



CANADIAN PROFESSIONAL PET STYLISTS



MATS IN YOUR DOG'S COAT

COURTESY OF THE MANITOBA DOG GROOMERS ASSOC.

WHAT EXACTLY IS A MAT?

Matting develops when dog's fur intertwines into a mass of snarls and knots, these then wrap together, forming a mat. When you pet your dog, mats may feel like lumps over the dog's skin. At times, a mat is so close to the skin, a dog's coat may feel combed out, but beneath this "combed out hair" is a tangled carpet of hair. One way to locate a mat is to use a fine to medium tooth comb and comb through the dog's coat, make sure you go all the way down to the dog's skin. If the comb gets stuck, you have probably encountered a mat.

WHY IS MATTING BAD?

Mats are extremely painful. If you allow mats to develop, the hair will twist and pull the skin, hurting your dog. Imagine putting your hair in a tight elastic band, when you turn, the hair pinches and pulls on your skin causing pain; this is what your dog feels. The pulling may also cause blood circulation problems and bruising to the skin, which is distressing to your beloved dog. Under all that matting, moisture from bathing or weather can accumulate & interact with your dog's warm skin; this is a prime breeding spot for bacteria to grow which can lead to hot spots & other skin disorders plus a hefty veterinary bill for you.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT MATS?

Never cut a mat with scissors! You may cut or nick your dog. Veterinarians are often stitching up dog's skin when a pet owner has inadvertently cut a dog while trying to remove or cut out a mat with scissors!

There are only two options:

Dematting is one option, but should only be done if the matting is not severe & if your dog can bear the procedure. There is no magic solution, dematting is very painful; to break up the matting, the coat is tugged and pulled, tearing at the skin, causing pain. Dematting can also break off the dog's coat and makes it more susceptible to matting in the future!

The second option is the most humane, most recommended and often only option; clip off the dog's coat and start from the beginning. Since a clipper cannot cut through matting, a clipper must get underneath the mat, right down to the skin's surface. How short we must clip depends upon the severity of the matting & how close the mat is to the skin surface.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MY DOG'S MATTING IS CLIPPED?

When clipping a dog short is necessary, there may be complications, typically as a side effect from the matting itself. Matting prevents air from circulating to the dog's skin and lacks the rejuvenating effect the skin & coat receive from regular combing; the skin then becomes more sensitive and is more susceptible to being scraped, nicked or irritated by the clipper. On occasion, clipping a dog may uncover problems which were not seen before because it was under the matting. Hot spots, eczema, parasites, wounds or worse may be uncovered. The removal of the matting also allows your dog to get to all the itchy areas they were previously unable to get to. Do not allow your dog to scratch, lick or chew themselves or rub themselves on the carpet or furniture. If you allow this, your dog may cause further, painful damage to its skin and large vet bills for you. If your dog seems uncomfortable or very itchy it is best to see a vet before any serious skin problems arise. Additionally, your dog may feel different and strange after being clipped down; after all, the dog has not felt the air on the skin for quite a while. Your dog may hide and act embarrassed. This is not only because it feels different but also because you may act or treat him differently. Don't laugh at your dog, tell them they're beautiful or handsome (even if they're not!) and give tons of praise to rebuild your dog's confidence.

HOW DO I PREVENT MATS?

There are a few things you can do to prevent mats in your dog. First of all, talk to your groomer to set up a regular grooming schedule. *It is usually recommended that a coated dog visit a groomer every four to six weeks, and go no longer than three months before seeing the groomer.* The longer between grooming visits, the more time you need to maintain your dog's coat at home. Even with regular visits to your groomer, brushing and combing should be done at home to prevent matting. Your pet groomer can show you the proper equipment & grooming techniques you should use for your particular breed. If you take the time out of your schedule, you and your pet will soon see grooming as a time to bond and not a time to fear. In return, your dog will live a happy life without mats and provide you with years of love and devotion that only a dog can give.