

# GROOMING GOLDENS

Goldens as a breed can be prone to sensitive skin, allergies, and skin breakdowns. Excellent nutrition and regular maintenance of the skin and coat can prevent many problems from occurring or getting out of hand. A knowledgeable breeder is the best source of specific suggestions in terms of diet and grooming products and will be happy to show you techniques to keep your Golden looking beautiful. Following are some basic suggestions to handle simple grooming. Get your puppy used to being handled and groomed all over its body from the beginning and grooming will be a relaxing, enjoyable experience for both of you. If you are not interested in doing basic grooming, and not able to take your dog to a groomer on a regular basis, you should seriously consider whether the Golden is the right breed for you. The Golden Retriever Club of Illinois periodically sponsors grooming clinics to demonstrate techniques for grooming and trimming.

## EQUIPMENT

Using the right equipment makes the job much easier on you and your dog.

### Essential:

1. Steel comb
2. Pin brush
3. Nail clippers
4. Quik Stop
5. Hair scissors
6. Dog toothpaste
7. Toothbrush
8. Ear cleaning solution

### Ideal:

1. Grooming table
2. Round grooming arm
3. Blower dryer
4. Fine tooth thinning shears
5. Stripping knife
6. Towel and blanket pins
7. Nail grinder

## BATHING

Bathe your pup when dirty, smelly, after swimming (at least rinse in clean water), before taking to a show, to visit friends or relatives, etc. If you use a mild premium shampoo, (not inexpensive grocery store varieties) there is no reason that dogs can't be bathed weekly as desired or necessary. Bathing removes dirt and thus actually preserves the coat, rather than drying and harming the coat as some sources claim.

Towel and/or blow dry. The blower dryer, such as one made by Metro, not a heated hair dryer, actually blows the water out of the coat, and quickens the drying process. If the weather is nice, not too cold or humid, the dog can air dry. If your Golden tends to have an unruly coat, you can pin a towel over the wet, flattened coat to help train it to lay flat. Using the blower dryer at some point in the drying process allows you to see all the way to the skin and thus check for any sores or developing "hot spots". NEVER let your pup go to bed wet as this tends to foster the development of "hot spots" which are a staph infection of the skin. Some Goldens are more prone to them than others, and if not caught and treated quickly, they can be very troublesome to the dog and the owner. Particular areas to check for dampness are behind the ears and under the legs, though Goldens can develop hot spots anywhere, including on the face.

## EARS

Check your dog's ears regularly and clean as necessary. If your dog has dirty, smelly ears, this can be a sign of an ear infection and may need to be checked by your vet. Again, preventative maintenance is the key. Cleanliness can keep a little road dirt and ear wax from turning into a big problem requiring vet trips and medication. The dark moist area covered by the ear flap is a perfect environment for bacteria and fungus to grow if not kept in check. There are a number of good cleaning agents, including vinegar and water, and Biogroom Liquid Ear Cleaner. The important thing to remember when cleaning ears is to clean thoroughly

and wick out as much moisture as possible with cotton balls. Have your vet demonstrate proper and thorough ear cleaning when you are in for a regular check.

Trimming excess hair from the underside of the ear flap, especially where it covers the ear canal, can help prevent moisture buildup. Trimming excess hair around the outside of the flap can neaten the dog's appearance. The thinning shears give a more professional look to this job. A stripping knife gives a neat finishing touch.

## NAILS

Trim your pup's nails at least once a week. Short nails help keep the nice round "cat's paw" appearance of the foot. Short nails also don't damage hardwood floors! Train your dog to accept this necessary grooming from the beginning. Use either a Miller's Forge or Resco nail trimmer. Make sure the blade is sharp or it may split the nail rather than cut cleanly. The quick is a vein that grows into the nail. You want to trim up to the quick without cutting it, as it will bleed. Use a little Quik Stop (styptic powder) to halt the bleeding if you do nick the vein. A matter-of-fact approach to nail trimming will help to get the job done quickly and painlessly. A treat to reward your dog's good behavior is a good idea. Some dogs are pretty accepting of this procedure, while for others, a grooming table may be a necessity to make the job easier on all concerned. Have your breeder, groomer, or vet show you how to trim nails if you are not familiar with the procedure. Just don't let it go, or the quick will extend further into the nail and it will be difficult to get the nails back to the proper length. Some prefer using a nail grinder to smooth and round the trimmed nail.

## TEETH

Your dog's teeth should be brushed daily using a dog toothpaste and a toothbrush. This will prevent tartar build-up and doggy breath. Heavy tartar will have to be removed by a vet under anesthesia, so again, regular maintenance on your part can go a long way towards your dog's dental care.

While your pup is teething (around 16 weeks, and again around 7 months), the mouth will be sensitive, so forego the tooth brushing at this time. You can use a frozen cloth to gently wipe the gums. Don't fight the pup if they resist having their mouth handled during teething. Most dogs, when they are used to the procedure, love to have their teeth brushed if their mouth is not sore. It's not worth creating a problem by making brushing a painful process during teething.

Watch to make sure that adult teeth are not trying to erupt with baby teeth still in place. If you see this happening, have your vet check it out. It is sometimes advisable to have baby teeth pulled rather than risk malocclusion of the bite.

## COAT CARE - TRIMMING

Goldens are a double coated breed. In other words they have a dense insulating undercoat and a harsher protective outer coat. They usually shed heavily twice a year. This is called "blowing" coat. When your Golden is blowing coat, it is best to get the old dead coat out as quickly as possible to allow the new coat to come in, and to keep the hair from carpeting your entire house and wardrobe. Warm, frequent baths and generous use of the steel comb help to remove the dead hair. Cool baths are recommended when not shedding.

You can use the steel comb and pin brush on a daily basis to keep the coat neat and mat free. Gently brush through the furnishings to remove loose hair and dirt.

NEVER shave your Golden. Their double coat is meant to protect them both from the winter cold (Goldens love cold and snow) and from the summer sun and heat.

As your pup matures, he will begin to grow more coat around the feet and ears which you will want to neaten with your scissors and/or thinning shears. The furnishings or longer feathering that your maturing Golden grows are not meant to be cut, but add to the beauty of the breed. Have your breeder or a knowledgeable Golden owner or exhibitor show you techniques for trimming to keep your Golden looking neat and gorgeous.