

Skin and Ear Care for Dogs

Taking care of your dog's skin and ears is super important, and it starts with regular grooming! No matter if your dog has a short coat or long, spending about 15 to 30 minutes a week on grooming can significantly reduce shedding around the house. For those fluffy friends, more frequent grooming sessions will be necessary. It's best to start this routine when they're puppies so they get used to the process from an early age.



Bathing Your Dog

When it comes to bathing, dogs with healthy coats usually only need a bath every few months. Just remember to pick a good quality baby shampoo—stay away from dry shampoos; they're just for a quick freshen-up and not a replacement for a proper wash.

Before you hop in the tub, make sure to brush your dog thoroughly. If there are any matted areas, clip those out first; wet mats are much harder to deal with. Take care not to cut your dog's skin while doing this!



Here's a few tips for bath time:

- **Eye Protection:** Don't put any protective ointments in their eyes; this can trap shampoo and make rinsing difficult.
- **Ear Safety:** To avoid water getting into their ears, you can gently place some cotton wool in each ear.
- **Shampooing:** Wet your dog's coat with warm water and apply shampoo along their neck and back. You can dilute the shampoo with water (one part shampoo to five parts water) to make rinsing easier. Lather it up gently and work it into their coat using your fingers or a rubber brush for long-haired breeds.
- **Face Washing:** Be extra careful when washing your dog's face; keep shampoo out of their eyes.
- **Medicated Shampoos:** Only use these if your vet has prescribed

them.



After bathing, towel-dry your dog and keep them warm until their coat dries completely. If you have a medium or long-haired pup, brush them gently while they're still damp. It's best to avoid hairdryers since they can irritate your dog's skin.

Dealing with Fleas

If your dog has been scratching at sore, itchy patches, fleas might be the culprit, even if you haven't seen any. You see, fleas only spend about 10% of their lives on your pet. Their eggs can build up in cozy spots around your home, like the cracks of your sofa or even outside in the garden. To keep those pesky fleas at bay, regular flea control is key!

Treating your dog alone isn't enough. You'll need to tackle the house too—think aerosol sprays for furniture and carpet. Flea combs, powders, and collars usually don't cut it for long-term control, and herbal remedies can sometimes be harmful, so it's best to stick with vet-recommended treatments.



Understanding Food Allergies

If your vet suspects a food allergy in your 18-month-old dog, it's worth exploring, even if he's been eating the same food for a while. Allergies occur when your dog's immune system overreacts to normally harmless substances, leading to skin issues like itching. The only real way to diagnose a food allergy is to try a low-allergy diet and see if it helps.

But it's not as easy as switching brands. Many pet foods have multiple ingredients—even those marketed as hypoallergenic! What you need is a simple diet with ingredients your dog hasn't had before. Your vet can recommend suitable commercial foods or guide you in creating a home-cooked diet. Hydrolysed protein diets can also be useful for diagnosis and treatment.

What if the Low-Allergy Diet Didn't Work?



If changing their diet doesn't help, remember that allergies can stem from other sources too, like dust mites or pollen. Allergy tests can provide insights, but they won't

always give a full picture, and they're not always necessary. Vets can often make diagnoses by looking at your dog's itch pattern and ruling out other causes.

For many dogs, managing allergies requires ongoing treatment, like medicated baths, and you'll always need to keep up with flea prevention, as fleas can make allergic reactions worse.

Taking Care of Sore Patches

If you spot a sore patch on your dog, it's best to contact your vet right away. In the meantime, try to prevent your dog from scratching or licking the area; you might need an Elizabethan collar or even some socks on their paws to stop them from making it worse. A cool saltwater rinse can soothe the area, or you can apply witch hazel or chamomile lotion for comfort. Just remember, flea bites are common, so checking with your vet for effective flea treatments is a good idea.

Is It a Tick?

If you see a funny bump on your dog's side, it might be a tick! These little critters are usually white to grey and about five millimetres long. They hang out in grassy areas and can carry diseases, so it's best to remove them. If you're unsure how to do this,



your vet can help!

Signs of Ear Problems

If your dog is shaking their head a lot, it might mean there's an issue with their ears. If it happens suddenly, a foreign body like a grass seed could be lodged in there, and a trip to the vet is needed ASAP.

Ear mites can also cause irritation, leading to wax build-up and discomfort. If your vet diagnoses this, they'll prescribe treatment for all pets in the household to prevent spreading.

Ear issues can range from straightforward to recurrent, so regular ear cleaning is crucial. If you're advised to do this at home, only use products your vet recommends.

Cleaning Your Dog's Ears

Here's how to clean your dog's ears safely:

1. **Positioning:** Lift the ear flap to straighten the canal.
2. **Ear Cleaner:** Put a few drops of ear cleaner in the opening and gently massage the base of the ear. Hold the flap to stop immediate head shaking!
3. **Wipe Away:** Use cotton wool to clean up any overflow, but steer clear of cotton buds in the ear.
4. **Praise and Treat:** After cleaning, give your dog some love and a treat!

If their ear seems very red or painful after cleaning, make sure to contact your vet.



Managing Ear Swellings

If your dog is shaking their head vigorously, they might develop a blood blister in the ear flap, known as a haematoma. If left untreated, this can lead to a “cauliflower ear.” It's best to see your vet, who may recommend a procedure to drain the fluid.

Taking care of your dog's skin and ears might seem like a lot, but it's essential for their overall health and happiness. Regular checks and grooming will help keep your furry friend feeling their best!