

Coat Care: Preventing Matted Hair

WHY IS HAIR OR FUR IMPORTANT TO DOG HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?



It protects the skin from chemicals, bacteria, and physical injury.

It also helps regulate body temperature:

- Coat glossiness reflects sunlight to aid in cooling.
- It also acts as a barrier to block wind, rain, and snow to aid in warming.
- Color, length, and density can help retain or dissipate heat.

In order for the coat to be healthy and protect the dog, it's important to keep it clean and free of mats.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mats are commonly found under the collar, behind the ears, and in the armpits—areas where there is rubbing.



MATTED HAIR MAY:

- be painful
- cause skin irritation
- hide foreign bodies, such as ingrown collars
- hide tumors, injuries, or other skin disease
- trap foreign material such as leaves, twigs, mud, urine, or feces
- interfere with vision, hearing, and chewing
- interfere with urination and defecation
- interfere with normal movement
- interfere with temperature regulation, both cooling and warming

How Do I Keep My Dog's Coat Healthy and Mat-Free?

It's best to prevent mats by regular brushing and grooming. The frequency of brushing, whether daily or weekly, is going to vary by breed, type, and length of hair.

When mats occur, they can be removed by **shaving** with clippers or **cutting** with scissors even if the dog is not due to be groomed.



PRACTICAL TIP

Clippers get hot with use and may burn the skin. Try using a clipper cooling product or alternating between two pairs of clippers. Scissors can cut the skin as well as the mat. Try using blunt-tipped (bandage) scissors.

Don't Forget Feet and Ears!

These areas mat easily and can trap moisture that may lead to skin infections. Removing hair from the **top and under the ear flap** and the **bottom of the feet in between the paw pads** is the best way to prevent problems.



This Animal Care Aid is part of a series developed to provide information about skin issues in dogs. Refer to the other topics covered in the series for more information on skin, feet, and ear care.

Questions? Email us at CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Credit: Dog illustration at upper right created by Cristiano Zoucas from the Noun Project

