

Keeping professional grooming costs to a minimum

👉 *Maintain your dog's coat in a reasonable condition at all times:*

- Towel dry the coat when returning from walks. Minimise tangling by patting or dabbing the coat rather than rubbing it.
- Remove all debris from the coat & spot wash away dirt. This is an opportunity to check the skin for parasites - especially ticks - if you walk in the countryside.
- Groom the coat out frequently & thoroughly, using the right tools & technique to keep it tangle-, knot- & matt free.

A dip in the river does not equal a bath! River (& even rain water) will dry a coat out. This can be minimised by rinsing or bathing, conditioning then fluff drying the coat (with a hair dryer) & grooming it out. If you bath your pet at home, squeeze excess water from the coat with a synthetic chamois or towel. Spritzing a leave-in conditioner or detangler through the coat a few minutes before damp combing it will help alleviate any post-bath tangling by smoothing down the hair cuticles. Natural air drying can cause some types of coats to tighten & form matts – curly & wool coats are especially prone to this. Damp comb then thoroughly towel- &/or fluff dry the coat – taking care not to tangle it - before giving it a final brush out when dry.

👉 *Teach your pet to tolerate handling & grooming:* A home grooming routine has many advantages: its quality bonding time with your pet & it gives you an opportunity to inspect your dog's coat & skin closely.

It'll benefit you financially too – if your dog is used to being handled & groomed its professional groom out will take less time & its unlikely to need any special handling during the process because it knows the drill.

The most effective & efficient way to groom is to confine your dog safely on a table.

👉 *Maintain your pet's optimum weight:* Like humans an overweight pet can develop preventable medical conditions, such as diabetes & joint problems, which can compromise its health & quality of life. The additional strain on its heart places it at a higher risk.

During professional grooming it may need special handling, eg. more than one person or specialist handling techniques to safely move or lift it, specialist restraint &/or additional handling because it is unable to comfortably stand unassisted to be properly groomed. Its groom will take longer than necessary & its coat is also likely to require more product than if it was at optimum size.

👉 *Learn how to line brush:* Ask your dog's groomer for a demonstration. This is the most effective, systematic way to maintain a long coat (an inch or more) & wool, curly or dense coats. It'll keep your pet's coat tangle-, knot- & matt free. It is not advisable to brush a dirty coat. Grit, sand & debris damage hair. Damaged hair tangles, knots & matts far more easily than healthy hair.

👉 *Maintain a regular professional grooming schedule with one groomer:* It takes time for your pet to trust & learn to work with a groomer. Each time a groomer handles your pet, the more he or she learns about its habits & tolerances. This has a significant effect on handling time & the mutual co-operation helps minimise grooming time. Every groomer employs different methods, procedures, products & equipment, so it is preferable to use the same groomer to allow this relationship to develop.

To give your pet the opportunity to develop a grooming marvellous relationship with a groomer maintain a consistent appointment schedule. (Its more likely to tolerate visits to the vet too!)

👉 *Turn your attention to your pet's mouth:* Fact: Without preventative human intervention, by the age of 3 years most dogs will develop periodontal disease. Current research indicates that it can shorten a dog's life by between 3 to 5 years, by slowly poisoning its internal organs. Signs of discomfort & pain include drooling, chattering, avoiding hard foods, snappiness/aggression, aversion to having its mouth handled.

Maintaining your pet's oral hygiene needn't be a chore. Enzymatic chews, specially formulated toothpastes, antibacterial mouth sprays & water additives make it quick & simple. Avoid feeding soft foods & provide abrasive foods to help prevent plaque build up. The gold standard is daily brushing. Prevention is the best way of extending your dog's quality of life for longer.