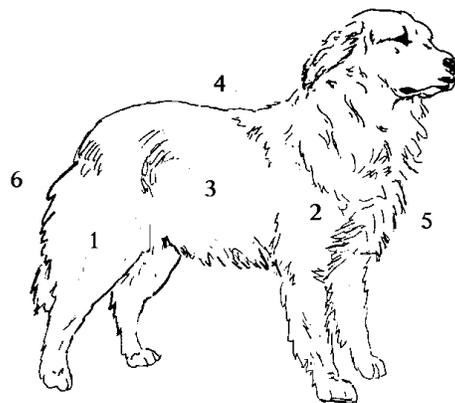


SPRING GROOMING YOUR PYR

By Catherine de la Cruz

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The rains, mud and shorter days of Winter don't give much incentive to groom our dogs. But Spring brings not only warmer weather and longer days, but that dreaded event known as "blowing the coat". Your lovely pet suddenly looks matted and moth-eaten and you suddenly realize that spring grooming time has come. Here are a few tips for the new Pyr-owner, and some suggestions for the experienced owner as well.



TOOLS

A slicker brush

A mat splitter (Oliver or Mat-Away)

Nail clippers

Spray bottle

* Mane & Tail Conditioner ®

* Absorbine Show-Sheen ®

(The two above are horse-grooming products, available at PetSmart or your local feed store.)

A grooming table or similar surface

If you plan to bathe your Pyr, add shampoo and a high-speed blow-dryer

THE EASY PART

Using the slicker brush, begin at the flat part of the hind leg, in the area marked [1] in the diagram. Part the hair with your left hand until you can see skin, then brush outward from the skin in short, firm strokes.

Gradually move your left hand to expose more hair and continue brushing from the skin outward. Brush only the short-haired part of the leg; leave the feathered areas to last. When both hind legs look white and clean, repeat the procedure on the front shoulders [2] and the rib cage area [3]. When the back is mat-free, move to the front

Note: if you are saving Pyr-fur for spinning, these are the prime areas and this fur should be separated from the later combings.

REMOVE MATS; SAVE FEATHERS

To groom the longer parts of your dog's coat, begin by filling the spray bottle with the following mixture: 4 ounces warm water, 2 ounces Mane & Tail Conditioner, 2 ounces Absorbine Show Sheen. Shake well.

Beginning with the longer hair above the shoulders (the withers area) [4] spray a section of fur until it is damp but not dripping. Allow the mixture to penetrate the hair for a few minutes, then use the slicker brush, brushing from the skin as before. If the area is seriously matted, work the mixture into the individual mats, then work at them with either the slicker brush or the mat splitter as needed. The oil in the conditioner and the silicone in the Show Sheen protects the long hairs and allows the mats to slip through them without excessive breakage of the healthy coat. Work out the mats along the dog's back from the withers to the base of the tail.

of your dog. Begin working on the chest

[5] - dampening the area to be groomed, then brushing from the skin outward - doing the belly and the area between the front legs first, then working upward to the collar area.

As you work around the collar area, pay particular attention to the *witches' knots* behind the dog's ears. Use extra conditioning mixture on this area to avoid hurting the tender skin there.

Brush the surface dirt off the front-leg feathers, then beginning at the foot, brush from the skin outward, working up to the elbow. Saturate this area with conditioner mixture if it is matted, then use the slicker brush to tease out the mats.

FEATHERS AND TAIL

If your dog is from long-coated show stock, the feathering of the britch, the tail and the back of the front and rear legs can be very profuse. Brushing out mats while the coat is dry can break the long guard-hairs. If you plan to show your dog, a well-cared for coat can make the difference between a placement and a win.

Most Pyrs try to sit down when you want to work on their hind end. You can either teach your dog to stand on command, or solicit the help of a second person to hold the dog up. In any case, brush surface dirt off the feathering of the hocks, then dampen them and, beginning behind the foot, groom from the skin outward, gradually working your way to the top of the hock. When you can run a coarse comb through the hock hair, they are free of dead undercoat.

Dampen the britch hair, working the mixture in to the undercoat near the skin, but keep the solution away from anus and vulva. Beginning at the lower part of the second thigh (just above the hock) part the hair to

the skin and brush from the skin outward. Gradually work upward on the back of the leg. The undercoat in this area is very dense and is usually heavily matted from the dog sitting on it. Don't hesitate to use enough conditioner mixture to wet the hair well and use a mat splitter as necessary.

Teaching your Pyr to allow his tail to be brushed takes patience. It is easier if you can brush the tail often enough to keep it free of mats. The tail is very sensitive and once hair is lost here, it takes a very long time to grow back.

Hold the tail flat on the grooming table or on your lap. Unlike the rest of the body, begin working on the **end** of the hair at the tip of the tail. Wet it well with the mixture and brush out the last inch of hair, then the last two inches, and so forth until you are able to run the brush from the skin outward.

Always brush the hair perpendicular to the tail, not parallel. Gradually work up the tail until you have reached the dog's body. If the tail has heavy mats, use scissors to cut through the mat, parallel with the length of the hair. Wet the mat and try to work it out with the brush or mat splitter.

The tail is mat-free when you can run a coarse comb from the skin outward, with the hair perpendicular to the tail.

After this careful grooming, you may find your Pyr doesn't really need a bath. If you decide to bathe her, use Orvus® or a shampoo formulated for dogs, not people. Rinse several times, then blow-dry and brush with a pin brush. The blower will remove any remaining loose hair and you will have a clean, comfortable Pyr (at least until she finds the nearest mud puddle.)