

MAINTENANCE GROOMING OF YOUR TIBETAN MASTIFF

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*The following article is courtesy of Audrey Lee.
Audrey Lee is a professional groomer of almost 30 years. She has been grooming
Tibetan Mastiffs for maintenance and for the show ring for over 15 years.*



From the Dachshund to the Poodle to the Tibetan Mastiff, all breeds and mixed breeds benefit from regular grooming as it helps to ensure that your pet is looking and feeling his best. Yet, more often than not, if a dog appears clean and doesn't smell, owners will frequently bypass regular brushing and bathing. Many people do not realize that regular grooming is essential to the overall health and well-being of their pet.

Why Routine Grooming is Important

For longer haired breeds in particular, a good and thorough brushing keeps the coat and skin in good shape. While it stimulates the oil glands and keeps the coat shiny, a regular brushing also cuts down on further problems as the skin underneath has less chance of becoming irritated.

Keeping Warm

A dog's coat needs to be matt free and this is particularly essential for the double-coated dogs. Brushing encourages fur separation. A thick clumpy coat does not allow warm air to circulate next to the skin so a dog that is not routinely brushed has a harder time keeping himself warm. This problem can be made worse should the coat become wet during the winter season. It is as if a sopping cold blanket is thrown over the dog and that means that it can take days for the coat to dry out completely. In the summer time, this same matted coat can be compared to a hot sweltering blanket. With each scenario, the skin underneath can become unhealthy, and it is the easiest way for your dog to develop hot spots, yeast, bacterial or fungal infections.

Fleas and Ticks

A TM is also much more difficult to treat for fleas and ticks if regular grooming is not part of your dog's weekly routine. Nasty fleas and ticks can hide better on your pet's matted coat and topical solutions aren't able to reach down to kill them. This can lead to further skin problems such as flea dermatitis. In addition, intense scratching from fleas can lead to secondary skin infections.

Oftentimes I am asked how frequently a Tibetan Mastiff should be groomed. The answer varies. It depends on what type of environment your dog lives in. Is it winter and is your Tibetan Mastiff in full coat? Is it spring and is your TM blowing coat? It also depends on your dog's coat type and how often he gets himself dirty from digging, rolling around on the ground and if he is regularly out in inclement weather.

Getting Into a Regular Routine

Your TM should be brushed weekly at the very least to remove any loose hair and to help separate the coat. A clumped coat can neither protect against the cold nor can it help keep a TM cool when the temperatures are warm. Of course, Mother Nature provides air-conditioning, when your TM "blows" his coat in the spring and it is a very efficient way to help keep your dog cooler in the warmer months.

Preparing To Bathe Your Tibetan Mastiff

If you have a grooming table, great! Remember that bending over while trying to groom your dog can make for a backbreaking task so try to use a surface that is waist level and secure, or have someone hold the leash while you groom your dog. Don't forget to have some treats handy to reward your dog. Most TMs come to love brushing when you combine praise, treats and time spent with their owner!

You should always thoroughly brush out your TM **before** bathing. This prepares the coat so that water, shampoo and conditioner can reach the skin easier.

Grooming Tools

There are many different brand names of grooming tools. I will list what I use. You may find a comparable tool in another brand that works just as well.

A **slicker brush** is an invaluable tool for any TM owner. It is the initial tool to use when first brushing your TM. It helps to loosen any dead hair and removes any loose dirt.



How to Brush Out a Tibetan Mastiff Coat

Start at the lower side and give a few strokes, holding the coat above where you are brushing and letting a bit more fall down as you go. Move up a bit at a time, until you have brushed the whole dog. This method is

easier than just diving in and you will do a more thorough job. Once your TM is brushed out, you can brush from head to tail. Make note of any knots you encounter to remove with the de-matting tools after brushing.

Except for the backs of the legs and the tails, a slicker brush can be used in any direction. When you get to the tail, start at the underside, brushing a small portion of the tail at a time, working your way down the tail, until the tail is done. For the furry back of the rear legs (bitches), start at the bottom and holding the coat above it, brush a small section at a time, until you are at the top of the leg.

Follow the brushing on the long hair with **combing** the same areas to make sure they are tangle free .



For Knots and Tangles

If you encounter knots/tangles there are different tools available to remove them. Use caution when using these tools! Used incorrectly, you can cut or injure your dog. For most TMs that are regularly groomed/brushed, the only places a TM will get knots or tangles are behind the ears, the tail and the bitches.

NEVER USE SCISSORS TO REMOVE ANY KNOTS!!! YOU CAN EASILY MISTAKE SKIN FOR HAIR AND CUT YOUR DOG!!!!

Always start at the edge of the knot and work inward when dealing with trouble spots. Don't try to grasp the whole knot all at once with the de-matting tool. It is safer, easier and much less painful to get out the knot a little bit at a time.

Two tools that I use and recommend are:

The Matbreaker

I use this Matbreaker tool for small areas, such as knots behind the ears. It can be used by right or left handed people by turning the blades. Get a couple of the teeth under a small part of the knot and twist your wrist slightly. You may have to give a slight pull. Always twist and pull **away** from the dog to allow the teeth to loosen and cut the knot. Not recommended for use on the body, as it can damage top coat/guard hair.



Oster Pet Grooming Rake-Coarse 18 Teeth

The Oster Pet Grooming Rakes are a must have for a TM owner! This is an easy-to-use, comfortable, tool for removing knots or undercoat and it won't damage the guard hair. These rakes come in several different sizes and teeth count. I like the Coarse Wide 18 Teeth tool for TM's. To remove knots from the bitches or tail with the Oster Rake, use the edge

of the rake's teeth to grasp a knot. Again, don't try to remove the whole knot at once. Starting at the edge of the knot, hook a few teeth and give a down and out ward pull. Always pull away from the dog. The teeth will loosen and break up the knot.

Follow up with a slicker and a comb to make sure all of the knots are out. Another quick, once-over with a slicker and you now have a fully brushed out TM!!!

Cleaning Ears

Cleaning the ears can be done quickly and easily. There are many commercial ear cleaners on the market that can be used but you can make up your own quite easily. I use a solution of ½ measurement of white vinegar to ½ measurement of water. I mix and store it in a recycled dish liquid bottle with a squirt top. It is thorough and economical. Both ear cleaners are used the same way. Pour in the ear liberally, massage the ear and let your dog shake. Use a cotton ball to clean out the ear. The small nooks and crannies may need a q-tip to get clean. Repeat as necessary. Caution: NEVER insert the q-tip or attempt to clean the ear farther that you can see easily. If you notice redness, irritation, discharge, extra dark earwax, or a foul odor, seek veterinary treatment.



Trimming Nails

Nails should be checked for length at every grooming session. How do you know when they are too long? If they are touching the ground, they are too long. When nails become too long, they can cause a dog to be sore footed. Make sure to check the dew-claws too. They are the extra-nails on the sides of the front legs. Some TMs have rear dew-claws as well. Dew-claws never have any wear, since they don't touch the ground. Left unchecked, they can become quite long and can even curl and grow back into the skin, a very painful occurrence.

I prefer the **plier's type nail clippers** for adult TM's. They do the job quickly and efficiently and they are strong enough to cut tough nails.



The **scissor type** is easier to handle for small nails on pups.



It is commonly known that most TMs do not like to have their paws handled. It is best to start nail-trimming sessions while they are still young so that puppies can become accustomed to the procedure. If your dog should struggle, however, enlist assistance. Have your assistant distract the dog with some delectable goodies. This will make it a pleasant experience and well worth a few treats for a well behaved dog. In time, they come to associate getting their nails cut with goodies and will behave for it.

How to Trim/Cut Nails

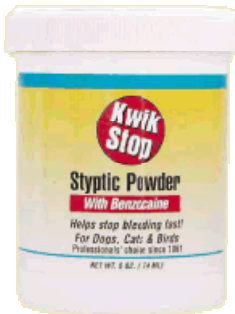
To cut the nail, hold the paw firmly. Remember, all cuts should be done by quickly squeezing the pliers together. Never squeeze the handles slowly. This squeezes the nail and is very uncomfortable to your dog. Take the tip off to begin with. Examine the nail. Black nails will be dark in the "safe" area. As you clip them look at the end of the nail for a lightening of color in the nail. As it lightens, it will expose a "bulls-eye." This bulls-eye indicates that the quick (a vein in the nail) is close. Stop when you see the bulls-eye. After some practice, you will begin to be able to tell where to clip to.

For longer nails, the quick may be closer to the end of the nail, as the quick grows out as the nail lengthens. In this case, trim weekly to get the nail back to a shorter length.

For puppy nails, use the trimmer to take off just the tips.

Cutting a Nail Too Short

Most people feel uncomfortable at the thought of cutting a nail too short to expose the quick. Should you cut a nail too short, don't panic! A bleeding nail can make a mess, and look like a massacre, but, truly, it is not!



Styptic Powder

Purchase some nail stop powder, often called Quik Stop with your nail clippers. A small container lasts a long time. It is a styptic powder that will stop the bleeding instantly on a nail. Apply a small pinch to the end of the nail a rub it in slightly. You may need to reapply. A styptic pencil, like men use for shaving, may be substituted.

Congratulations on completing a full brush-out and grooming of your Tibetan Mastiff!
You are now ready to bathe your Tibetan Mastiff!!!