

how to groom your german shepherd dog article courtesy of cheryl lecourt, plush puppy australia.

There has been a propensity in past years to ignore the German Shepherd's glamour qualities in favour of his working capacities to the exclusion of all else. There are always factions who when discussing good honest working breeds, claim to be purists and excuse their lack of success in the show ring as the fault of everything but their own participation in doing the hard yard with presentation.

Having thrown that contentious claim into print, I can at least state that the German Shepherd exhibitors have really got into this grooming thing and are inundating me with lots of questions and interest. I am mightily pleased at the level of work that most are ready to do as it is true that when it comes down to the wire in that show line-up, the dog has to look good too.

The standard calls for a double coat that is neither open nor soft. The coat must be dense, harsh and lying close to the body. Now the interpretation of this can often be to have the coat slick and flat as a pancake which does not serve for a good looking finish. Much better to have a slight lift to the coat when drying and utilise that density for a fuller finish without destroying the outline of the dog.

He must at all times give an overall impression of smooth curves rather than angles and the touch of elevation to the coat when drying can enhance this.

Let me explain. Starting from scratch with the bath, select which is the main objective for the coat and it will be either more coat or a shinier coat, depending at what stage of shedding or regeneration the coat is at.

For more coat, use the **Plush Puppy Body Building Shampoo** or, for a shinier coat, the **Plush Puppy All Purpose Shampoo**. Use both at a ratio of 5:1 ie. 5 parts water to one part shampoo. These can be diluted further to 10:1 for general maintenance.

Never use conditioner unless you have too boofy a coat and want to really flatten and soften. So, as your coat does not require softening, I advise avoiding conditioner. The answer to hydrating the coat and keeping the good general healthy vigour is to oil the coat. This will not soften nor change the texture but will keep it in good health especially when showing every week and bathing every week. Use **Plush Puppy Seabreeze Oil** which is a very alternative oil and is all naturally sourced containing primarily Evening Primrose Oil, Calendula Oil, Wheatgerm Oil and other nice goodies. Use at a ratio of 1 tbspn to 1 gallon/4 litres water and sluice through, sponge on or surge bath into the coat ensuring it goes right through to the skin. Leave in and do not rinse out. This is not an oily oil and is totally water soluble.

This is probably the best thing I know of for keeping that natural look to the coat and giving lots of glamour and vigour without softening. It is also just wonderful for the health and vitality of the skin and hair. Also good for those that have that scurfy, powdery, skin shedding.

Now some GSD's do have a dodgy skin - it seems to follow some of the lines and is there whether we like it or not. All the products listed will be kind and gentle to these situations. For the very serious problem skins, use the **Plush Puppy Itchy Skin Shampoo** at a ratio of 3:1 till it starts to clear and then dilute further to as much as 10:1 for general follow-up

maintenance. Follow with the **Plush Puppy Seabreeze Oil** as discussed above as this is quite calming to distressed skin.

Now you have bathed and oiled your dog and it's time to blow dry. Use an oval pin cushioned brush such as our **Plush Puppy Pin Brush** and blow dry the coat against the grain of the coat all forwards towards the head. Do this till the coat is $\frac{3}{4}$ dry and then switch to a $\frac{1}{2}$ bristle $\frac{1}{2}$ plastic cushion brush such as the **Plush Puppy Porcupine Brush** for a professional finish. You use the pin brush when the coat is very wet so as not to rip the guts out of the coat but need to finish with the other brush for that closer, smoother finish.

Once fully dry, the dog can have a good shake and the coat will fall very nicely back into that curved silhouette that is desired but has many advantages over drying with the grain of the coat. Firstly, it allows you to really get into all the underneath areas and get all the dead coat out thoroughly without any of that felting one often sees with a dense, double coat. It also aerates the skin and allows you to check for any skin allergies, ticks and fleas - heaven forbid! By the time you get to the show and the dog has squashed most of the "do" it will be just perfect for the show.

You can use some **Plush Puppy Volumising Cream** when drying at a ratio of 1 tbspn to 1 cup/250 ml water to bodify a sparse coat that has recently shed - use the whole of this mix when drying. You can also spray with **Plush Puppy Ruffy Tuffy Coat Spray** if you want a firmer texture - spray lightly and dry and keep applying till the level of harshness has been achieved though to keep a natural feel, don't go overboard.

Show day is a matter of spraying and brushing with either the **Plush Puppy Volumising Cream** mixed as above or the **Plush Puppy Ruffy Tuffy Coat Spray** or the **Plush Puppy Quick Fix** for a light hold factor if a little more lift is wanted. Spray for final finish with **Plush Puppy Shine & Comb** and you have a very glamorous German Shepherd which is exactly adhering to the requirements of your breed standard. Don't forget to add that final pizzazz of a good misting of **Plush Puppy Odour Muncher** to really get some attention. It smells divine and gets rid of any doggy odours too.

Your breed is a fantastic dog. He is arresting in the ring when presented well and not only should capture attention when he moves out on that long leash around the ring, he should look a million dollars as well and he can and he will! Hope to see you at your Nationals somewhere.