

## Grooming your Afghan Hound

Afghan hounds are tall and elegant dogs with long, flowing coats. They were originally developed in Afghanistan in the 19th century as hunting dogs. They were used to hunt large prey over rough and unstable terrain. This may seem contradictory to the current perception of the breed as one of the most pampered pooches.

Afghans require a lot of grooming maintenance to keep their long silky hair in top condition. Even if you don't have a show dog, a clean and healthy coat will enhance your pleasure of owning this graceful breed. Hair is the signature feature of the Afghan and, when properly cared for, it brings drama and elegance to the Afghan's every move.

The natural state of an Afghan coat does not require you to clip or trim the dog's hair. The long, silky coat occurs naturally, but this does not imply that the coat is maintenance-free. The keys to keeping an Afghan coat beautiful are regular bathing and maintenance grooming.

Afghan puppies require little grooming as they have a short, plush coat of hair. At this age, daily brushing is more for getting the animal used to grooming than for necessity. Between 9 months and 2 years of age,

Afghans begin to shed their puppy coat and the silky adult coat begins to grow in. Daily brushing is an absolute necessity during this period to remove the old puppy hair. Skimping on brushing will result in unwieldy mats of the puppy coat tangled with the new growth adult coat.

Adult Afghans only need to be brushed three times a week and bathed up to twice a week for show dogs, and every two weeks for family pets. The breed has a dual coat of a thicker undercoat and a silky overcoat. The coats are essentially two different types of hair and need to be brushed separately. If you only brush the outer coat, your dog will develop mats. A pin brush will penetrate the undercoat sufficiently and smooth the outer coat as well.

Before bathing an Afghan, brush the dog thoroughly and remove any mats present. Use your fingers to search for mats behind the ears and in the armpits of the dog. If you are bathing your dog yourself, you may find a raised tub with a hand sprayer will make the job much easier.

When you apply the mild shampoo, make sure to work it into the coat well but never rub or scrub the dog's skin. Rinse well until the water runs clear and then apply a cream rinse. Afghan coats benefit from the cream rinse and the treatment makes their overcoat silky, shiny and tangle-free.

Afghans are a breed that must be blown dry. Allow your dog to drip dry for about an hour on towels. Brush from the skin out and allow the blow dryer to part the dog's coat. Most owners start at the head, and work their way back to the tail of the dog.

Another important part of Afghan maintenance grooming is using a "snood." These protective tube-like head covers keep the dog's long ear fringe out of the way when it is eating. Snoods can also be used to protect the coat quality of the head and ears of show dogs.

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### About the Author

Robin Darch, has a website, <http://www.mypetdog.org> to help you find all the information you need about your pet dog.