



FUR WARS

WINNING THE BATTLE AGAINST SHEDDING TAKES VIGILANCE
AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF FUR TYPES.

by SANDY ROBINS photo SHAINA FISHMAN

Whether you're getting ready to adopt a new pet or are used to all your furniture and rugs appearing to be the same color—that of Max's fur—learning to control shedding is an important aspect of pet care. Loose hairs can get matted; mats can make your dog or cat uncomfortable. Happily, you can reduce the effects of shedding with regular bathing and brushing to remove dead hair.

THE CANINE COAT

To know how to combat your dog's shedding you should understand the kind of hair you're dealing with. Dogs' fur varies in length, texture, thickness, and hair-growth patterns—and fur can vary on different parts of a dog's body (see "Canine Coat Types," page 24).

Along with a range of hair types, dogs display a variety of shedding patterns influenced by seasonal conditions such as hours of daylight and temperature. "They're also governed by hormones, metabolism, reproduction cycle, and age," says certified master dog groomer Christina Pawlosky, owner of Pet Connection in Warren, Ohio. "And with some dogs, the longer the hair grows, the less often that dog will shed."

Research grooming requirements for your dog so you know what type of shedding patterns to expect and how to combat them year-round, Pawlosky says. If you've adopted a mixed-breed dog, use a DNA test to determine primary breed makeup, which will give shedding clues.

CANINE COAT TYPES

Understand your dog's coat to figure out what you can do to defeat shedding.

- **SMOOTH COAT** (e.g., beagle, boxer, bulldog). Their hair is sleek, shiny, and close to the body. Some dogs with shorter smooth coats need to be brushed daily to reduce shedding.
- **DOUBLE COAT** (e.g., Border collie, Labrador retriever, Siberian husky). They wear a short, thick undercoat beneath a longer topcoat of guard hairs. Double-coated dogs with wiry guard hairs (such as the Lakeland terrier) need their coats to be hand-stripped to remove dead hair by the root.
- **WIRE COAT** (e.g., Airedale terrier, Brussels griffon, Scottish terrier). Hair texture ranges from coarse and wiry to smooth. These dogs shed less than many other breeds, but you still need to remove tangles as necessary.
- **SILKY COAT** (e.g., cocker spaniel, Irish setter, Yorkshire terrier). Their hair is long, straight, and silky. Such coats require daily brushing.
- **CURLY COAT** (e.g., bichon frise, poodle, Portuguese water dog). Coats range from tight curls to wavy fur. Corded coats are a variation of curly. Grooming needs vary dramatically between breeds, so check with a professional groomer for the best approach.

MAKE IT ENJOYABLE

Start your war on shed hair early by establishing a grooming routine soon after acquiring a new puppy or kitten. The same goes for an older pet, although it may take a little longer to convince him that being groomed is a pleasurable experience. Tasty rewards help confirm that being brushed and combed is something to enjoy.

Your success rate for a grooming session will depend on timing and your pet's state of relaxation. In other words, don't pick up a brush or comb when you get home from work and your dog expects to go on a brisk walk. If your pet is restless, don't force the issue; simply reschedule. Before a meal can be a good time, though, because your pet will be receptive to treats. He can get the rest of his meal after the grooming.

Let your pet indicate the space where he most enjoys being brushed. Cats often like to lie on the floor, a counter, or your lap. Your dog may enjoy being brushed outside on the lawn or patio or inside while he's hanging out on the couch.

From a practical point of view, it may be a good idea to set up a table outside on the patio or in the garage, so you don't have to bend down to do your work. Cover the table with a towel, yoga mat, or other surface your pet feels secure standing on.



HANDSON GLOVES
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CATIT SHORTHAIR GROOMING KIT
Everything you need for purrfect grooming includes a rubber curry brush and fine comb. \$40; Catit; usa.catit.com



ANDIS PREMIUM STEEL COMB
Removes tangles, dirt, and loose hair. Ideal for all sizes of dogs and cats. \$9; Andis; andis.com



WHEN THE FUR FLIES

Regular bathing and brushing greatly reduces a pet's accumulation of dead hair and prevents it from landing on your favorite chair or pair of black pants. "It's a good idea to brush before a bath and again afterward," says groomer Dawn Squadrito, owner of Hairy Poppins, a mobile grooming service in Loxahatchee, Florida. "I also like to use a rubber-backed curry brush in the tub to loosen the hair. It's an inexpensive but very effective tool. And most dogs love the gentle massage [it provides]."

A curry brush shouldn't be the only tool in your collection. If your dog has curly hair or a thick double coat, he may require a slicker brush and spray conditioner to remove dead hair and tangles. Fortunately, most grooming tools spell out specifically what type of coat they are best suited for, so take time to read packaging descriptions or seek advice from a professional groomer.

Keep your dog's comfort in mind. "It's important to find tools that are gentle on the skin; repetitive motion can cause irritation," Squadrito says. "A deep-conditioning shampoo followed by a conditioner helps soften skin so hair is released more easily."

THE FELINE FUR STORY

Shedding is a normal, natural event in a cat's life—irrespective of hair length—because the feline fur growth cycle allows each hair to grow, rest, die, and then fall out.

"Cats who have access to the outdoors typically shed twice a year: in spring to lose the heavy winter undercoat and in fall to prepare for the 'grow-in' of the next winter's undercoat," says Lynn Paolillo, certified feline master groomer and certifier with the National Cat Groomers Institute.

As with dogs, feline shedding is largely influenced by the number of hours a cat is exposed to sunlight in a day (called a photoperiod). Cats who live indoors, especially when they're in homes with both heat and air-conditioning, can be in a constant state of shedding because their biological system becomes confused by temperature controls.

Cats are efficient self-groomers, but they need human help removing loose fur—the more, the better. When cats groom themselves, they ingest loose hairs, which causes hairballs. These, in turn, can lead to a dangerous intestinal blockage. In addition, excess dead hair forms knotted clumps and huge mats.

"The rule is that the more hair a cat has, the more often maintenance is required," Paolillo says. (She suggests several sessions a week for long-hair cats and weekly grooming for short-hair cats.) "For long-hair cats, maintenance is particularly important in areas that tend to mat faster, such as armpits, chest, belly, rear legs, tail, and the base of the tail leading up the back."

In addition to length, more hair also refers to density and "fluffiness," Paolillo says. "Even short-hair cats can develop hard mats that ultimately require being shaved."

KITTY TOOL SCHOOL

When it comes to deshedding tools for cats, the National Cat Groomers Institute recommends a 6- to 8-inch-long metal comb with fine to medium teeth. This comb will remove dead coat and catch all the tangles and mats that lie hidden underneath without irritating a cat's delicate skin. A rubber curry brush is also great for lifting loose hair. And, like dogs, most felines enjoy the massage this brush offers.

"We don't recommend using a metal deshedding tool or rake," Paolillo says. "They can damage hair, which makes mats form faster. They can also damage delicate skin."

photos BLAINE MOATS

MYTH BUSTER

Despite what you've heard, all dogs shed. They just shed at different rates.

→ It helps to understand the four phases of canine hair growth. The anagen phase is when hair grows to its genetically predetermined length. The catagen phase is a transitional phase during which hair stops growing. Telogen is a resting phase that lasts until the exogenous phase, when old hair falls out (shedding) to make room for new growth.

→ The length of each of these phases differs by breed. Some dogs shed completely only once or twice a year. Other dogs shed hair from different parts of their bodies at different times, so it seems like they're constantly shedding. When a dog's coat spends more time in the anagen phase, it seems like he barely sheds at all.

→ "To better understand how coat type affects shedding, you need to understand how a dog's hair grows," says groomer Dawn Squadrito. "Hair texture hasn't got anything to do with shedding patterns. But if not regularly brushed, a wired or curly coat is more likely to trap dead hairs than a smooth coat."



KONG ZOOM GROOM
This dog- and cat-friendly brushing tool with gentle rubber teeth can also be used in the tub to massage shampoo and conditioner into the coat. \$12; Kong; petco.com