

Matting



What is matting?

“Matting” refers to densely tangled clumps of fur in a pet’s coat. If a coat is not properly and/or frequently brushed, loose and live hair become embedded in large masses. Mats can form in both the outer coat as well as the deeper undercoat. Sometimes severe mats form in the undercoat and are unnoticeable because of a heavy outer coat.

What causes matting?

Matting is caused when a pet’s coat doesn’t get regularly and/or properly brushed out. Regular and frequent grooming—especially brushing—is absolutely necessary to not only prevent mats, but to keep your pet’s coat and skin healthy.

Can’t you just brush the mats out?

Some mats aren’t too tight or close to the skin that careful brushing can remove them, but most of the time it is a painful procedure for the pet and/or too tightly clumped for a brush to penetrate or too close to the skin that the risk for brush burn or the skin to slice is too great. In the case of mats being tightly clumped, brushing will only cause live hairs to be pulled out of the skin with excruciating pain. Though even mild matting can cause your pet a great deal of pain.

Why not just cut the mats out with scissors?

A dog’s skin is thin like tissue paper, and dense mats can cause it to become loose due to the weight of the matting. It is too easy to injure your dog when using scissors due to how thin and loose dogs skin can be, and also how close mats can be to your dogs skin. Because matting pulls at the skin and can cause the skin to be loose in that area, the skin can be pulled up beneath the matt, making it difficult to judge where the skin is and where the matt is.

Why are my dogs ears swollen after the mats were removed?

When your dog’s ears become matted, the sensitive skin on the ear tips can become constricted and the delicate blood vessels inside the skin can rupture, causing blood to pool inside the tips of the ears. These “hematomas” (bleeding bruises) can be quite painful, and, when your pooch shakes her head, can bust open sending blood flying around the room. Hematomas require veterinary care to heal properly and not become infected. If you notice your dogs ears are swollen after dematting, start massaging them. When you sit on your leg for too long and you stand up, your leg starts tingling from the loss of blood flow; this is the same feeling a dog gets after the mats are removed from the ears and sometimes the tail. They start shaking their head because of the weird feeling, but if they shake too much, the hematoma can burst open. Some people tie a large sock on their dogs head over the ears to keep the ears from being flung around when the dog shakes their head.

Why is the skin under the matting so gross?

Matting can cut off blood supply to extremities, and deny regular air circulation. Skin denied fresh air and stimulation from regular brushing becomes quite unhealthy. It can turn dark pink to red, and open sores are apt to form emitting foul odors. Even organic matter, like weeds and stickers, can become embedded in the skin. Mats have been known to contain stool of the pet and even fly larvae that further irritate the skin. All kinds of nasty infections, such as candida, can form under mats and cause the dog great pain as the skin underneath is unable to heal itself from the onslaught of infection. Heavily matted hair can change a dog's movement, cut off circulation, or hide infected wounds. In an extreme case, matting can tighten around a dog's leg or tail, slowly constricting until it has cut through to the bone.

Removing Mats

Shaving a matted coat is a delicate and slow process requiring experience and expertise. Clippers can easily cut loose skin if not done properly and safely. In order to shave mats off, you are required to change and cool blades of the clipper to protect dogs from heat burns. Friction burns (like a rope burn) are unfortunately possible because the moving parts of the clipper are so close to the dog's skin. Because of matting, it is rarely possible for your dog to come home with a cute, even shave. Remember- shaving the hair off the dog is a temporary solution; hair will grow back. After shaving, a pet may develop an itchy skin response. Owners should watch to ensure that constant scratching does not cause the skin to become irritated.

Prevention

Dead, loose hairs should be removed through regular and thorough brushing. This is especially important for long-haired dogs, and when dogs shed seasonally. Brushing also aerates the fur and skin (ask your groomer which brush is the best for your dog's coat type- different coats require different brushes, or a combination of a few). Comb or brush your dog at least once a week. If your dog is impatient or uncooperative for brushing, take them to your groomer. Regular, professional grooming is essential, too, because we thoroughly bathe and brush with particular attention to areas where mats quickly form. Grooming should be done on a regular basis every 4 to 6 weeks. Keeping your dog's hair at a manageable length also helps to prevent matting. If your dog's coat is damaged or beginning to tangle, bring her in for a complete groom. Removing broken hair, split ends, and loose hairs prevents matting. If your dog only needs a few mats trimmed out, but isn't ready for a complete groom, schedule an appointment to only shave out the mats.

