

Grooming

How often should I bathe and groom my puppy?

Give your puppy a bath only when they begin to exude that doggy odor or is obviously dirty from working or playing. Too frequent bathing can dry out the skin and hair coat. Use a quality dog shampoo, and make sure you rinse well after shampooing because soap can irritate your puppy's delicate skin. You might want to use a crème rinse or conditioner, especially if you have a medium-to-long haired dog. If you do, be sure to read the directions on the crème rinse or conditioner bottle- some are leave-in products and some need to be rinsed out.

Most puppies love being brushed and combed, especially if you hold the skin tight with one hand and brush with the other so it doesn't pull. Shorthaired breeds should be brushed 2 to 3 times a week with a soft or medium bristle brush, rubber currycomb or grooming glove and a fine-tooth comb. Puppies with medium length hair, woolly coat or curly hair should be groomed with a wire pin brush and a wide-tooth comb.

Longhaired breeds require daily grooming with a soft, natural bristle brush and a wide-tooth comb. Matted, tangled hair may require special lubricants or mat combs or having mats clipped out with clippers, which are much safer than scissors. Groom your puppy several times per week to prevent this problem.

Regular grooming sessions of 5-15 minutes do more than just keep your puppy clean and healthy. They also strengthen your bond with them and allow you to check their appearance to make sure he/she stays in peak condition. Grooming needs vary according to breed, but no matter what kind of puppy you have, you should regularly check the condition of her eyes, ears, teeth, skin, paws, and nails. Some breeds, like Poodles and Bichon Frises, will require professional grooming.

What can be done about fleas on my puppy?

Once fleas get on your puppy they will stay there through their entire life cycle (which lasts 21 to 28 days), and then their progeny will take up the occupation- unless you do something about it. Your puppy's coat provides the ideal warm, humid environment for fleas. They will lay hundreds of eggs over that time, many of which will hatch on your puppy and start the process all over again. Most will roll off your puppy, getting into his bedding, household carpet, and upholstery and hatch there, compounding the problem. As you can see, the key to flea control is to kill fleas on your puppy before they can lay eggs, and/or to keep the eggs from hatching.

The Sentinel pill we give you will, in addition to killing heartworms and controlling hook, whip, and round worms and keep flea eggs from hatching. Sentinel is safe for puppies from 4 weeks on. If you have problems with live fleas after your puppy is 12 weeks old, you can use Parastar Plus to kill adult fleas, as well as keep any eggs from hatching. Parastar Plus a liquid applied above the shoulder blades, also kills ticks. Nexgard is a pill that you can give to your puppy at 8 weeks old for the same flea protection. Your need for flea control medication will depend on the indigent flea

population in your neighborhood; the more rabbits and squirrels you have in the area, the more likely you are to have a flea problem.

If you have serious flea problems that these medications are not taking care of, call our office so we can counsel you on how to proceed. DO NOT buy flea products from Wal-Mart or another retailer. Many over-the-counter flea products can kill puppies, especially puppies compromised by flea infestation.

Can I trim my puppy's sharp toenails?

Puppies have very sharp toenails. They can be trimmed with your regular fingernail clippers or with nail trimmers made for dogs and cats. If you take too much off the nail, you will cut into the 'quick' and bleeding and pain will occur. If this happens, neither you nor your dog will want to do this again.

Therefore, a few points are helpful:

If your dog has clear or white nails, you can see the pink of the quick through the nail. Avoid the pink area and you should be out of the quick.

If your dog has black nails, you will not be able to see the quick so only cut 1/32" (1 mm) of the nail at a time until the dog begins to get sensitive. The sensitivity will usually occur before you are into the blood vessel. With black nails, it is likely that you will get too close on at least one nail.

If your dog has some clear and some black nails, use the average clear nail as a guide for cutting the black ones.

When cutting nails, use sharp trimmers. Dull trimmers tend to crush the nail and cause pain even if you are not in the quick. You should always have styptic powder available. This is sold in pet stores under several trade names, but it will be labeled for use in trimming nails. Emory boards also work well on sharp puppy nails.

Can you recommend something for pet identification?

The latest in pet identification is microchipping. This tiny device is implanted with a needle much like administering an injection. A special scanner can detect these chips; veterinary hospitals, humane societies, and animal shelters across the country have these scanners. A national registry permits the return of microchipped pets throughout the United States and Canada. We strongly recommend microchipping all pets.

Do you eat with that mouth? Rule of thumb: If any or all of something will fit in a mouth, it's dangerous. Watch out for cigarette butts, rubber bands, balloons, sewing needles, thread, string, and ribbons and, yes, even pantyhose. Because what goes in must come out, often via surgery.

This client information sheet is based, in part, on material written by Ernest E. Ward Jr., DVM

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