



DOGS

** Routine Grooming Promotes Good Health in Pets **

Routine grooming and cleaning is as important for our pets as it is for us: it improves their appearance, helps to prevent diseases, and contributes to their overall well-being. Grooming can be simplified with a few tips and hints to make the task a little simpler.

When grooming, first start with a wide-toothed comb, combing from head to tail, looking for signs of fleas, growths, and mats. By using a wide-toothed comb first, you can minimize hair pulling. Follow up combing by brushing with a wire slicker brush. Hair mats can be removed by simply isolating them from the rest of the hairs, gently splitting them into smaller clumps, and then, while firmly holding the skin underneath, pulling the mat upwards and towards the head. You can also use a mat splitter and/or de-matting comb which have actually safety blades that help cut through the mats. NEVER USE SCISSORS to cut out mats because you may accidentally cut the skin underneath.

Ears are also an important part of pet hygiene. Most pets' ears do not require routine cleaning. However, the ears should be examined routinely and if your pet has excessive hair, dirt, or wax build-up, they must be cleaned. While mineral oil and alcohol are often recommended for ear cleaning, products presently on the market for ear cleaning (available from your vet) are far more effective and cause less problems.

Cotton-tipped applicators should never be used to clean ears (except by your vet) because of the risk of inadvertently damaging your pet's ear drum. Instead, wrap a cloth or tissue paper around your index finger and clean the ear canal gently. You can also apply the cleaner to a cotton ball and clean the ear that way as well.

Bathing should be done on an "as-needed" basis. Frequency depends on the individual pet and your veterinarian should be consulted regarding the most appropriate bathing schedule for your pet. *Never* use a shampoo intended for human use on a pet. *For example...* a dog's skin is much more sensitive than human skin. People shampoo can cause a serious skin irritation in pets. They tend to be heavily perfumed (which pets do not like) and they tend to affect the *PH Balance* which, in turn, causes excessive drying of the haircoat and flaking of the skin.

Keeping the *nails* trimmed contributes to the health of the paws and also ensures that your pet will be comfortable when running and walking. Failure to keep nails clipped can, in some cases, result in in-growth nails, which can become infected and painful. If nails are not properly trimmed on a regular basis, the small vein inside the nail, which is referred to as "*the quick*", can grow along with the nail. So, when the nails are eventually trimmed, they can only be trimmed so far back because the quick has grown and will bleed if cut into it. Sometimes if the quick is *excessively* long, your vet can surgically trim them right back and cauterize them. Dogs who go for regular walks on concrete have the benefit of having them filed down in this process which cuts back on the frequency of putting them through an actual nail trim.