

## What's the big deal about Mats?



You may not be aware of it, but mats are a serious problem and can be detrimental to your pet's well-being. Pets left in a matted condition are usually ignored or neglected by their owners, often unintentionally. Many owners do not understand how wretched this condition makes their pet. Often people obtaining a puppy/new dog are not aware of how much time and care is required to properly maintain their chosen breed.

The pets may chew, dig at themselves and suffer greatly if the mats are not removed. Mats can become so tight it can tear the skin and cut blood circulation off to areas that are affected. Matting can also restrict the pet's movement, creating a veritable straightjacket. Some pet owners think that because the dog is chewing and scratching there must be a flea or skin problem.... but not always, many problems can result from or be aggravated by the presence of mats. Often Matting will also hide other problems, Sores, infections, cuts and maggots often result from un-maintained coats.

The most common places mats start are:

**Behind the Ears**

**The neck where the collar sits**

**In the armpits and the crotch area**

**A badly matted animal is actually a prisoner in its own hair.**

**Why did my pet become matted? Quite simply - the pet's coat has not been properly cared for. Many pet owners do not take the time to maintain their pet's coats. Often they do not understand or have been advised how to properly comb and brush their pet. Combing and brushing needs to be done on a regular basis, and the pet should be taught from puppy hood to accept grooming as part of its daily routine. A dog or cat cannot brush himself or herself, and home care is a part of the responsibility one accepts when owning a companion animal.**

**Matting is Painful! Imagine how your head would feel if your hair was matted. Imagine trying to brush those mats out. Now imagine how your pet feels. But on pets, the matter is worse, as mats occur in the groin area, in armpits, around tails - all areas that move when the pets move, and the hair is constantly being tugged - ouch! Pet's skin is just as sensitive as our own skin.**

**What if I can't get the mats out? If the mats are not brushed out before they become too tight to remove safely, they will eventually become an extreme health hazard to your pet. In the worst case, the mats can rip the skin. Wetting the pet will just make it worse, and the mats will weave tighter and pull harder on the skin. About the only humane way to remove mats at this stage is to have the pet shaved. Even then, the pet will be at risk from clipper irritation and possible nicks from the clipper blades as mats are usually very close to the skin. This is especially dangerous for cats and puppies. NEVER try to remove mats with scissors, as the**

skin can be easily cut open unintentionally. Fleas and ticks can hide under matted coats making their extermination almost impossible, If the mats cover the 'private' areas, urine and faeces will be pressed against the skin or stick in the coat, causing further irritation and possible infection and rotting of the coat and skin.

How can I keep my pet mat free?The amount of coat care will depend on how much coat your pet has. Medium to long coats, and those with more undercoat will require more attention than short coats. Even short coats need some kind of attention. The proper tools are essential.

### **The Basic tools required for most coats consist of:**

A metal comb, preferably stainless steel.

A slicker brush.

De-mat spray with silicon.

Depending on your particular breed other tools may be recommended. These tools should be available from a local Pet Supply store or online. Your Groomer should also be able to help you find the proper tools.

**I have the tools, now what do I do?**

On most breeds it is recommended to start at the bottom of the feet and pushing the coat up with one hand begin using the slicker to brush the coat below with your other hand, the slicker should be used to pull down a small bit of hair at a time, brushing all the way to the skin. Work your way up using this method. Once you have gone over the entire coat you can then use the comb to run through the coat and find any tangles and knots you have missed. Make sure that you can part the coat to the skin with the comb. Many people spend plenty of time brushing there dog only to find that they have merely been brushing over the top and the coat they though was well brushed is in fact solidly matted near the skin.

**I Found A Mat!**

Now is when you use a little elbow grease and ALOT of care. Mats are usually in delicate areas, and since they were formed, they have been tugging on the dogs skin. That means, if you are not gentle, it will hurt a lot when you pull. You must hold the mat in one hand, dampen with the spray, and work it a few hairs at a time to break it up. If you have not taught your dog to be handled for brushing & combing then you'll have quite a job on your hands and will probably need the help of another person to hold the dog.

**Why not just take the dog to a Groomer?**

Yes, you can take your dog to the Groomer to have it properly groomed, but do not expect de-matting to be a regular part of your grooming. It takes extra time and care to de-mat a pet, and you will be charged an additional fee for it on top of your regular grooming charge. Do not be surprised if your Groomer will not de-mat, if the matting is to extensive the only option they will give you is to shave your pet. A caring groomer will not torture a pet because you do not want it shaved. Remember, it is not the Groomers fault your pet has fallen into this condition.

**REMEMBER - DAILY COAT CARE IS TRULY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PET'S OWNER.**

You will find in the long run, proper coat maintenance will cost you less and your pet will be much happier.

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