

Bathing and Grooming a Tibetan Terrier

by
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Although little grooming is required until a puppy is nearly six months of age, it is during these early months that you should get him used to all aspects of grooming care including bathing, brushing, nail clipping and dental care. This is also a golden opportunity to accustom him to lying on his side on the grooming table. Begin with only a few minutes of grooming to start with, and slowly lengthen the time period that you expect him to lie quietly and co-operatively. Be firm but patient and kind. Be sure to handle his feet often, as many TTs don't like having their feet touched. If your puppy gets muddy, do not remove the mud when it is wet. Instead, wait for it to dry up completely.

An adult Tibetan Terrier has a long coat that will require consistent care and grooming. TTs don't shed like most other breeds, but they do blow old coat from time to time, which can get caught in the permanent coat and create mats or tangles. This is not usually a problem until the Tibetan Terrier reaches adolescence (starting around nine months) at which time he will start to "blow" his puppy coat and grow his adult double coat. This can last for several weeks or even several months and mats can seem to appear mere moments after you have just brushed him. Be patient. Put him on a daily brushing schedule, and this period will pass.

Tibetan Terriers do not have the usual doggy smell of other dogs, and are a good breed for most people who are normally allergic to dogs and cats.

Bathing and brushing

As a breeder, my approach to bathing and brushing is probably more fastidious than it needs to be, as I am motivated to keep a fine coat even when I am finished showing my dogs. Please note that this is my personal advice and description, and I recognize that pet owners will likely take a less perfectionist approach to these important tasks.

The bath

Tibetan Terriers should be bathed at least monthly. From late spring until about mid-autumn, I try to bath mine every 10 days to two weeks. Some purists believe that only a freshly clean coat should be brushed. However, I brush my TTs every four days because I know that mats and 'wads' will make grooming problematic if I leave a longer gap between brushing. Moreover, a TT should be 'brushed out', at least minimally, BEFORE his bath because a matted and wadded coat is likely to turn to 'felt' after a bath. A good plan is to put a schedule on the fridge and stick to it.

When bathing your TT, always use a good quality shampoo. Some shampoos are available in concentrate form, which you dilute with water. A gallon of concentrated shampoo can last a long time.

Put a non slip mat in the tub to make sure your TT doesn't slip and slide. The laundry tub will work for a while until puppy gets too big.

Wet the dog thoroughly with a spray hose. Pour on shampoo and work into a lather, taking care not to scrub so much that it tangles the hair. Rinse thoroughly. Your TT probably won't be keen on having his face sprayed, but cover his nose and firmly press on. He has to get used to this. He's a Tibetan Terrier. Shampoo a second time if the dog was really dirty or muddy. Rinse thoroughly. When you think you have rinsed him enough, do it again.

Apply a good quality conditioner to the coat, squeezing into the ends of the hair as you go. Let this sit for a couple minutes and then rinse very thoroughly. There are also some good leave-in conditioners available that avoid having to rinse.

Blot your TT dry with a towel. Do not rub vigorously as this will tangle the coat. A chamois works well for blotting the coat dry. A product I like to use at this point is show sheen, which I spray lightly on the dog and work through the coat. Be careful where you do this, though, as it can make floors dangerously slippery.

Some people now take their TTs directly to the hair dryer and grooming table. I prefer to let my wet dog roll on some towels and run around like mad for a few minutes, before putting him in his crate on some towels warmed in the dryer (he will shiver and be cold, otherwise) and leaving him for perhaps an hour and a half while I catch my breath, tidy up after the bath, do a chore or two and prepare for grooming.

After-bath grooming

This is where a grooming table will seem like one of the most useful things you ever have bought. This is also where you will need one of those free-standing dog hair dryers. These are very expensive, but wonderful and worth the cost. A home-rigged-up dryer anchored to the table and moveable so that your hands are free and you can leave the heat stream directed while you use your hands is also an option as is another person to manage the dryer while you brush.

You will need a good medium pin brush (I like the #1 All Systems brush), and definitely NOT the kind with the little knobs on the ends of the pins.

Begin with your TT standing or sitting, and blow dry while simultaneously brushing his face, head and ears and chest. Work down his back, sides and legs while he stands, blowing the coat every direction while brushing. Proceed to dry and brush his tail and rear the same way. This preliminary drying and brushing is to warm him, launch the untangling, and straighten the coat in readiness for putting him down on his side

Next, put him on his side. Push his coat up, and start with his feet and then legs, blowing dry and brushing upward as well as downward. He will be mostly dry, so this segment will soon resemble a routine maintenance grooming. Another useful brush for the feet and legs, but NOT for his outer coat, is a soft slicker brush.

Use short, quick and straight strokes. Work in small sections, and don't take on too large an area at a time. Hold the brush very loosely. If you encounter a mat, pull it apart bit by bit until it is in manageable sections for continued brushing. When I have done the feet and legs, I push the rest of the coat upward and, starting at the top with one transversely parted section at a time, I dry and brush upward with the pin brush, lifting his legs to get at his chest and underside and bottom. Your goal is to brush him out "right to the skin". When the coat has been all brushed upward, I take it down in transverse sections, bottom to top, brushing flat.

After you have finished one side, go through his coat with a Greyhound comb to remove any loose hair and find any missed tangles. You can also use the comb on his face hair and beard. Try not to pull or tug, so that he will not dislike this grooming experience. Some dogs completely relax and go to sleep on the table.

Then, perhaps a treat for being such a GOO-OO-D DOG, before laying him down onto his other side for a repeat.

When you've finished his second side, it's time for any necessary final touches. Show dogs, for example, have their hair parted along the back. If there is a lot of static, I use an anti-static spray for a brief mist and final brush down his sides.

Grooming between baths

The above is a description of the post-bath grooming. You will also need to groom between. Use the same method for maintenance or between-bath grooming, but without the dryer. I start immediately with my dog on his first side. Dampen the coat with a grooming spray, such as Royal Crown Magic Touch, misted lightly over each section of coat before you brush it as you shouldn't groom a totally dry coat.

While this might all sound pretty intimidating, don't be alarmed or disheartened. Remember you will be starting with a young puppy's coat, and you are a couple of years away from the more major task of bathing and grooming an adult coat. Also, some coats are easier to care for than others.

The whole bathing and grooming operation for a full-grown adult might take 30 minutes for the bath and then an hour to an hour and a half for the brushing out. Maybe less, if you are lucky or remarkably efficient or if it hasn't been long since he was brushed out.

Of course, if you prefer and can afford the luxury, you can always send your Tibetan to a professional groomer once every month, perhaps, and then you will only have to do the in-between-baths maintenance grooming. If you choose this option, be sure to choose a groomer who knows how to deal with a Tibetan Terrier coat. This is not a Lhasa Apso. Stripping of undercoat is a no-no and scissoring for a show-ring TT is also a no-no. For a pet TTs, you might want to use thinning scissors to trim the headfall over the eyes into wispy bangs so that you can see his eyes. You can also clip a little hair away from the rectal area to ensure that nothing sticks. I recommend that you strive to keep your Tibetan's coat in its full glory, as this represents the natural look of this breed.