

Grooming for the show.

The first principle of good show grooming is to objectively assess your dog – if you don't know its virtues and its faults, then you won't be able to apply your grooming techniques to best effect.

The second principle is to have the dog healthy and in good condition – no amount of show grooming and shaping will bring a basically unhealthy out- of- condition coat to full bloom.

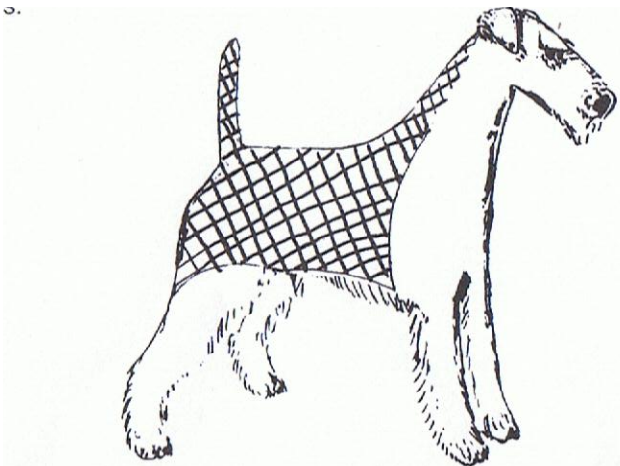
As show grooming is done almost completely by hand, it is necessary to have the right equipment – a good stripping knife (coarse blade for stripping out the saddle, fine blade for the shaping and fine trimming work), steel comb, and scissors for trimming the hair around the feet.

As the coat on an Airedale Terrier grows at different rates in different places, it is necessary to 'stage' your grooming. Set the dog to start its show campaign at a particular show on a certain date, and start your grooming cycle two months before that date. (Some coats, of course, require longer, some shorter, but this is based on the average.) It is most effective to keep working the whole coat throughout that two-month period.

The initial objective is to strip out the hair you ultimately want to be longest, in this instance, it is the saddle of the dog.

Using the coarse-bladed stripping knife, strip out the dog's saddle from the top of the back of the neck to the top of the tail, down the sides and across the top of the hips.

As a general rule, the saddle will have grown through to an acceptable length by the date of the show two months later.

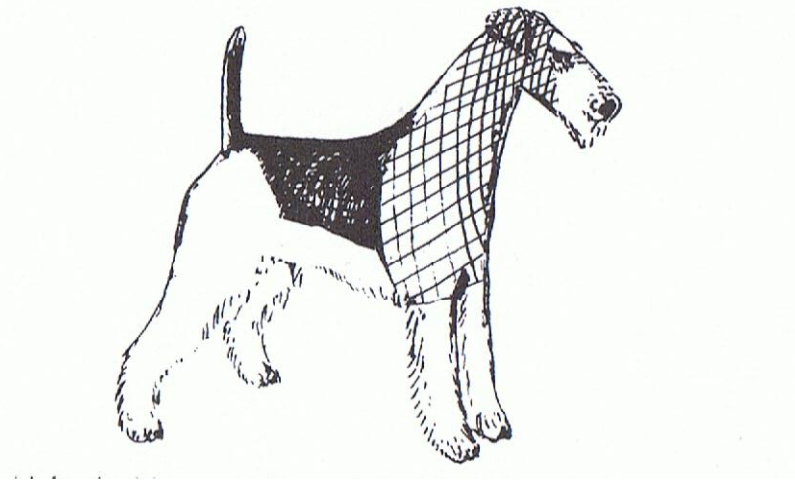


However, it is not a case of strip and forget for two months. It is necessary to 'de-fuzz' the dog, by neatly going over the saddle area again two or three weeks later to top-off the first growth of 'fuzz' that often comes through.

If you keep the saddle hair 'working' throughout the two-month period, the hardest texture will come through.

The next stage basically involves stripping out the tan areas, where we want the hair to be the shortest for the show and involves stripping out the ears, skull, cheeks, back of the neck (again), throat, shoulders (sides and front), centre panel of the bottom and the back of the tail.

Again, 'de-fuzzing' those areas is a good idea a week after the stripping has taken place.



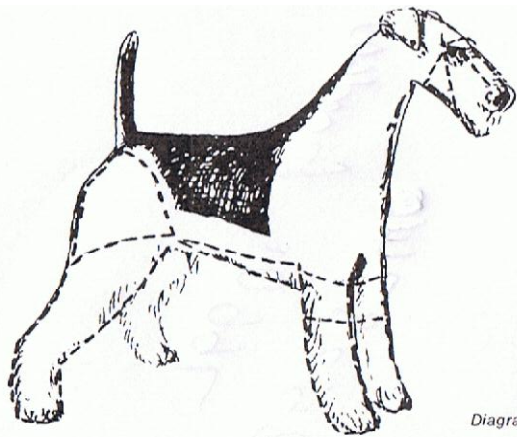
Finally, the fine trimming takes place. If the finished product is to present a symmetrical appearance, blending, or 'fine-trimming', must take place.

Some of this work is done with the fine-bladed stripping knife and some with finger and thumb.

Some people prefer a heavier coat and more furnishings and others a more refined and sculptured look. This is a personal preference and your eye will tell you which style you prefer.

The areas involved in fine trimming are the head, legs, hind end and underline.

The head trimming involves creating parallel planes so the head assumes a long rectangular shape when viewed from any angle – achieving strength, length and narrowness. For the front legs, the objective is to create straight, round front legs that look like pegs from the elbow to the feet. The hind end should blend over the hips and down the back of the stifle, making sure that the curved shape of the behind and stifle is accentuated when viewed from the side. The underline should be trimmed straight and sloping from the tummy forward to the elbow, making sure the chest line at least reaches down to the elbow.



The hardest part of grooming is to keep the coat going so that you can campaign the dog for many shows. The secret is simple – hard work!! ‘Holding’ the coat is achieved basically by working over it with the stripping knife to remove the longer older hairs, leaving the newer shorter hairs (in other words, ‘topping’ the coat) In this way, the older hair is consistently removed, allowing new hair to grow through and replace it, making the whole saddle ‘work’.

Maintaining the coat in this way also involves continually doing the fine trim to keep the beautiful sculptured shape together.

Clipping and in between grooming maintenance

Although the above is for show preparation the same effect can be achieved with the use of clippers and scissors. Regular clipping may alter the texture and colour of the coat. If you are not intending to exhibit on-going maintenance between major grooming sessions is necessary. This involves regular combing using a wide tooth steel comb all over the body, legs and beard. Hair between the pads of the feet should be cut short in order to avoid mats forming and nails cut or filed. Inside ears should be checked and rear ends kept clean. Lower lip area around the beard should be trimmed short and kept free of knots.

This grooming article is based on an article appearing in the 1980 – 1984 Airedale Terrier Club of Victoria Inc Year Book.