3

National Detector Dog Manual

Health Care

Grooming

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Introduction

Grooming is an important daily task and often incorporates the *"Daily Health Checks" on* ***page-3-4-2***. Grooming is critical for maintaining the cleanliness and professional appearance of the dog, as well as maintaining its safety, comfort, and health. A complete grooming consists of bathing the dog, brushing the coat, cleaning the ears, and trimming the nails. Daily grooming should minimally include brushing the coat while checking all areas of the body. Nail trimming and ear cleaning may only be needed once every week, depending on the condition of the individual dog. Ideally, routine dental care is performed daily, and this may involve brushing the teeth or providing a dental chew toy. Cleaning the eyes depends on the presence and amount of discharge.

Daily Brushing

Daily brushing keeps a detector dog's coat clean. First brush with the lay of the coat, then loosen the undercoat with a fingertip massage, working against the lay of the coat. Brush with the lay of the coat to finish. On hard-coated dogs (dogs with short, tight coats with little fluffy undercoat), always brush with the lay of the coat. A variety of brushes or grooming tools can be used on different types of coats.

Rubber Curry Brush

These brushes or mitts are excellent for stimulating the skin and removing shedding coat. They are extremely gentle on the skin.

Rubber Slicker Brush

This is a good brush for daily brushing of short- and medium-coated dogs, as it is gentle on the skin and removes normal shedding coat.

Natural Bristle Brush

Natural bristle removes more of the shedding coat in short- and medium-coated dogs and spreads natural oils from the skin through the hair.

Hound Glove

A hound glove is a mitt with horsehair bristles attached to one side. It is excellent for tight, hard coats with little undercoat and for a quick "polish" before taking the dog onto the floor to work.

Other Grooming Tools

NOTICE

The following tools are probably never appropriate for use on beagles or pointers and other smooth coated breeds, but are useful for grooming heavy coated breeds (Labrador retrievers, golden retrievers, springer spaniels).

Wire Slicker Brush

A wire slicker brush is appropriate for heavy-coated breeds (shepherd dogs, some Labrador retrievers) with substantial undercoat. Apply gentle pressure when using, as the tines can scratch or irritate the skin if applied too vigorously. Brushing gently against the lay of the coat will remove shedding coat more effectively than brushing with the lay of the coat with heavy pressure.

Undercoat Comb

An undercoat comb has long and short, offset, alternating tines. This tool is excellent for removing thick, shedding undercoat from heavy-coated breeds. In medium-coated breeds it can be used with caution to remove wadded undercoat. It can also be used to pick out matted coat in breeds with long, silky coats (golden retrievers, springer spaniels).

Mat Splitters (combs, rakes, blades)

These tools feature sharpened blades as part of the comb or rake configuration. They should be used only to remove matted hair from breeds with long, silky coats (golden retrievers, springer spaniels).

Conditioning the Coat

A wide array of commercial coat conditioners is available to polish or soften dogs' coats. One of the most effective ways to condition a dog's coat is by stroking the coat, with the grain, with the palms of your hands. Commercial conditioners that contain silicones are effective for repelling dust and stains and impart a high gloss to the coat, whereas those containing natural oils (emu, mink) are best for moisturizing dry skin and dry, brittle coats.

Trimming the Nails

Nails of detector dogs should be kept short for a well-kept appearance, but even more important, to prevent unnatural positioning of the feet and strain on the limbs. Long nails compromise the dog's surface traction (which is derived from surface contact with the pads), and can place unnecessary strain on the bones and ligaments of the paws.

Scissors and guillotine trimmers are available and the choice of which to use depends on handler preference. Motor-driven nail grinders are an excellent tool for keeping nails tightly groomed, but carry the disadvantage of poor acceptance by dogs not accustomed to them. Novice nail trimmers, or handlers with dogs whose nails are black can safely trim nails using a coarse file or cutting using the "deli slice" method (removing several thin slices of nail, rather than making one thicker cut). Ideally, the nail is trimmed to within 2 mm of the quick (fleshy nail bed). Handlers should aim for cutting the nails short, but not so short as to cut into the quick, which causes the dog pain, bleeding and apprehension about future nail trimming. Nails should be regularly trimmed, as the quick and the nail's blood supply lengthen when the nails are neglected, and only recede as the nails are gradually trimmed short. Handlers should be aware that they must also trim the dewclaws on those breeds with these nails intact.

The following directions and illustrations were provided by Dr. Rose Borkowski:[1]

1. Note how the blood supply gets longer as the nail grows. Refer to **Figure 3-5-1**. If the nail is cut at ①, it will cause bleeding and the nail will still be long. Trim at ②, and the blood supply will begin to recede.

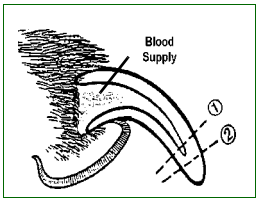

FIGURE 3-5-1: Blood Supply of a Dog's Nail

2. If a little is clipped or filed off a long nail every few days, the blood supply will continue to recede. As the nail get shorter, so does the blood supply. Refer to **Figure 3-5-2**.

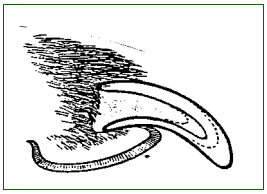

FIGURE 3-5-2: Blood Supply Recedes as the Nail is Trimmed

3. Only when the nail is kept short can it be trimmed without bleeding. Refer to **Figure 3-5-3**. If the same cut had been made on the long nail illustrated in **Figure 3-5-1**, it would have caused bleeding.

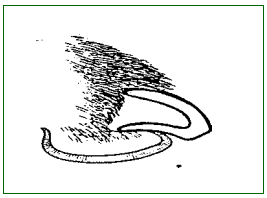

FIGURE 3-5-3: Properly Trimmed Nail

1 Dr. Rose Borkowski. staff doctor at Tufts University. MA, specializing in wildlife exotics from 1994 to present; private practice in Boca Raton, 1994; attended University of Florida Veterinarian School, 1991.

Cleaning the Ears

Following are basic steps for cleaning a dog's ears:

1. Pull the earflap upward to expose the external opening of the ear canal.
2. Place several drops of ear cleaner solution in the dog's ear. Refer to ***Figure 3-5-4***.

FIGURE 3-5-4: Cleaning Ear

3. Release the earflap.
4. Massage the base of the ear. Refer to ***Figure 3-5-5***.

FIGURE 3-5-5: Massaging Ear

5. Repeat Steps 1–5 for the other ear.
6. Allow the dog to shake its head. Refer to ***Figure 3-5-6***.

FIGURE 3-5-6: Allowing the Dog to Shake its Head

7. Pull the earflap upward, wipe the ear dry, and remove excess ear wax. Refer to ***Figure 3-5-7***.

FIGURE 3-5-7: Wiping the Ear

Important

Floppy-eared dogs are prone to yeast infections in their ears.

Cleaning the Eyes

A small amount of thin, clear discharge is normal for many dogs, especially for beagles with large, prominent eyes. If the discharge is yellow, green, or thick, it should be checked by a veterinarian. Beagles' eyes often discharge a thin fluid that creates a dark reddish-brown "tear" stain in the corners of the eye. This should be cleaned for both cosmetic and for health reasons. Any discharge that remains on the face is a potential breeding ground for bacteria. Eyes can be wiped with a soft, moist gauze sponge, or cleaned with a commercial tear stain remover if staining of the coat surrounding the eyes has occurred.

Cleaning the Teeth

Detector dogs should have their teeth cleaned a minimum of once a year, or more often, based on the veterinarian's recommendation. Rawhide chews function about as well as brushing to rid a dog's teeth of plaque (the precursor of the hard calculus deposits). The disadvantage of using rawhide is that it may cause gastrointestinal obstruction. Compressed rawhides are a good alternative, as these beak down more easily than rawhide strips. Brushes, finger brushes and special toothpastes are available for dogs. A moistened gauze pad will provide adequate, gentle abrasion to remove plaque from the teeth if used daily. NEVER use human toothpastes, as these contain foaming agents and other components that may cause digestive problems in dogs. Clean the outside area of the teeth, only. Saliva adequately clears the inner surfaces.

Expressing Anal Glands

For information on expressing anal glands, refer to **Appendix G**.

Bathing

Determine how often the detector dog requires a bath, based on its skin needs. Keep in mind that excessive bathing is drying to the dog's skin and coat.

When bathing, select a mild shampoo made for dogs. For skin conditions, follow the veterinarian's advice about the type of shampoo to use and how to apply it. Flea and tick shampoos are not necessary for dogs receiving the monthly topical preventive (Frontline, Advantage, etc.), and, in fact, may be harmful to these dogs.

Important

Do not bathe the dog in cold or wet weather unless you can dry the dog in a warm place.

Secure the dog in the bathtub before bathing. **Do not leave the dog unattended.**

The basic bathing procedure is as follows:

1. Perform daily health inspection.
2. Brush coat and remove excess hair with fingertip massage.
3. Inspect for presence of external parasites (flea excrement, other insects, ticks).
4. Place a drop of mineral oil or triple antibiotic ointment in eyes.
5. Dispense shampoo into the hands and apply it to the dog's body.
6. Wet the coat with water and massage into a lather.
7. Let the shampoo stay on the dog for the time recommended by the shampoo manufacturer.
8. Rinse the coat thoroughly with warm water.
9. Massage the dog briskly with a dry towel.
10. Brush out excess hair.

For special bathing problems such as tar, sap, gum, or other sticky materials adhering to the coat, trim out as much of the substance as possible, and soak any residue in vegetable oil for several hours (or overnight for particularly resistant substances). Never use petroleum-based oil products on a dog's coat, as these can be ingested by the dog as it attempts to groom itself.