

Grooming

Many owners feel that since their Doberman has a short coat which does not require constant thinning, snipping, and clipping, grooming is not needed. But there are many other tasks which fall into the grooming category which require regular attention. Grooming does not mean simply brushing the dog once in awhile.



Coat: Brushing your dog regularly will not only keep the hair and skin in top condition, but it is also a time to check for parasites such as fleas and ticks. Foxtails, skin abrasions, cuts, and callouses can also be noticed and attended to. There are many varieties of brushes and grooming aides. I prefer a medium stiff bristle for a brush but find the rubber grooming tools with the little nubbies on them to be good at working out loose hair. A change in coat or skin condition could be an indication of a larger problem needing veterinary care. Sometimes stress can trigger a condition called Demodetic Mange. This type of mange is not contagious from dog to dog, or dog to owner. It should not be confused with Sarcoptic Mange which is contagious and can be a serious condition. Early signs of Demodetic Mange are often small bald spots on top of the feet, around the eyes, or in the flank area although they can appear anywhere on the body. All dogs carry the mite for Demodex but the condition seldom develops unless the dog has undergone some sort of stress like moving to a new home, surgery, or changes in routine. It is not genetic but does seem to follow family lines so you could say that for some dogs there is a predisposition for the condition.



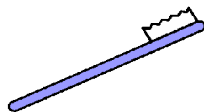
Bathing: Train your dog early to have a bath. It is much easier to bathe a 30 lb puppy than a 90 lb. adult. Tepid water is best. If the water is too warm, the dog seems to shed more. In the summer many dogs enjoy a cool shower after being outside. The frequency of the baths should depend on weather, and if the dog spends a lot of time in a yard with no grass. Baby wipes are great for between bath touch ups.

Ears: If cropped, special attention should be given to keeping the ears clean. The hairs in the ear are not sufficient enough to keep dirt and debris out of the ear. Q-tips and baby wipes work quite well for cleaning ears. **DO NOT PROBE WHERE YOU CANNOT SEE.** Natural ears should be checked often for moisture buildup, dirt, foxtails or other debris. Ears should have no discernable odor.



Eyes: Many Dobermans seem to collect “sleep” in the corner of their eyes and a small amount is natural. If it seems excessive, or greenish in color, consult your vet as the dog may have an allergy which is irritating the eyes.

Nails: It is said that if you can hear the dog’s nails click on the kitchen floor, they are too long. Nail length can affect gait and stress muscles and tendons by forcing the toes into an unnatural position. Dobermans should have tight “cat” feet and the nails should be kept short. Most dogs do not like conventional nail clippers as invariably at some point we would clip one too short. Once a dog has been “quicked” it’s not going to want its feet messed with again. A preferred method of nail care is grinding or sanding the nail. This can be done with an emery board or small file or with the use of a Dremel tool. The rechargeable Dremel Minimate is only about \$30 and worth every penny. Do not, however, use the stone attachment as the friction will heat up the nail too quickly. Instead use one of the sandpaper attachments. If your dog does not like its feet handled start off for a few days just giving foot massages. Then begin with an emery board for them to get used to having the feeling of friction on the nail. Finally begin to use the Dremel – perhaps doing only one or two nails each evening. Keep the sessions short and pleasant. Always give a treat reward when finished. Nails done with a Dremel or file should be smooth which eliminates scratches on people, furniture, and floors. See the attached chart showing the structure and care of the nails.



Teeth: Regularly examine the teeth and gums on your puppy. Check for broken or chipped teeth and especially in puppies; be sure that the “baby” teeth have come out as the adult teeth erupt. If they don’t, have them removed by the vet. Gums should be a healthy pink and free from redness around the teeth. Brushing the teeth several times a week will keep plaque from building up. There are “doggy” toothbrushes and toothpaste on the market but I prefer the little rubber brushes that fit over your index finger. Start young with the puppy to get it used to having your fingers in its mouth. Instead of toothpaste, start off with a bit of peanut butter and your pup will look forward to the brushing sessions. Do not use a mixture of salt and baking soda as a paste. This is too abrasive for the enamel.