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THE ART OF PRESENTING A COMPETITIVE SHOW DOG

Helpful Hints on Bathing and Grooming the Afghan Hound or Any Long-Coated Breed

INTRODUCTION TO THE DOG SHOW WORLD

I have enjoyed and profited from the dog show industry in many ways, both emotionally and financially.

Emotionally, through all of my wonderful experiences, accomplishments, and good friendships, together with a lot of fun times. Finding a passion I love has fulfilled many of my dreams. It has allowed me to enjoy my dogs in work and play.

Financially, through the success of our SummerWinds business, which has supported us for over 45 years, as well as through the professional handling of many dogs in many different breeds.

If you are taking the time to read this, I would presume that you have a dog — perhaps an Afghan Hound or another long-coated breed; perhaps a curly or harsh, wiry coat, or even a short-coated breed. Maybe your dog is a pet or a rescue that you and your family simply love. You may not show at all, but you still enjoy seeing your dog in a beautiful coat and want to do the very best by him or her.

Your dog might be a show dog that you think would be fun to show occasionally, perhaps to try to make him or her a champion, and you are interested in learning how to train and groom for the shows. At this stage, you would be called the hobbyist.

You might discover that you enjoy showing your dogs so much that you have, as we say, been bitten by the dog show bug. If your dog is competitive and begins to win, you may even experience the adrenaline rush that sometimes accompanies a big win. Now I'm warning you: if this does happen to you, hang on tight, because this is when the dog show sport — or game, according to the terminology — becomes a whole new adventure.

The sport of showing dogs is a subculture in itself. We have our own rules, laws, language and terminology. You will quickly find that one dog isn't enough. Your house and car aren't big enough, and don't be surprised if you end up moving out in the country where you can have kennel facilities. According to how ambitious you become, your life can be in for a big change. I call it "After I Went to the Dogs."





Rosemary Sutton with a SummerWinds Afghan Hound

One of the blessings at this point in my life is being able to share some of the experiences and knowledge I have gained over many years of participating in the dog show industry. I have been called both an expert and an authority — among other things...oops. I am not sure that either title is a fact, but what I have learned is that an expert is someone who lives a long way away from you. So, what I am about to share are methods that I have found work for me.

I purchased my first Afghan Hound in 1968. Over many years of trial and error, I have found shortcuts that gave me the same results as methods that were much more time-consuming. Choosing the Afghan Hound breed alone is a very labor-intensive commitment. If you, too, have chosen Afghans as your breed, let me warn you right now: you can find some shortcuts, but truthfully, you are in for a ton of work and grooming. So you might as well get used to it!

The acronym KISS — Keep It Simple, Stupid — means learning simple steps and learning how to do them correctly. It doesn't matter whom you learn from as long as the method works for you. Many years ago, I had a friend who used to say, "Check the record." That would be some of the best advice I could give you. I have taken a little from this person and a little from another, tested what I learned, and kept the things that worked.

One of my favorite sayings is, "When you're green, you're growing; when you're ripe, you rot!" I try to learn something new every day, because you are never too old or too experienced to learn. What I love most about a truly sincere novice is their ambition. They are like mental sponges — eager for information and eager to learn how to groom, how to do it correctly, and what products will give them the best results.

Anyone who knows me well enough knows not to ask me a question if they don't want an in-depth answer. To say that detail and full explanations are my forte would be an understatement. Some people are very good at Reader's Digest responses; there are others who prefer the "Gone With the Wind" type of answer. For those who like to cut to the chase, I have organized this article with subtitles so you can skip over what doesn't interest you and still go away with a little more understanding and knowledge than you had before.

The rest is for those who always have a million more questions after I think I have answered all of them. I have gone into more depth and detail for those with inquiring minds who “really want to know.” I find that one of the hardest subjects to teach is a subject that someone isn't inquisitive about — from the basics to the extravagant. Yet people often want to know how to complete a task and be good at it before they truly understand the whole structure of the project.



World Show 1994

If you understand the basics of why something is the way it is, and how to keep it protected and in good condition, the easier it will be for you to accomplish your goal. My effort here is to share with you how to be a winner and to give you the ability to exhibit and put down a dog in pristine coat condition, well trained and well behaved, making the experience of showing dogs rewarding and pleasant for both you and your dog.

CHAPTER TWO

NUTRITION FOR THE CANINE

The way to achieve the best results for a beautiful coat on an Afghan Hound or any long-, short-, curly-, or harsh-coated breed is to have a dog that is first healthy, clean, and well conditioned. Many people ask me, “How do I get a gorgeous coat on my dog?” My answer is simple: it starts with a healthy dog. A sick, malnourished, or diseased dog cannot produce a gorgeous coat. You must start from the inside and then work out.

A healthy dog, if genetically factored correctly, can produce a wonderful, strong, shiny, and lustrous coat. It all starts with the nutrition fed to your dog. I believe in feeding the dog as a whole, rather than expecting one food to provide everything.

For a full-grown Afghan, I recommend approximately one to two cups of dry dog food per day, according to the dog's weight and size, along with one-third of a pound of fresh raw or lightly cooked meat. The amount should always be appropriate for the individual dog, its size, age, activity level, and condition.

Along with this, I use Xtraordinary En-Z-Ymes, Trav-L-Stress Relief, and Ocean-S-Finest Kelp to provide additional nutritional support.

I know many people have strong opinions about feeding raw meat or feeding only dry dog food. I have always believed that an all-raw diet can be difficult to balance and can be time-consuming, especially with the freezer space and preparation required. I prefer to combine a quality dry food with fresh meat and the nutritional support I have found useful over many years.

Of course, I want the kibble to be safe, but all kibble is highly processed and much of the enzymes are killed during the cooking process. So I am not feeding just kibble and relying on dry dog food to supply every nutrient my dogs need.

I also believe that hair and nails are among the last parts of the body to receive nutrients. The body first uses available nutrients for vital organs and other essential functions. When an animal is deficient in nutrients, the hair and nails can be among the first places where the effects become visible.

That is why I add the fresh meat, our Summerwinds Health-E-Coat Supplement, and Xtraordinary En-Z-Ymes. This is the approach that has worked for me over many years and has supported the health, energy, longevity, and beautiful coats of my dogs.

The goal is always the same: start with the healthy dog, then build and protect the beautiful coat.



Adidas at 11 months — Best of Breed over three Specials

CHAPTER THREE

SKIN PROBLEMS & DISORDERS

Whether you are trying to cultivate a show coat or just keep a pet in healthy condition, the skin is one of the most important tissues to maintain. It is the largest organ in the body. If your animal suffers from skin disorders, not only will he be uncomfortable and sometimes even in pain, there is no way on earth you will be able to put a gorgeous show coat on your animal until you find the source and address the problem. So if your animal starts to show signs of any skin problems, deal with it immediately. Do not procrastinate; these problems do not usually cure themselves.

SummerWinds has two products that can aid in the relief of itching: Summerwinds Stop-N-Itch Bath and Summerwinds Stop-N-Itch Lotion

Dry and itchy skin can come from many different causes, as I am sure you are aware.

Skin structure: epidermis, dermis, subcutaneous tissue, follicles, glands and nerve endings.



Close study of the Afghan Hound head and coat

COMMON CAUSES OF DRY OR ITCHY SKIN

- 1) Allergies from foods or things in their environment.
- 2) Topical products, including shampoos, conditioners and styling agents.
- 3) Cold and dry weather, or hot and humid changes in the seasons.
- 4) Fleas or ticks.
- 5) Stress may aggravate skin problems or make an existing problem harder to manage.
- 6) Disease or yeast infection.

FINDING THE CAUSE

Below are a couple of websites that were included with this discussion and explain these subjects more scientifically.

<http://www.thepetcenter.com/gen/itch.html>

<http://www.k9web.com/dog-faqs/medical/canine-allergies.html>

Healthy skin is the foundation for healthy hair — and healthy hair is the foundation for a beautiful coat.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE COAT — WHAT MAKES IT BEAUTIFUL?

A beautiful coat does not happen by accident. It is the result of genetics, nutrition, healthy skin, proper products, good grooming, protection, and consistency. You can have all the right products in the world, but if the dog is not healthy or the coat is being damaged, you will be fighting an uphill battle.

One of the first things to understand is that long hair does not automatically mean a beautiful or healthy coat. A coat can be long and still be dry, brittle, dull, thin, broken, or full of mats. What we are trying to cultivate is healthy hair with the correct texture, strength, moisture balance, and condition for that particular breed.

Every breed has its own coat characteristics, and even within a breed there can be considerable variation. Some coats are straight, some are wavy, some are curly, some are harsh, some are silky, and some are combinations of several textures. Understanding what your breed is supposed to have is important before you start trying to change what nature gave you.

There are also single coats and double coats. A short-coated breed may require an entirely different approach from a long-coated breed, and a wire-coated breed may need a different grooming method again. There is no one grooming recipe that works perfectly for every dog.

The Afghan Hound has a single coat, and that beautiful, flowing coat requires careful handling. One of the mistakes I see is treating a long coat as though it should always be groomed completely dry. In my experience, working with the coat with water and conditioner can make a tremendous difference in preventing breakage and making the grooming process easier.



The long, flowing Afghan Hound coat

A long coat is something you cultivate. It takes time to grow, and once you have it, you must protect it. Every time a hair breaks, mats, is pulled out unnecessarily, or is damaged by excessive heat or harsh products, you are losing some of the work you have spent months growing.

That is why I look at the entire dog when I evaluate a coat. Is the skin healthy? Is the hair growing properly? Does the coat have the right texture? Is it moisturized without being greasy? Is it free of mats and unnecessary breakage? Does it move correctly when the dog moves? And, finally, can it be groomed and presented in a way that makes the dog look its very best?

I have always believed that you should learn, observe, experiment carefully, and find people whose dogs and methods you admire. Listen to advice, but don't blindly follow everything you hear. What works beautifully on one dog may not work the same way on another.

Your job is to learn your own dog. Once you understand what you are looking at and what your dog needs, grooming becomes much less mysterious. You begin to recognize what is helping the coat and what is hurting it — and that knowledge is worth far more than any single grooming trick.

A beautiful coat is cultivated, protected, and maintained — not simply grown.

ANATOMY OF THE HAIR — AND HOW TO PROTECT IT

If you are going to cultivate a beautiful long coat, it helps to understand what you are actually working with. Hair is not simply “hair.” It is a living structure while it is being formed, and once it emerges from the skin, the part we see is a very specialized protein structure that can be protected, damaged, conditioned and managed.

THE ROOT AND THE SHAFT

The hair can be divided into two parts: the root and the shaft. The root is within the skin, where a pouch-like structure called the follicle surrounds it. At the base of the root is the bulb. Cells in the center of the bulb divide and push the older cells upward. As those cells move upward, they slowly die and form the hard hair shaft.

Hair is composed primarily of protein, a hard fibrous type known as keratin. That is one reason nutrition matters so much when you are trying to grow and maintain a beautiful coat.

THE THREE LAYERS OF THE HAIR SHAFT



Hair shaft: cuticle, cortex and medulla

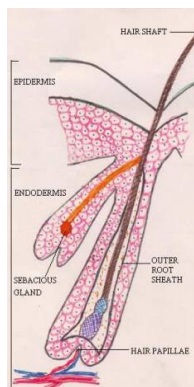
Cuticle — the transparent outer layer. It protects the inner layers. A healthy, well-maintained cuticle gives the hair a shiny appearance; a damaged cuticle produces a dull, lifeless look.

Medulla — the innermost layer, composed of large cells.

Cortex — the layer between the cuticle and medulla. It contains pigment and keratin and determines much of the bulk and strength of the hair.

The hair follicle also contains oil-secreting glands that help give the hair its natural shine. Stress, illness and inadequate nutrition can affect the condition and appearance of the coat.

THE HAIR GROWTH CYCLE



Hair grows in a cycle. A growing hair eventually reaches its full growth, enters a resting period, and is later shed as a new hair begins growing in its place. A little daily hair fall is a normal part of this process. Excessive hair loss, however, is not something to simply ignore.

Hair follicle, root, sebaceous gland and papillae.

Hair shaft: cuticle, cortex and medulla.

ANATOMY OF THE HAIR — CONTINUED

HAIR — AND DIFFERENT TEXTURES

Hair thickness varies from individual to individual, and from animal to animal. In the material used for this article, hair thickness is described as ranging from approximately 17 to 181 microns, with flaxen hair generally finer and black hair generally coarser.

Hair shape and texture are strongly influenced by genetics. Nutritional status and intentional alteration, such as heat or chemical treatments, can also affect the physical appearance of hair.

Hair color is largely the result of pigments — chemical compounds that reflect certain wavelengths of visible light.

NOW THAT WE KNOW WHAT WE ARE WORKING WITH... PROTECT IT!

Growing gorgeous coat is one thing. Keeping that coat gorgeous is another. You can have excellent genetics and good nutrition, but if the hair shaft is continually being damaged by grooming, heat, chemicals, environment or improper products, you will spend a great deal of time trying to repair what could have been protected in the first place.

I have always said that you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Genetics give you your starting point, but proper cultivation and protection determine how much of that potential you are able to preserve.

Start the puppy early — and start yourself early, too. The sooner you learn to handle the coat correctly, the easier it becomes to maintain it as it grows.

CAUTION — THINGS THAT CAN DAMAGE A COAT

- Shampooing without restoring the coat properly afterward can leave the hair dry, dull and more vulnerable to breakage.
- Extreme heat from blow drying can damage the hair, especially when the coat has not been properly protected.
- Chemical treatments such as tinting, perming or straightening can alter and weaken the hair.
- Sun and ultraviolet exposure can damage the coat; protection is especially important for a cultivated show coat.
- Chlorine can be harsh on the hair and skin.
- Hair sprays, bodifiers, texturizers and similar styling products can create buildup or affect the feel and condition of the coat.

THE DIFFERENT TYPE OF COATS IN DOGS

Coat Length

Long, medium and short. For example, both Old English sheep dogs and Afghans have long coats; however, the two breeds could not have grooming requirements that are more different. Even short-coated breeds can have different grooming requirements. The Labrador retriever and Miniature Pinscher are both shorthaired, but the first has a dense and oily coat, while the second coat is hard and close lying to the skin. Some dogs have coats between these two extremes. The Papillon, with its wavy coat and attractive frills on its ears, tail, and ruff, has a medium-length coat.

Hair Type

There are three types of hair types: straight, wire, and curly. Straight coats are perhaps the most familiar. The short-coated Whippet and the long-coated Rough Collie both have straight outer "guard hair" for their coats. Most of the Terrier's breeds have "wire" coats. The outer guard hairs that are straight in other breeds are harsh and kinked. Some sporting breeds to retrieve game from the water have curly oily coats. They can be soft or harsh, depending on the breed.

Coat Density

Coats are either single or double in density. Double coats consist of outer guard hairs, with an inner layer of shorter, finer coat called undercoat. This undercoat can be fine or downy, thick or thin. Dogs with single coats have the outer guard hairs, but lack the inner layer of undercoat. Most breeds with single coats also have long hair. Many single-coated dogs, like the Maltese, were developed to be decorative, rather than functional. Dogs from warm climates, like the Afghan hound also have single coats.

Grooming for Coat Type

Different coat types will have different grooming requirements briefly described below.

Short Coats

short straight coats are of course the easiest to care for, requiring occasional grooming with a slicker brush or a soft brush. However, those short-coated breeds with a dense undercoat will also require that undercoat to be groomed out on occasion. Using a brush known as a shedding rake like Untangle Shedding Rake to rid the dog from dead hair in the undercoat will prevent mats from forming. If mats form underneath the guard hairs and remain for any length of time, sores and hair loss, known as "hot spots" can occur. Some dogs, such as Alaskan Malamutes and German Shepherds, have such thick undercoats that they require frequent, if not daily, grooming to prevent these mats from forming in sensitive areas. Removing this dead undercoat will also cut down on the dog shedding his coat all over your house.

Wire Coats

wire-coated dogs have unique grooming needs. Each different breed of Terriers will have a little different trim on the head and body, but most will have a process called "stripping" which is done by hand or the aid of a stripping knife a couple times a year. Dead guard hairs are plucked for the dog's coat. Their hairs are loose and about to drop out so removing them does not cause the dog pain. This allows fresh new coat to grow in, along with preventing a lot of excess shedding.

Long Coats;

long coats require a lot of attention. Their coats must be groomed several times a week, if not daily, to ensure that they remain free of tangles and mats. Bathing once a week and thoroughly brushing and combing through the dogs coat will help to keep the matting under control. Long coated dogs with double coats require the same attention as double-coated shorthaired dogs. Single-coated long coated dogs have special grooming needs. Dogs with these kinds of coats, such as Afghan hounds and Maltese, should never be groomed when their coats are dry. Spray the coat first with water or conditioner such as Summerwinds Fine L Shine Cream Rinse or Summerwinds Stat-A-Way Spray before brushing or combing to prevent the coat from breakage. Matting in Single-coated breeds is a big problem and in order to keep the coats mat free they must be monitored frequently to prevent this from happening.

Unique Coats

Corded Coats;

are breeds that have curly hair and are allowed to mat forming "cords", similar to dreadlocks. The "cords" that form this kind of coat are specialized mats. They create a weather-resistant shield in herding and some hunting breeds. Dogs with corded coats require baths to keep their coats clean and order free. Corded coats take hours to dry following each bath.

Hairless Breeds;

have no coats. The American Hairless terrier and the Chinese Crested dogs are examples of hairless dogs. Their skin must be maintained, just as other dogs' coats are groomed. They need regular baths and moisturizer and sunscreen must be applied for their skin.

GENERAL PRODUCT FACTS

Natural or Organic

In hair care products there are no such thing as all natural products. Ingredients derived from natural sources lose their natural composition when they are processed to make cosmetic products. Cleaning ingredient in shampoos and conditioning agents in conditioners are just a few. They may start from plant derivatives, but are altered drastically to be a shampoo or conditioner. Adding natural or organic products to the shampoo or conditioner are done for performance enhancement.

SHAMPOO

The purpose of a shampoo is to clean the hair. It is important that shampoo does not clean too well, or all of the protective oils in the hair would be stripped out.

Detergents

The most common ingredient in shampoos is detergent, which is used in other products, a class of surfactants known as straight-chain alkyl benzene sulfonates. An example is Ammonium Lauryl Sulfate, or its sodium relative, or the slightly larger related molecule ammonium lauryl ether sulfate, sometimes abbreviated as ammonium laureth sulfate.

These detergents work best in water that has little calcium and magnesium, as these elements bind to the detergent and make an insoluble scum. So tetrasodium EDTA is used to sequester the calcium and magnesium from the detergent, while keeping them soluble so they rinse away without scum.

Cocamide DEA (or MEA or TEA) is used as a foaming agent to make the lather. The other surfactants will generate a certain amount of suds, but this foaming agent is added to get the amount just right. Besides its foam stabilizing effects, it is also a viscosity booster (it's thick).

The detergent cocamidopropyl betaine is added for several of its special properties. It is milder on the skin than the benzene suffocates, so adding it to the mix reduces the amount of the harsher detergents needed. It is thicker than the other ingredients, so it can be added to make the mix have the right viscosity. It has anti-static properties so the hair doesn't generate an electric charge and jump to the plastic combs and brushes used when drying the hair. It is a humectant, attracting moisture from the air, thus keeping hair from drying out. Lastly, it has antibiotic properties that can prevent spoiling of the shampoo.

Special effects

Sodium chloride (table salt) is used to thicken the mixture if the main surfactants are sodium lauryl sulfates. If the surfactants are ammonium based, then ammonium chloride is used. Salt can make the shampoo harsh, drying, sting the eyes, and irritating to the skin leaving it itchy. In Summerwinds Shine-Onnn, Summerwinds Take-A-Hike and Summerwinds Stop-N-Itch Bath there is no Sodium Chloride added.

Glycerin is added as a humectants (draws moisture from the air), as is propylene glycol, which is also a preservative.

All Summerwinds shampoo's have Amino acids added that act as conditioners.

Preservatives

Two widely used preservatives, DMDM hydantoin and imidasolidinyl urea are found in many shampoos, to prevent fungal and bacterial spoilage. They release formaldehyde to kill germs.

Sodium benzoate and 2-bromo-2nitropropane-1, 3-diol are other preservative's used in shampoos. It kills bacteria, fungi, and yeasts, and works well in acidic mixtures.

PH balance

The surface of a strand of hair is covered with overlapping sheets, somewhat like the scales on a fish, or the shingles on a house. This surface is called the cuticle.

Alkaline solutions raise these scales so they stand up. This makes the hair rougher, makes it look dull, and makes the hair shafts stick together due to the rough texture.

All Summerwinds Shampoos are made slightly acidic to keep the cuticle smooth and lying flat on the hair shaft.

As shampoo mixes with the water in the bath, or mixes with dirt on the hair, it can become less acidic as the acids mix with alkaline water or dirt. A compound that releases more acidifying ions when the acidity gets low, or absorbs acid when the acidity gets too high, is called a buffer.

A typical buffering agent used in shampoo is sodium citrate. Since the goal is to keep the shampoo slightly acid, the term "pH balanced" is actually a misnomer. The balance should be tipped slightly to the acidic side. Human pH is 5.5. A dog's pH is 6.5 all of our Summerwinds Shampoo's are 6.5 pH based. Many pet shampoos on the market are formulated for the human pH of 5.5, with a pet label applied to them.

CLARIFYING SHAMPOO

Clarifying shampoo is any of a variety of shampoo products that are formulated to deep clean the hair by removing product buildup from the hair shafts. Styling products, such as hair spray, conditioners, and even daily shampoos can cause buildup on the hair overtime. This buildup can add weight to the hair, making it flat and lifeless, as well as prevent the reflection of light, which makes the hair appear dull and dingy. Periodic use of a clarifying shampoo will help remove the buildup. Don't confuse the words buildup with residue. Residue can come from both the conditioning ingredient in shampoos and hair conditioners that will protect the hair shaft. Residue can be a positive and essential end result for the shiny, healthy finished look. Buildup occurs from the accumulation of residue, both from topical styling products as well as some internal medications.

Most clarifying shampoo products contain acetic acid. A chemical compound, though mild as far as acid goes, is known for its de-scaling abilities. As necessary as it is to keep the hair shaft clear of buildup it can be very difficult to find a clarifying shampoo that won't cause more harm than benefit. Many clarifying shampoos are not known for their conditioning abilities. With an improper formulation and harsh stripping agents in the ingredients some clarifying shampoos are great for aiding in the removal of unwanted buildup of oil, styling products, and other grime, but also remove the natural oils in hair and skin leaving the hair dull and dry out.

We at Summerwinds have worked long and hard on formulating our (NEW) Summerwinds Remove-A-Way Clarifying Shampoo. Finally arriving with a perfect answer to how to remove buildup with a mild formula is our Summerwinds Remove-A-Way Clarifying Shampoo. Summerwinds Remove-A-Way Clarifying Shampoo is effective in removing product buildup or any accumulation buildup on the hair shaft. It is formulated not to deep cleanse so thoroughly as to remove any natural oils and moisture in the hair and skin or residue from conditioning agents in shampoos and conditioners that we want to remain on the hair shaft. Along with maintaining the same 6.5 pH balance that is mild and gentle as all the other shampoos in our Summerwinds line.

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- Improper use of grooming tools can damage the hair shaft and cause unnecessary breakage.

CONDITIONERS HAVE DIFFERENT JOBS

The word “conditioner” can mean many different things. Not every coat needs the same type of conditioning, and the purpose of the product matters. Conditioners can be formulated as moisturizers, reconstructors, acidifiers, detanglers, thermal protectors, glossers or polishers, and oil or essential-fatty-acid treatments.

Moisturizers help attract and hold moisture. Reconstructors are generally designed to help improve damaged hair. Acidifying products help bring the cuticle back toward a smoother, more compact condition. Detanglers reduce friction so the comb can move through the coat with less breakage. Protective oils can help maintain elasticity and protect the hair from environmental and grooming stress.

THE BIG OIL DEBATE

There has always been plenty of discussion about oils in coat care. My philosophy is simple: use the right product, for the right purpose, in the right amount. SummerWinds Protect-A-Coat Oil Conditioner is designed as a conditioning and protective treatment. It can help maintain moisture, elasticity and manageability while protecting the hair from the everyday wear that comes with growing a long coat.

The goal is not to make the dog look oily. The goal is to protect the hair so that it can remain healthy, flexible and beautiful while it is being cultivated.

SHAMPOO CLEANS. CONDITIONER CONDITIONS. PROTECTION PROTECTS.

These jobs are related, but they are not identical. Shampoo is meant to cleanse and be rinsed away. Conditioner is meant to condition the hair, helping restore the feel and condition of the coat after cleansing. Protection is what helps the coat withstand grooming, drying, brushing and environmental exposure.

That is the SummerWinds 1-2-3 Treatment: Clean it. Restore it. Protect it.

Microscopic view of the hair shaft.

CHAPTER SIX

BATHING & CONDITIONING — THE FOUNDATION OF A BEAUTIFUL COAT

By now, you understand that a beautiful coat starts from the inside with a healthy dog, healthy skin and proper nutrition. Now comes the part where we have to keep that coat beautiful. Growing a gorgeous coat is one thing; keeping it gorgeous is another.

There are many different ways to bathe and groom a long-coated dog. What follows is the method I have developed and used over many years with my own dogs. Once you understand why each step is done, you can adapt the method to the individual dog and coat in front of you.

GETTING THE COAT COMPLETELY WET



Rosemary Sutton presenting a SummerWinds Afghan Hound

Whether you use the standing method or the lying-down method, the first thing is to get the coat thoroughly saturated with lukewarm water. A long, thick coat can take time to wet all the way to the skin.

For faster wetting and shampooing, I use a dog-washing hose attachment with a soap dispenser sprayer. I can add either shampoo or cream rinse to the dispenser, which speeds up the process by wetting the coat and beginning the cleaning process at the same time.

THE STANDING METHOD

Place the dog securely in the tub and begin rinsing with lukewarm water. Work methodically until the entire coat is thoroughly wet.

If there is buildup from styling products or other products previously used on the coat, begin with SummerWinds Remove-A-Way Clarifying Shampoo according to its directions. Follow with SummerWinds Shine-Onnn Shampoo, diluted as directed.

Work the shampoo into the coat by squeezing it in a downward motion rather than rubbing in circles. Circular rubbing can tangle long hair. Let the shampoo do the cleaning rather than trying to scrub the coat into submission.

Rinse thoroughly with lukewarm water. The coat should be truly clean before you begin conditioning.

THE LYING-DOWN METHOD

If I am using a conventional tub, I like to train the dog to lie down in the tub. Fill the tub with water to approximately one-third of the dog's rear hocks while he is standing. Add the shampoo or conditioner you are using at the appropriate dilution and mix it into the water.

Then have the dog lie down in the tub. Scoop the water-and-product mixture over the dog again and again. This method can save a great deal of time because the coat becomes completely wet while the product is being applied.

A dog may resist this the first few times. That is one reason I strongly believe in starting puppies early and teaching them that bathing and grooming are simply part of life.

TEACHING THE DOG TO LIE DOWN IN THE TUB

Kneel in front of the tub facing the side of the standing dog. With one hand, gently move the shoulder away from you while using the other hand to guide the far rear hock toward you. This takes the dog off balance and encourages him to lie down.

He may try to jump right back up. Calmly hold the shoulders and hindquarters, tell him to stay and reassure him that everything is okay. It may take several attempts before he understands what you want. The important thing is to make the experience calm and predictable.

SHAMPOOING

If needed, begin with SummerWinds Remove-A-Way Clarifying Shampoo to remove product buildup. Then use SummerWinds Shine-Onnn Shampoo, diluted as directed, to remove dirt, oil and remaining buildup.

Squeeze the shampoo downward through the coat, being careful not to tangle the hair. Allow the shampoo to work for a minimum of three minutes, then rinse completely with lukewarm water.

Do not rush this part. A coat that is not thoroughly clean will not condition or groom properly.

CONDITIONING WITH FINE-L-SHINE

Next, apply SummerWinds Fine-L-Shine Crème Rinse Conditioner, diluted as directed, over the entire dog.

Allow the conditioner to remain on the coat for a minimum of three minutes. Whether you rinse it completely or leave some in depends on the individual dog, coat texture and condition.

Thick, fine coats may comb and detangle more easily when the conditioner is completely rinsed out.

Dry, damaged or coarser coats may benefit from leaving some conditioner in the hair as a deeper conditioning treatment.

There is no one formula that works identically on every dog. You will learn what works best for each individual coat by trying both methods and paying attention to the result.

PROTECT-A-COAT — CONDITION AND PROTECT

Finally, SummerWinds Protect-A-Coat Oil Conditioner can be used as a conditioning treatment and to help restore elasticity to damaged hair. It is also useful as a preventative treatment for coats that are already in good condition.

Protect-A-Coat is intended for conditioning treatments and maintenance grooming. I do not recommend using it as the final conditioner for show grooming because it can leave the coat oily.

The amount of dilution depends upon the dog, the amount and texture of the coat, and what you are trying to accomplish. Some areas may benefit from a more concentrated application, such as ear tips when wrapping or areas needing extra protection.

On dark-coated dogs, I am careful about putting an oil mixture over the saddle or short coat on the back. Some dogs may develop visible dander there, and while that may simply be part of normal skin renewal, it is not something I want to see in a finished coat.

THE HOT TOWEL TREATMENT

For a really deep conditioning treatment, apply Protect-A-Coat and wrap the dog in towels for approximately 10 to 15 minutes. The towels can be warmed first for an added warming effect.

This is a good time to clean the ears, trim toenails or clean the teeth while you are waiting. When you are finished, rinse thoroughly with lukewarm water. Pay particular attention to rinsing well because the towel treatment can cause the coat to clump together.

Another option is to leave Protect-A-Coat in the coat rather than rinsing it out. In that case, the warming towels are not necessary because the product remains in the coat until the next bath.

I also sometimes combine Fine-L-Shine Crème Rinse and Protect-A-Coat, dilute them together and let the mixture remain on the dog for at least three minutes. It saves time by combining two conditioning steps into one.

ONE LAST PIECE OF COMMON SENSE

Some people groom completely damp; others prefer to blow dry and brush at the same time. I prefer to work with the coat while it is damp for many maintenance procedures because I can feel where mats and tangles are and work through them carefully.

If you use a dryer, remember that heat is not harmless. Protect the coat appropriately and do not mistake drying quickly for grooming correctly. Excessive heat can damage the hair's elasticity and condition.

Once the bath and conditioning are complete, it is time to move from the tub to the grooming table — and that is where the bath becomes the finished coat.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SHOW GROOM — TURNING A BEAUTIFUL COAT INTO A SHOW COAT

There is a difference between having a beautiful coat and presenting that coat as a finished show coat. The foundation is the same: a healthy dog, good nutrition, healthy skin, the right products and regular maintenance. The show groom adds the final precision that allows the coat to be presented at its best.

The show groom is done very much like the maintenance bath we have just discussed. The difference is in the final preparation and the attention to how the coat will look when the dog walks into the ring.

START WITH A CLEAN COAT

If the dog is extremely dirty, or if you have used a heavier amount of Protect-A-Coat during maintenance grooming and the coat is extra oily, you may need a second shampooing with SummerWinds Shine-Onnn Shampoo. If you are using Remove-A-Way Clarifying Shampoo when appropriate, that can take the place of the extra cleansing step.

I prefer to use as little shampoo as necessary. The first shampooing removes most of the dirt and oil while allowing the coat to retain its natural condition. More shampoo is not automatically better.

CONDITIONING FOR THE SHOW RING

For the show groom, I do not use SummerWinds Protect-A-Coat Oil Conditioner as the final conditioner because it can leave the coat oily.

CHAPTER TEN

TABOO HINTS: AFGHAN TRIMMING



This is a very touchy subject — almost like walking on holy ground. Afghan Hound grooming has always inspired strong opinions about what is considered a natural presentation and what is considered trimming. I have spent many years learning how to make a competitive dog look as natural as possible, and these are the methods and tools that have worked for me.

There are many opinions about how much, if any, hair should be removed. My purpose here is not to tell you that there is only one way. It is to explain what I have learned through years of grooming and showing Afghans so that you can understand the tools and the reasoning behind them.

For the novice, this can be especially confusing. When there are different opinions and different grooming traditions, it is difficult to know where to begin. Study your breed standard, observe experienced exhibitors, and learn to recognize the difference between shaping a coat and creating an obvious pattern. The goal is a finished Afghan that still looks natural, balanced and beautifully presented.

TOOLS I USE

1. Magnet Trimmer — a tool that, when used properly, removes fuzz from the saddle area without taking the short undercoat excessively close.
 2. Thinning Shears — useful for stubborn or excessive hair around areas such as the base of the tail, cheeks and muzzle. Use a light hand and work gradually.
 3. Rubber Finger Tips — helpful when hand-plucking small amounts of unwanted coat where appropriate.
 4. Pumice Stone — another tool that can be used to remove fuzz in the saddle, cheeks and muzzle. I prefer the Magnet Trimmer because I find it gives me more control and is less likely to take the under hair too short.
 5. Cuticle Rubber-Tipped Brush — used in the saddle while bathing to help polish the coat and remove dander.
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ANT-STATIC SPRAY

Electrostatic events occur whenever positive and negative electric charges are held apart. When you comb or brush hair on a dry day, you may notice the comb or brush pick up bits of dust. Static electricity is most often caused by a lack of moisture in the atmosphere.

When a show coat is supposed to drape and hang down but instead sticks out, static can get your attention! SummerWinds Stat A Way Spray helps combat static by putting a small amount of oil into the coat, which adds weight and helps hold necessary moisture while deodorizing the coat. It also contains de-tangle properties that protect the hair shaft for ease of grooming and add shine.

CAUTION!!!

Products And Things That Damage Coats The Most...

1. Shampooing without restoring the pH balance with a cream rinse acidifier, such as SummerWinds Fine-L-Shine Cream Rinse, can leave the cuticle open, resulting in dry, dull, brittle hair and breakage.
2. Blow drying hair with extreme heat without protecting the hair first with a thermal protector.
3. Chemically treated hair, such as tinting, perming, or straightening without reconstructive conditioner.
4. Sun and UV rays without sunscreen.
5. Chlorine exposure.
6. Hair sprays, bodifiers, texturizers, and mousse products that give hair body.
7. Grooming tools, such as brushes, that are not used correctly.