

SPEND A LITTLE TIME AND EFFORT IN GROOMING YOUR AUSTRALIAN TERRIER

Generally speaking all breeds of dogs exhibited in the show ring require to be groomed to enhance their appearance and attract attention. The Australian Terrier is no exception, although he does not require a great deal of effort to make him look his best.

Incorrect trimming can make a good dog look bad so, like any good craftsman, you should start with the correct equipment. The basic requirements are a strong natural bristle brush, a steel comb, (with two different widths of teeth) a pair of long bladed sharp scissors, a coarse stripper, nail trimmers, and a pair of thinning scissors.

First stand unwashed dog on a table and thoroughly brush the coat back against the natural fall, paying a lot of attention to the pants and apron. This stimulates the skin and removes knots and dead coat. Using the wide toothed end, comb all the coat back into its natural position. Having done this, you start at the head. With the dog turned around to face you, and using the fine toothed end, comb the topknot toward you, over his eyes. The topknot will fall into its correct place when the dog shakes his head. Comb the ruff outwards so it frames the face and comb the apron down in front of the legs, again using the fine toothed end of the comb.

The ears are groomed next. Standing beside the dog, fold the inside of ear over your index finger and you will see long hairs sticking up on the back of the ear. Pluck these out with your finger and thumb, beginning at the tip of the ear and working down to the base. Turn the ear inside out and pluck along the edge and inside of the ear removing any long hairs growing in the ear canal. The finished ear should have a sharp clear edge with the back resembling brown velvet and the inside pink and clean with a tan edge.

The Aussie grows a fan of hair across his eyes, from the stop. The purpose of this hair is to protect the eyes when digging. Sometimes this hair sticks in the eyes and causes irritation, so for the dogs comfort, remove any long untidy hair you see there. Next, lightly strip, with the coarse stripper, the hair from the outer corner of the eye, towards the ruff, across the thumb marks in the temple area. By doing this you give accent to the ruff and you can improve the apparent length of the head, but remember, all must be done lightly. Now hold the head up and gently strip the hair off the throat about where the lead lies. If the hair is long here the lead can push it up and make the head look stuffy.

The feet and legs are next. First cut the nails as they should not touch the ground. A good routine to get into is to shave a little of each nail weekly. If the nails are allowed to grow to long they cause the toes to spread, spoiling the "cat-like" appearance the Standard calls for. You also run the risk of cutting the vein that runs down the centre of each nail. This vein shrinks back when the nails are kept short. With the scissors cut off the hair under the foot level with the pads. Do not trim between the nails or pads. Nothing looks worse than ugly bare nails. Now with the foot flat on the table, carefully scissor-snip around the foot, shaping it to give that cat like appearance. At the back of the foot, trim off the hair from the back pad up to the stop pad at the wrists. From the front, take the foot, slightly bent, as if standing in your hand, and with the scissors cut in a straight line from the side of the pad to the knee joint on both sides of the leg. Do not shape the wrists. Keep a straight line. Now take the thinning scissors and thin the hair over the knees, then with the stripper blend the hair down to the toes. The finished foot should look smooth like a cats foot and the legs should look straight when viewed from the front and side.

With the dog still standing facing you, using the fine toothed end of the comb, comb his leg feathering towards the rear. If any hair is sticking out from the elbow, pluck it out as it will give the appearance of the dog being out at the elbow.

Still using the fine end, comb the neck hair down and around to blend in with the ruff to make neck appear long and slightly arched. A little light stripping on the sides of the neck can help if the dog is inclined to be short in neck, but be very careful not to strip too heavily. The body hair is then combed down to its full length without a part.

Now begin the tail. Holding it flat in your hand, with the dogs rear towards you, comb from root to tip. Then with the scissors cut around the tip and in a straight line down to the root on both sides. Holding the tail by a few hairs at the back so the tail is in the natural position, cut off all untidy hair down to the vent, on the underside. Looking at the dog from the rear, you will see his pants grow into two whorls or crowns just below the vent. NEVER CUT BELOW THESE WHORLS. With the scissors trim the top of the whorls up to the vent. Examine carefully from the side and pluck out any hairs projecting. This area should be kept fairly short. Thin out the back of the tail with the thinning scissors, then lightly strip over the scissor marks to finish off.

Turn your attention next to the hind legs. Comb the pants down, then turn the rear of the dog towards you. Lift the leg and comb the hair on the back upwards so it stands up. Scissor snip this off up to the hock joint. With the foot still held from the rear, scissor the hair off from both sides of the legs in a straight line and shape around the top of the back pad. Stand the foot flat on the table and scissor snip around the foot to get the cat like shape. With the thinning scissors, thin the hair on the front of the leg, then finish it off with the stripper, taking out the scissor marks. Always be careful not to strip the toes bare and always keep the cat's foot in mind when doing feet.

To complete the grooming operation, recomb all over with the fine toothed end of the comb, and if possible get someone to walk the dog on a lead so that you can check for any mistakes you might wish to rectify.

Bathe your dog only when he requires it. Over-bathing takes the oil from the skin and can cause skin problems. Always use a good quality shampoo formulated for dogs, terriers if possible. DO NOT USE HUMAN SHAMPOO as these are intended for human hair and skin condition. If used on a dog, whose skin is more sensitive, you may cause skin problems. Do not use conditioner as it will soften the coat, even if used several days before a show, and Australian Terrier coats do not require it. The time before a show to bath a dog is up to the individual owner. Some prefer to bath two to three days before a show to give the coat time to settle. Others bath the day before the show so the dog is presented to the judge in a clean sweet smelling condition.

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This article was given to me by Jean Jackson "JANELA" in the early 1990's she had had it for years

Today there are good Terrier shampoos available