

## Article 30

Grooming is as important for your pooch as it is for you.

Dear Gus,

What do you recommend for proper grooming and bathing for a dog?

Tina H., Orange

Tina, grooming covers a lot of ground. First off, think of grooming as not just something that helps your dog's appearance (and smell!), but as something that is critical for his health and helps you to bond with him.

Grooming includes your trips to the veterinarian, where your pet's ears will be checked, his nails may be clipped, and he will have a fine-toothed comb run over his coat to check for fleas.

You should include in your routine grooming further nail clipping, brushing and combing his coat, cleaning his ears, brushing his teeth, and a gentle massage.

For good oral hygiene and the prevention of "doggy breath," you should be brushing your dog's teeth with special canine toothpaste on a daily basis. Your dog's teeth should also be cleaned by your veterinarian routinely. Remember that your dog's teeth are basically the equivalent of your hands, so dental care is very important to his long-term health.

The food that you feed your pet is also very important to his overall health and his dental health – never feed your dog solely canned or soft food since chewing on hard foods help to remove tartar.

While cleaning your dog's teeth inspect his gums.

Color changes can indicate a number of medical problems so make your veterinarian aware of any changes you see.

Massage, combing, and brushing will help to identify any problem areas with your pet's coat or skin.

Dogs under stress typically will shed in clumps, so this can be a sign that something is amiss.

You will also learn what are normal "bumps" on your pet—for example, bumps that are symmetrical (like on both sides of his head) are generally going to be normal parts of his anatomy.

But, a new bump, or something on one side only could indicate a tumor or cyst.

You also will find any ticks that may have attached to him. Since the general rule is that it takes 24 hours for a tick to transmit a disease, daily grooming will allow you to identify and remove ticks before they cause a serious problem.

And, very importantly, this part of grooming will create a lifelong bond between you and your pet.

Your dog's nails should be clipped every 14 days. If you hear a "tick, tick, tick" when your dog walks on a hard surface, his nails are too long.

There are a variety of good clippers on the market and for a novice owner I suggest the type with a guard which prevents you from clipping too short, which results in bleeding since there is a vein in the nail.

Your dog may at first dislike having his nails clipped, but over time and with plenty of praise for good behavior, he will accept- this as a routine practice.

Your dog's ears should also be cleaned every 14 days. You should never smell a foul odor from your dog's ears - this can indicate an ear infection. Clean your dog's ears by wrapping damp, not wet, cotton around your finger, and pulling the ear back and away from his body.

And lastly, bath time. Depending on how frequently -you bathe -your dog, and the condition of his coat, you may want to use a medicated shampoo and conditioner.

When bathing your dog indoors in either the bathtub or the sink, a hand sprayer is recommended so that you can be sure your dog is -thoroughly rinsed off. Ask your vet for a recommendation on the appropriate shampoo.

I hope this helps you to have a healthier pet!

GUS

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