blended, or clipped in which case the coat on the head forms a ball. Longer variants of this trim with more shaping and scissoring are called a modern trim.

The same as above but with legs clipped to the same length as the body coat apart from 'anklets' shaped into balls at the bottom of the legs is called various things, such as a summer clip or a clown clip.

Variants of the above trims with close-clipped ears and tail are considered German trims. It's also possible to blend the coat on the ears into long coat on the head rather than having separate long ears; I call this a Canadian trim because it looks like the hats people wear in Canada in the winter, but I don't know of an official name for it.

You can also cord all or part of the long coat on any of the above trims. Cords are the dreadlocks seen on breed such as Komondors and Pulis. Some poodle coats cord better than others. The cording process involves washing the dog with no conditioner and not brushing nor combing it, but as it begins to mat, separating the mats into even cords. Cords don't require brushing and drying as do normal coats, but they do need some maintenance to keep the cords separate, and may be difficult to clean if they get really dirty, and hard to dry properly in cold weather.

A useful book to have if you are interested in doing more advanced trims on your dog is Kalstone's *Poodle Clipping and Grooming: The International Reference*.

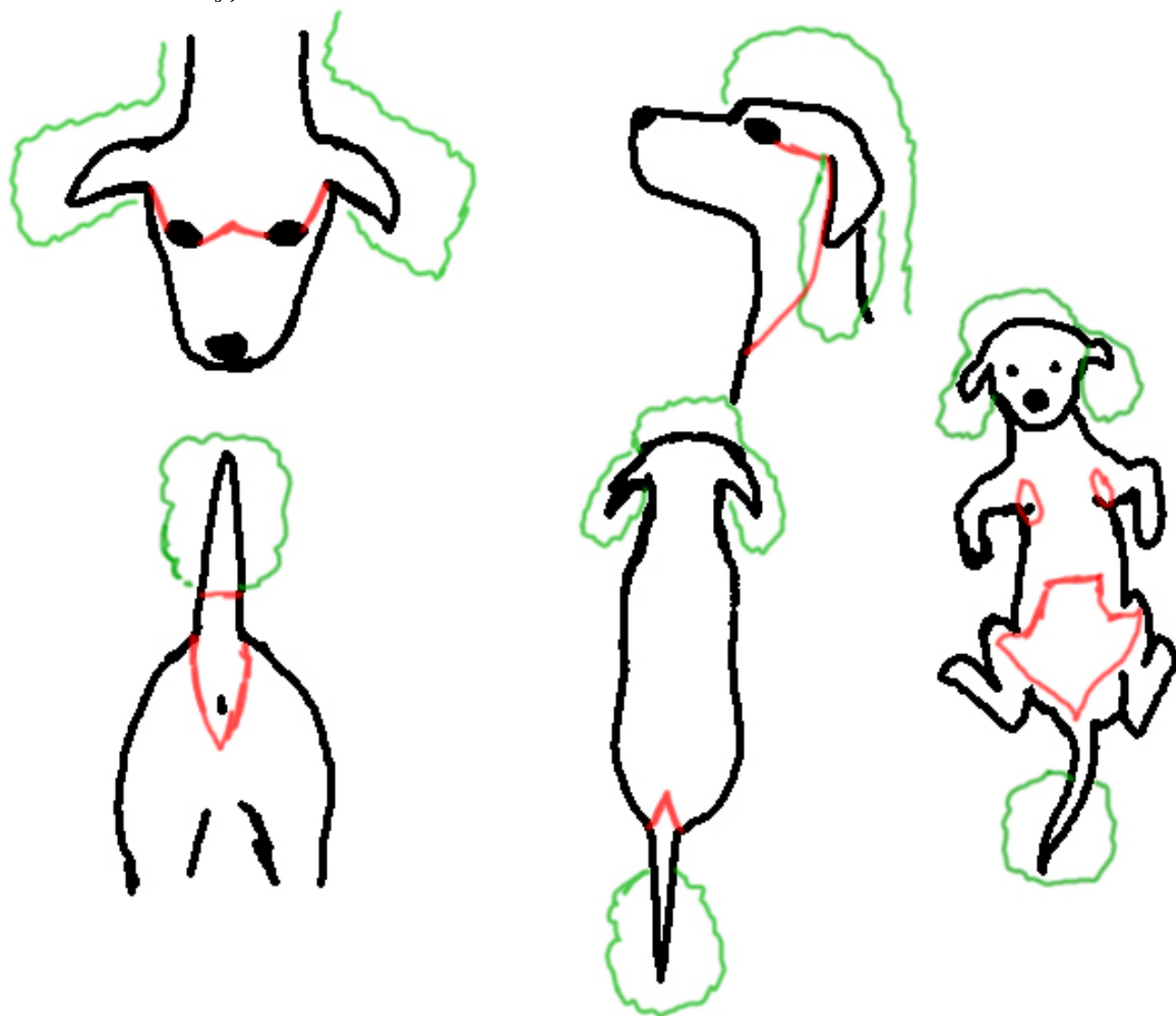
## CLIP LINES

The following atrocious and anatomically incorrect illustrations of a puppy demonstrate roughly the lines where the shaved area of the poodle should meet the coated area.

When clipping the face (top) clip from the edge of the ear to the outer corner of the eye. Shape a chevron across the muzzle in front of the stop, between the inner corners of the eyes. Clip a 'v-neck' from the area under the ears to the bottom of the neck.

When clipping the tail (lower), clip a line around the base of the tail extending into a chevron on the back (this stops the coat from looking lumpy when the poodle carries its tail up, and helps form a smooth line from the croup into the topline) and extend the clipped area over the dog's bottom to help prevent the area around the anus from getting dirty.

Clip the undercarriage of the dog, and its armpits if you wish as they are not visible normally and mats tend to form here. Use #10 blade or lower number to avoid nicking and rashes in sensitive area. Clip the insides of the thighs and up to the navel including the dog's 'private parts' (vulva on a girl or sheath and testicles on a boy).



I do not recommend grooming your dog in a style that leaves the normally clipped areas untended.

Most of the commonly used clips have the feet, face, and base of the tail shorn for reasons that are for the welfare of the dog and nothing to do with appearance. Unclipped feet invite prolonged dampness when they get wet from grass, can collect painful burrs between the webbing of the toes, and very long foot hair can get under the pads and interfere with the dog's grip on the floor. The tail and around the dog's bottom should be kept short to prevent it becoming fouled with faeces or stained with urine. The face is also normally clipped as frequent contact with food and water would otherwise cause it to become matted and stained (not to mention smelly and otherwise unpleasant) and it is hard on the dog that it should need to have the sensitive areas on its face brushed in order to maintain long coat here. The vibrissae (whiskers) on a poodle grow curled -- they seem to be under the influence of the same gene that causes the coat to be curly -- and they serve little function and indeed will become matted with the coat and painful if left to grow. It does not hurt the poodle or damage it in any way for the vibrissae to be clipped off with the rest of the hair on the muzzle.

#### NOTE

Some poodles with mild, non-confrontational temperaments do have an unfortunate tendency to wet themselves when someone goes to pick them up in order to groom or wash them. Although properly socialised dogs should not hate grooming, it should be borne in mind that when we groom a dog, it is expected to endure a lot of one-sided physical contact, including in sensitive areas such as its feet where it isn't otherwise handled with such duration and intensity. Therefore, while they generally enjoy some aspects of grooming, such as the warm water and the shampooing and brushing, it should be understood that they probably won't feel enthusiastic upon picking up the message that it's 'that time of the month' again. If your poodle is in the habit of doing this, do not punish it or become disgusted/distracted into cleaning up the urine immediately, firstly because it is almost certainly not deliberate, and secondly because if you do this, you might actually reinforce the act of weeing, as the act of urinating has caused you to not groom the dog, if even momentarily. Ignore the wee, continue with picking up the dog, and after the dog is on the table/in the bath, then clean up the wee.