

- AB** Hello, I'm Anthony Baker and today we're going to be talking about pet grooming.
- With me, I've got Alison Petit who's been a dog groomer for many years and she's going to share some of her many secrets to achieving a really good grooming of your dog.
- So, hello Alison.
- A PETIT** Hello Anthony.
- AB** Firstly, would you like to tell us just a little bit about your background and how you got into dog grooming.
- A PETIT** Well, I've been involved with animals for about 40 years. I've even worked for strays for many, many years and I was actually showing a Lowchen and Great Danes and I realised the dogs seemed to me, not to be groomed as well as they had been many years before and that triggered me off to thinking about doing dog grooming.
- So I phoned a lady, Rosemary [Dagesford] who's very well known here in Victoria. She is a show judge and a breeder and also had been dog grooming for many years, and I said "I'd like to do dog grooming".
- When she heard my age, which is 42, she thought I was too old, and then she thought I was overweight and didn't think I had the stamina.
- AB** Well, you have certainly showed her over the years.
- A PETIT** Yes, I did. Yes, and so I've been qualified now for 13 years.
- AB** Okay, and you have had your own business for all that time?
- A PETIT** Yes, for all that time.
- AB** Fantastic.
- A PETIT** And worked for several vets.
- AB** What did that involve when you were working – so, were you a vet nurse?

- A PETIT** I was an unqualified vet nurse, but I actually worked in the animal hospital on the Gold Coast for admins.
- AB** So, you must have picked up some great tips when you were grooming pets. Things to look for.
- A PETIT** Oh yes, picked up looking for lumps, skin problems, ear problems and all those sort of things.
- AB** Good. We might cover a little bit of that as we go along.
- Okay, well we might just start with something basic like equipment. For example, if someone wanted to, and not all of you listening to this audio will want to do your own grooming, some might want to bath your own dog or cut their nails. Some might want to attempt cutting the hair of your dog. It all depends. Everyone is different, but let's just go over the basic equipment that people would need.
- A PETIT** You need scissors but they have to have blunt ends. You never use scissors with sharp ends.
- AB** Why is that?
- A PETIT** Because they will stick into the dog or when you are grooming around their eyes, taking the hair from their eyes, you may stick them. It becomes very dangerous if you've got a dog with a head that wants to pull away from you, so you always use scissors with blunt ends. "Rounded ends" might be a better word.
- AB** Would you be able to buy those at a pet shop or would they be from a more specialised outlet?
- A PETIT** Any good pet groomers supplies all those sort of scissors.
- AB** So you are not talking electronic ones. These are just?
- A PETIT** Just plain scissors. That's part of your equipment.
- You need ear pluckers for plucking the ears and they are a forcep.

- AB** Why is it important to pluck ears?
- A PETIT** Well, in a lot of the hairy dogs, the ear acts like a candlewick so when the hair grows down into the ear, the moisture gets in and seeps into the ear and then you get chronic ear infections, to the degree that some poodles have to have an ear operation to allow the air to flow, like Cocker Spaniels. So you always keep the ear free of any debris.
- AB** Okay, so a special plucker that would remove the hair.
- A PETIT** Just a forcep.
- AB** A forcep to remove hair from the ear.
- AB** And you can get them from any pet shop, a good quality pet shop.
- A PETIT** How often would you need to do that to the average dog?
- AB** Every six weeks.
- A PETIT** Okay, so it's quite often.
- AB** Yes.
- A PETIT** For poodles, Bichons, the real hairy type dog.
- AB** Okay, sure. And what other equipment would we need Alison?
- A PETIT** You might decide you want to use clippers. They are quite expensive.
- AB** So these are electric?
- A PETIT** Electric clippers. They come with a blade, but often people don't realise this, the blades they are supplied with are often too fine. Like you could buy the pet clippers. If you are only doing your own dog, they are quite good but the blades are too fine and the blades they use are what we use for doing under the belly or a face, clipping back a face on a poodle or something like that – they are only a fine blade. Whereas groomers have various thickness of blades. So you have to buy in extra blades, which is also an expensive proposition.

- AB** So is that a bit like the electric trimmers at the hairdresser, where there is different size blades?
- A PETIT** Yes, but you can't use a human one on dogs.
- AB** Okay. What would happen there? Is it too fine?
- A PETIT** It just won't cut.
- AB** It won't cut the hair.
- A PETIT** It won't cut a dog's hair.
- AB** Okay, so that's an important thing for people to realise.
- A PETIT** Not to use your human ones on your dog.
- AB** No, it's not going to work.
- A PETIT** No, what it will do is the hair gets caught in the blade and then it will pull the hair on the dog and it will hurt.
- AB** Okay, that's a good point.
- And what other things? I imagine we would need some sort of brushes, combs, etc?
- A PETIT** I think the basic things, that anyone needs, it doesn't matter what you do, is what's call a matting comb. It has a long tooth and a short tooth which means you then can get the tangles out.
- AB** Okay, terrific.
- A PETIT** So the matting comb is used to tease tangles out. You never use a plastic comb because a plastic comb will knot the hair. It will generate static electricity so you always have to have a metal toothed comb.
- AB** Okay, a metal tooth comb. Never plastic.
- A PETIT** Never plastic. And the other thing is the brush. A flicker brush – a medium flicker because they come in various hardnesses. A soft one is just too soft for a

coat.

AB So when you say a flicker?

A PETIT That's got like tiny wires.

AB Okay, tiny wires like a rectangular shaped head.

A PETIT Yes, and they come in soft, medium and hard. I find the hard is too harsh, the medium is what I use on all the dogs.

AB Okay, so you find the medium – and what's the name of that brush again?

A PETIT It's a flicker.

AB A flicker. A flicker brush – found in any pet shop.

A PETIT Any good pet shop will have a flicker brush.

AB Okay, terrific. So does that about cover what most people would need to groom their dog with?

A PETIT That's the basics yes. Oh, and a pair of nail clippers and you have to have ones supplied by a pet shop, not your nail clippers, unless you have got a tiny puppy, you can't use human nail clippers. Dogs' nails are just too hard.

AB Okay. How often would you be looking at cutting your dog's nails?

A PETIT Probably every six weeks unless they run around a lot, but little babies often have very long nails so you just cut the whites off the nails.

AB Terrific. So that's a good introduction on what equipment we need for general grooming.

What we might do now is just talk about puppies first because there is some differences with grooming a pup versus an adult dog and once we briefly talk about pups, we will then go on to walking you through how Alison would groom a dog from beginning to end.

So Alison, would you like to tell us a bit about pups – why it's a bit different and

how we have to look after them – groom them, etc.

A PETIT Well, puppies between 5 and 9 months of age drop their puppy coat into their adult coat and often times what people do is then decide well, I will bath the dog. A big mistake. It turns it into matts and then they bring in a groomer and the dog has to be stripped back to it's skin using clippers and it's not a good look.

AB So when you say, they bath the dog, that's when the hair has dropped you are saying?

A PETIT Yes and it's matted in the coat and people have the idea "well, if I bath it, then I brush the knots out". It doesn't work like that. You must brush your knots and comb your knots and tangles and get everything out before you bath your dog. We're talking long haired dogs here.

Another big mistake they make is when they bath them, they go round and round like they are washing their own hair in the bath or the shower and that's a "no, no". It tangles the coat. And it's the same when they are drying. They go round and round like they do on their own head. Human hair is different to dog hair and all the conditioning in the world won't get the knot matts out. You can get special matt conditioners that will help soften a matt to groom it out.

AB Okay. Can I just take you back a few steps for a minute – when you said when a pup drops it coat and grows it's new coat. How would someone recognise that, that that's happened?

A PETIT It will start to matt around it's neck and it will start to matt around it's bottom.

AB Okay, in around 4 to 6 months, did you say?

A PETIT Between 5 and 9 months that happens. They will start to realise the coat is getting matted and it can almost happen overnight that they will drop the coat and especially if you have a summer or a winter coming on, it happens very quickly.

AB So what should they do, for anyone who is listening to this, if that's happening to your dog?

A PETIT Well, they could get the comb and the brush out and start to groom their dog but they should be grooming their puppy as soon as they get it home. Even if it's two

minutes a day. Get it used to the feel of the brush, even if it hasn't got very much hair and so it gets used to being petted and then it's less frightened when it comes to a groomer and it's never had the strange smells or the sounds.

AB So it could get very upset?

A PETIT It could be, yes, if it hasn't been handled right from the word go and show him what a brush and comb is and some puppies can be extremely naughty. They will bite the brush. They will scream and you haven't touched them but that's their way of saying "well, I don't want this done".

AB Yeah, and if you have never done it to them earlier on it's going to be more of a problem.

A PETIT Yes and with puppies that are naughty you have to be persistent but you love them, you cuddle them, you sing to them – do whatever you need to do, as long as you can get that brush and the comb to them.

AB So they are enjoying the experience?

A PETIT So they are enjoying the experience.

AB Okay, so someone with a pup – when would they look at having the first cut?

A PETIT I'd say at about 5 months because they have had their full injections so they are all covered for diseases, they are fully wormed and the whole bit.

AB Okay, terrific. Just before we go onto how Alison goes through a typical grooming of a dog, how often should people be looking at bathing their dog? I'm sure it varies between the breeds?

A PETIT I firmly believe that possibly once every six weeks. Now some people wash their dog every week – it's too much. It destroys the oils in their coat. They must have the oils to be healthy, but brushing and combing – if you can brush and comb your dog, you will take away a lot more of that and they will still smell nice. You don't have to keep putting them in a bath. We have this unreasonable desire that we want them to smell better all the time and sometimes it's not even their coat that is smelling, it's their anal glands.

AB How would they find that out? Would that be a trip to the vet if someone had a dog that was needing the anal glands cleaned?

A PETIT Well, often they don't realise. They just think the dog is smelly so they keeping bathing this dog within an inch of it's life.

AB And the smell obviously doesn't go away?

A PETIT No.

AB Okay, so we have run through what equipment is needed for dog grooming and we have talked about special tips for pups.

We might go on now with a typical grooming, what that entails and this might be useful for someone who wants to do their own grooming at home. May be even for someone who is thinking of starting their own business. But generally, if you are going to be grooming on a professional level, some sort of training is required. Is that right Alison?

A PETIT Yes, I believe so.

AB And there is many courses out there where people can be trained and gain experience along the way.

A PETIT Yes.

AB Okay, so let's say someone has brought you a dog. Let's just slowly walk through what goes on from beginning to end.

A PETIT Well, when I have a new client come in and sometimes people say "oh, it's not very matted" and on the top it looks great. They have been brushing it alright, but only the topcoat and as soon as I feel into the coat, I can tell straight away it's water matted and the coat will have to be clipped off.

AB Okay. So how could that be overcome beforehand? Are they not brushing deep enough?

A PETIT That's right and they are going with the coat instead of against the coat. You always start at the back legs and you move forward to the dog's head. That way,

if you have a feisty dog, you know up the first couple of legs whether it's going to bite you or not and whether you have to muzzle it because you are at the furthest end of the dog.

AB So, you are saying you are brushing the dog from the back forward?

A PETIT Yes.

AB Okay, so that might be a surprise to most people because the hair goes from the head to the back legs.

A PETIT That's right, but to actually find knots, you have to come up the legs, up the back to find the knots and the matts.

AB That could be where a lot of people are going wrong.

A PETIT That is. They groom it the other way but it doesn't get the dead coat out and it doesn't get the matts out. The skin grows at the top.

AB Okay, that's a fantastic point.

You mentioned muzzling. So, some dogs need like a type of restraint. Can you just explain that ?

A PETIT Yes, just a soft dog muzzle. As long as they can open their mouth and pant because in hot weather it can be dangerous and you only muzzle it for as long as you are handling it. Some dogs you have to muzzle when you clip their nails. So you pop the muzzle on, clip their nails and take the muzzle off and you make a fuss of the dog because some of them can't help themselves. They just get feisty. Or if you have got a very naughty pup that is biting and he could hurt himself or herself by their struggle, so you pop a little muzzle on and usually they give up. They realise you have got them beaten, they can't bite the brush, they can't bite the scissors and so they are in no danger of being hurt and plus the groomers are safe with their fingers.

AB Okay, that's important. And I imagine after a few groomings, a few cuts, those dogs that are a bit feisty settle down. Would that be right? They do get used to it?

A PETIT Well, with a puppy I find three groomings and the puppy knows what's happening because I use commands all the time as well like sit, stand and stay as is used in normal basic obedience training and also often holding a puppy close to you so they can hear your heartbeat will sooth an anxious puppy. So they know they are not being hurt and before I touch a puppy, we're talking a 5 month old that's never had a grooming in it's life with the clippers, what I do is hold the puppy against me and I run the clippers across it so they can feel the vibration of the clippers and when they realise that it's not going to bite, it's a purring sound which is quite soothing, they will often let you do whatever you want to do because they know it's not going to hurt.

AB Right, so you have to show them that it's non-threatening basically?

A PETIT Yes. And another trick that I do use if I've got a young puppy come in, if I've got an older dog there that knows the ropes, the puppy can see me where I'm working and it will watch what's happening.

AB Oh really!

A PETIT And puppies will often pick up that it's okay. If I've got a feisty old dog, I won't do it. I will do the puppy first because the puppy will think that's the way to behave.

AB Right, so role modelling?

A PETIT Yes, role modelling. Definitely! Puppies will learn what they are watching.

AB Okay. Very good points .

Let's continue on. The dog is in, you have brought the dog in, you are having a look at the hair and so you need to make a decision how short to cut based on what the owner wants but also how matted the coat is?

A PETIT That's right.

AB So what happens next.

A PETIT Well, say the coat is in reasonable condition, only a couple of matts and they don't want to keep the dog in a long coat, I suggest a puppy clip which is long enough for them to groom but not long enough for them to get into too much

trouble or to bring fleas in and things like that.

So then what I will do with the dog, I will start to groom it from it's feet up to it's head, get every knot, every tangle out. Then I clip under it's belly, under it's legs so the under side of it is perfectly clean and depending of course, on the breed of the dog whether I clip the face or the poodle's feet that's done before – unless it's a very dirty dog and I will leave that until last. But normally, your face, feet and tail is the way to go.

AB So this is all before any water?

A PETIT This is long before any water.

AB Because it's again quite different to adults isn't it? Adults go for their hair cut, have the hair wash with the shampoo and the conditioner and then have the cut. This is very different.

A PETIT That's right. You have to prepare the coat and the dog, pluck it's ears, clean it's ears out, make sure that everything is fine in that department and then you come to the bathing.

AB Okay, terrific. Is it worth mentioning a bit more about the cutting at the moment, or will we cover that later? Like the cutting before the bath?

A PETIT Well, if you have a matted coat, then you clip it off all over the body.

AB What length would you need to go to for a very matted coat?

A PETIT Well, it depends on the matting of the coat. Sometimes I will have to use a 7 which is a drastic cut. It takes it right back to almost the skin.

AB That's a size 7 blade?

A PETIT Yes. I personally try to put it into what we call a "winterclip" a size 4 – but sometimes the blade can't get through.

So I use between a 7, a 5 and a 4. So, the 5 blade is classed as the "summer cut" or a "winter cut", depending on whether it is summer or winter. The 7 is classed as a summer cut but which is one I don't use now because of the sun.

The dog needs as much hair as it can get.

AB For protection against ultraviolet light.

A PETIT Yes, that's right – for sunburn and skin cancer and things like that on a dog.

AB We have covered brushing your dog and just a general clip around the belly in preparation for the bath.

So let's briefly talk about what products we would use for bathing a dog.

A PETIT Well, I actually use Pett Oil oil. It's a natural product. It's made of natural pyrethrins and developed by Australian botanicals and I use it because I do suffer dermatitis and eczema.

AB So it's good on your skin?

A PETIT It's good on my skin because my hands are in water all the time and I don't have any breakouts. I find dogs with skin that's irritated that come in, their skin will be extremely red but once they have had their bath, the actual redness will disappear.

AB So some of the additional properties of that shampoo helps settle allergies?

A PETIT Oh for sure, yes. And it also deters fleas and will kill fleas.

AB Oh okay, so that's important. People could visit their local pet shop?

A PETIT No, it's a Australian specialised product.

AB Oh they wouldn't find that so they need to search for that somewhere else.

A PETIT Any good dog shampoo – the one thing I do advise people is do not use one with an insecticide in because you are handling the insecticide, it goes through your skin, it goes through your dog's skin and I personally don't believe it's healthy. Like you have children – and I think anything with insecticide in, has to be used very, very carefully. Just a gentle dog shampoo is fine. Never use a human shampoo, as we have different Ph's in our hair and it won't clean the dog properly.

- AB** Do you use a conditioner as well?
- A PETIT** I do not use a conditioner at all because I find the dogs' coats are conditioned enough and a lot of conditioners are extremely 'heavy' and what happens is, and this is quite common in the grooming world to be known, that it will attract dirt. So your dog will get dirtier if they have had conditioner in their coat.
- AB** So people out there using conditioner thinking you are making your dog much cleaner and shinier hair – you are actually attracting the dirt.
- A PETIT** For very cotton woolly coats that tend to matt easily, it's very good for that, but as a general rule, I will not use it.
- AB** Okay. So Alison, can you just briefly walk us through, you know, you have got your dog - how you actually bath a dog, the nitty gritty of wetting the coat, how you go about that and what you actually wash them in. Whether you have a big tub and that type of thing.
- A PETIT** Well, I have a hydrobath which means warm water is put into a tank and the dog actually stands on a firm floor so it's not standing in water and dogs feel a bit safer like that. And there is a few drops of shampoo put in that to actually help with the coat. Water will not wet the coat. It must have an agent in it to help wet a coat.
- AB** How do you actually wet the coat?
- A PETIT** It's like a shower head and you just run that all over the dog and that's when I get down to the nitty gritty with my shampoo and start from the bottom and work my way up to the head.
- AB** So just like the brushing earlier on – you are starting from the back working towards the front.
- A PETIT** Yes.
- AB** Can you just explain to us a bit more – so you put shampoo on. What sort of motion and cleaning motion are you using with your hand?
- A PETIT** Well, I actually smooth it through the coat and squeeze it through the coat. We're

dealing with a longish coat here, so there is no 'round and round' business, you are actually squeezing through the coat.

AB A bit like sort of massaging through to the skin?

A PETIT Yes, very much so. And the dogs enjoy the massaging through, and at the same time you can check under their feet for burs and things like that you might have missed in your grooming.

AB Okay, so you just work from the back right up to the front.

A PETIT And then I use a washer for around the face.

AB That's an awkward part for a lot of people, getting around the eyes.

A PETIT And you make sure you don't get water in the ears because that will cause ear infections. So cottonwool in the ears is very good to stop that.

AB Okay, so just pop a piece of cottonwool in each ear and don't forget to take it out of course.

A PETIT Well, you will soon find it when you come to groom the ears.

AB Yes, and just a few tips around eyes. I know some dogs have weeping eyes and discolouration around the eyes. There is products out there that clean the tears up. How do you clean around eyes?

A PETIT I just use the shampoo on a washer and just clean the eyes off that way because it's a very, very gentle shampoo that I use but I don't get it in the eyes but it won't take the discolouration out because that's a natural thing from the eye secretions that actually stain

AB So people shouldn't be trying to clean that?

A PETIT No. It won't happen. They can get special drops that actually bleach the hair there or if they want to do it everyday twice a day – just with cottonwool and water they can avoid the staining. You see dogs in a show ring – that happens to them all the time but usually with your pet puppy, you haven't got time to do that.

AB And it's not a real issue anyway.

- A PETIT** It's not dangerous. It's part of the breed. Some stain their coats more than others, especially their saliva, around their mouth – there is nothing much you can do about that.
- AB** Okay, terrific. So we've lathered the dog up. I'm just trying to help people get a picture of what the dog would look like. I'm sure we're not talking gallons of shampoo and a dog that's just covered in white foam.
- A PETIT** No, no, it doesn't happen like that, no.
- AB** So, just a mild shampoo.
- A PETIT** That's right. Then you use the same shower head and the water is recycled so you actually then rinse them off with the same water so it brings the dirt and the soap through and then you empty your bath and with warm water, you then thorough rinse the dog, making sure all the soap has gone.
- AB** So, with shampooing – just shampoo once or twice?
- A PETIT** Once for wetting and then once for shampoo and then the once to rinse off the bulk of the soap and that's a water saving device and then you just use your rinse to get the rest of the shampoo off then I add a flea rinse which also pyrethrin based, very safe for children.
- AB** Is that massaged through?
- A PETIT** No, I just rinse that over them with a sponge and leave that on for five minutes – the dog is in the bath there for five minutes and that helps get rid of the fleas and it will keep them flea free for about seven days.
- AB** Then they have another rinse after that or?
- A PETIT** No, that's left to dry with coat.
- AB** Okay. So we've got a nice clean dog who has been shampooed and rinsed off. I guess now we are moving onto drying Alison. How do we accomplish that?
- A PETIT** Well, while they are still in the bath, I have a huge blower and actually blow the excess water out of the coat and because it's geared lower, it doesn't frighten the

dogs, it's like a massage. So they quite appreciate that.

AB So when you say a blower, is that like a hairdryer?

A PETIT No, it's like a big blower. It has got three motors and it actually blows the excess water off the coat and then they are picked up in a nice towel, placed in a cage and cage dried for about ten minutes.

AB So when you say cage dried?

A PETIT They are just left in a cage with warm air blowing on them for about ten minutes or so and then depending on their coat, say if we are talking about a very fluffy dog, then it comes out onto the table and I do use my hand blower to then start to blow dry. Then I switch to another dryer which has only one motor and with a brush, I start to brush as well as blow dry.

AB Okay, can I just stop you there for a moment. So for people out there who don't have one of these blowers with three motors, what could they use?

A PETIT Well, towels – to take the excess water off, they can towel off the excess and once they have towelled off the excess, they can use their hairdryer. I do advise them to train their puppy from a very early age though because often puppies are frightened of a handheld dryer because it's got a higher pitch in it's motor because it's so tiny. On some sensitive dogs, with their hearing sensitive, they get very frightened of it. But if they are brought up with it, they are usually fine.

AB A lot easier for them.

A PETIT Yes.

AB Okay, so let's go on.

You were saying you now started the brushing.

A PETIT Yes, the blow drying and brushing.

AB Which brush are you using for this?

A PETIT I use the flicker brush and that's to get a fluff on the coat and you brush it, once again, up towards the head. Everything goes up towards the head. You are also

getting a fluffier look in the coat because I'm going to put it into a puppy clip, so I don't need the hair lying flat. So you always go against the coat.

AB Against the coat, brushing and drying at the same time. Do you completely dry the dog now before?

A PETIT Yes, it has to be absolutely thoroughly dried or the combs you snap onto your clipper just will not work. The clippers won't go through a wet coat and it also damages your clippers and your blades.

AB Okay.. So let's say your dog is now nice and dry. How do we begin clipping?

A PETIT Well, I put on a 15 blade onto the clipper and then I snap a comb on – you have combs that come in various sizes. So you can have an 1½ inch long coat, an inch, ¾ of an inch – you are still in the old metric because they are American combs.

AB Which would suit our American audience anyway.

A PETIT The basic ones I use is ½ inch comb. That seems to give a nice cover and it's not too long for the people to get into trouble with. Occasionally, they want them longer in winter, which is fine, I use a higher comb. You start at the back of the neck and you go down towards the tail. Then you go down the body following the line of the coat, always following the line of the coat.

AB So for clipping, people need to start at the neck?

A PETIT At the neck.

AB And what type of motion? It's just a forward motion, or backwards and forwards?

A PETIT You hold it like a pencil and you go in a straight line using short bursts.

AB And careful not to push too deep, I imagine.

A PETIT Well you don't push at all. You let the clipper do the work and you just guide your hand. When you start to push your clipper through a coat, it will jam the hair and you won't get anything. You will have to clean the blade, get the hair out from between it. So it's a gentle touch that does it and then you follow the brisket right

around the body and round under the neck.

AB So just as an overview there, we started at the neck and have gone down the line of the back along the spine and the legs are last.

A PETIT Yes, and often they are just scissors not clipped. You go over the hips and often you just leave the legs and they are scissored up later.

AB What about tail, is there any tips for cutting tails or is it much the same?

A PETIT Well, that's the last bit your grooming. That's your absolute last bit. Your head and your tail are the last things you do. So you get your body looking fine first and you are also getting a balance with the dog. The dog has to look – if it's got little twisted feet, you have got to make the feet look straight and things like that. So you can actually disguise figure faults in a dog, in your pet.

AB By the way you cut and brush?

A PETIT Yes.

AB Okay. So let's say you have done the back. So where to next?

A PETIT You start on the feet and you actually then trim with your blunt scissors under the pads, take all the hair out from around the pads and then you groom out the feet. So the feet are flat on the table and then you use your scissors and you cut around in a circle.

AB Okay, so obviously the dog needs to be standing up for that.

A PETIT Standing back, yes and if you have to have your hand under their butt, then that's what you do to get their feet flat on the table.

AB Otherwise you won't get a nice even cut.

A PETIT No, you won't and then you do all four feet.

AB Okay, so all the feet are done. What's next?

A PETIT The next thing then is you trim up under their belly so you have got a nice line.

AB So in the beginning, just before the bath it was a brush, and now it's a fine trim

for the belly.

A PETIT Yes, we brushed for the bath.

AB Oh okay, that's right.

A PETIT We are doing the puppy clipped. Yes, it has to be brushed first and then your puppy clip and then your scissor up to make them look better because the comb will leave bits and pieces so you have to make it look a straight line or whatever the line the dog is and then around the legs and often you scissor them so they are in a round tube look. So often you hold the foot back and get a straight line, especially with you're your Bichons, your Poodles, that sort of thing. Especially if you have got feathers on a different sort of a dog, that's a different process again, but on your Shitzus, Maltese etc when they are a puppy clip, you always go for a rounded look around their legs. You follow their line of stifle when you are just trimming them up.

AB And what's that (the line of stifle) , for people out there?

A PETIT The line where their knee is , and it curves. Some dogs have a very straight stifle so you follow the line of that, depending on their breed. Then you do the same on the front legs, just scissor it around.

AB Let's say all the legs are now done. Where are we moving to now?

A PETIT Well, we will move to, something we did miss while we were in the bath.

AB Oh, what was that?

A PETIT So why the dog was nice and soapy and things like that, you then evacuate the anal glands which is situated at 9 o'clock and 6 o'clock at their bottom.

AB So is this something that people should be doing at home regularly?

A PETIT A lot of people find it quite revolting but it is something, it was a gland that was used when they were wild, they are no longer in use but often because we feed them processed foods, they don't evacuate them and it sets up a smell and that's the smell people are looking for when they are bathing all the time. Once they are evacuated, and it's just a matter of holding the tail up and gentle pressure. You

shouldn't press hard because you cause them to rupture and if there is any resistance or any lumps there that's not going to evacuate you get your client to take them to the vet. Then get the vet to do it (evacuate the anal glands) because they can have a cyst there or an abscess or something like that and you can damage it but normally it's a very simple matter of just squeezing it out, and if you do it in the bath, the smell has gone.

AB Okay, so that's a good tip for everyone. So those that haven't ever done, it would probably better to be shown how to do it.

A PETIT Ask your vet or ask your groomer how to do it.

AB Yes, get an expert to show you the first time before you go tinkering down that part of the body.

Okay, that was good to go back to that point. So let's just finish off the cut. We finished with the legs a moment ago, so now we're up to the head, I believe.

A PETIT No, we've got the tail. Always start at the rear end of the dog.

AB Okay, so we're back to the tail.

A PETIT Back to the tail. Hold the tail up and with your blunt ended scissors you trim neatly around their bottom. Often we use clippers to clip around their bottom but you need to just trim up so there is no hair there, but you have to be very careful in that area because you can cause damage with your scissors. And also with clippers, you have to be very careful not to catch any skin. It is a delicate matter and the dog will bite you if you get them, there is no two ways about it and that's fair enough.

AB And so would we if someone tried that on us.

A PETIT Yes, that's exactly right.

So then you groom out your tail and depending on your dog and how long the tail is, you actually do the tail in balance with the length of the body. Some people like an extra long tail and that's fine, that's a personal thing. You balance it also with the head. If the ears are being kept very long then you keep the tail very long too. It's no good having a very long tail and the head has been shortened.

It just looks unbalanced. You have got to look for symmetry and then the tail is cut like a flag, so you have to like a triangle unless you have a Bichon or a Poodle and they're different in that their tails are fluffed. So that's different – like with a Poodle with a short tail you do it like a pom pom and I have scissored in the round and others like that. If it's a Poodle with a long tail, you do it like a round tube so it still has some shape. But on tails on Shitzus, Maltese, it's done like a flag.

AB Good. So where are we moving to now?

A PETIT Now we move to the head.

AB So the head is the final area to trim?

A PETIT The head is the final area.

AB Many people probably start there first. The head is last.

A PETIT The head is last.

AB How do you approach the last bit of trimming?

A PETIT Well, this last bit of trimming is, with a Shitzu, Maltese, puppies like that, you actually just do a part on either side of their eyes and up on top of their head so you have got a length of hair between your fingers back behind the ears so you can cut off the bulk. After you have cut the bulk, you then comb the hair forward. You never cut their hair away from a dog's eyes over its eye browse, it spoils the line of the head because the hair is supposed to frame the dog's eyes and nose and mouth to give them a pleasant appeal.

AB Okay, so that's an important point, isn't it? You might mention that again Alison, about how to cut around the eyes.

A PETIT You actually comb the hair forward and then you cut it across like a fringe.

AB Okay, rather than cutting it back.

A PETIT Yes, you always cut it forward and then it frames the face and then we move to around the face and depending, once again, on the sort of the dog, mainly Maltese, Shitzus. Bichons have an exaggerated look under their chin and you

scissor that up to the effect and around the face so they have got a nice moon face. So it's actually giving them a pleasant look. Like I have one that actually looks like a little white owl when he is done.

AB Oh really, gorgeous.

A PETIT Yes, and you trim up around the ears. Poodles of course, have got a top knot, they are cleaned faced and you move to the ears and you scissor across the top of the ears unless it's a Bichon and kept in a Bichon look. A lot of Bichon people, they keep them in a poodle look which means yes you can cut across the top of the ears to get a different shape. So scissoring gives you the shaping.

AB Sure and if you are cutting for someone else, it's obviously very important you know what type of cut they want.

A PETIT Yes, you speak to your client about what they want and what they are prepared to look after.

AB Okay, we will just continue along with the ears Alison, if you wouldn't mind.

A PETIT The ears, depending on the sort of the dog, I always trim Poodles' ears. I also trim around Bichon's ears. A lot of groomers just leave them grow wild, I just feel that it looks like you haven't finished your job and we are talking pets here, different to show dogs. Very different, I'm not a show groomer.

AB Yes and that's important to mention.

A PETIT Yes, that's important and to be very careful not to cut the ear. And I also warn people about cutting matts out of their dog's coats. I have had some horrendous things brought to me when somebody thought they were helping their dog by cutting out a matt. There are specialised ways of doing it and that's not having the scissors lay close to the skin.

AB What would that cause if someone has tried to?

A PETIT They have actually cut the skin of the dog. They have actually injured the dog.

AB So be conscious of skin.

A PETIT Yes, yes.

AB So what should they do in that situation, if they have got a nasty matt that won't brush out?

A PETIT They should get onto a professional groomer or take it to their vet, if the dog is feisty, and get them to clipper it off rather than damaging the dog with scissors because it's just so easy. You don't know where the skin finishes and the hair begins.

Even us groomers have to be aware when we have a dog that is so tightly matted, we have to be very careful ourselves on how we use the scissors and you never lie them parallel to the skin. You always go up under the matt, but you have got to have blunt ended scissors so you are not piercing the skin and you cut through the matt, not cutting off the matt, there is a difference. But if you cut through the matt, it will often then brush out, but if you are trying to cut it next to the skin, you are going to cut the dog. There is nothing surer.

AB That's very important for people listening – to be very careful.

Okay, we are drawing to the close now of this audio. We have covered how to groom your own dog, remembering we are not talking about show dogs. This is just for general grooming.

One thing we didn't quite get to mention was nails. So let's briefly do that Alison. What can you tell people about nails.

A PETIT Well, they have to be very careful. They only cut the white of the nail because the vein runs through, the quick runs through and if you cut it too short you will get a bleeder and it can be very hard to stop. So, always just tip cut it, if you are not sure. And black ones, definitely only tip cut but make sure you get the dew claws otherwise they can grow right around into a dog's flesh and it can be extremely painful for the animal. But where in doubt and you are not sure, only tip cut. Just cut the white. Black – tip cut. Sometimes even I have to pray when I cut them, because different dogs, like Terriers, their nails are black, the quicks are very long and they are meant to have long nails. So you have to be extremely careful when you cut any Terrier's nails. Often with your Maltese or

your Shitzus, you can actually see the white nails. The same as on your Bichons and your Poodles should have shorter nails. If you start clipping them when they are babies, the quick will actually withdraw and make it much easier for you. The longer you grow the nails the longer the quick will be. So if you decide to shorten up their nails you could be in deep trouble because you could get a bleeder and you can lose the dog. It can haemorrhage to death. I have known it to happen.

AB So again, if it's something you haven't tried for the first time, get some expert advice. Of course, make sure you have got the right clippers to start with.

A PETIT And often a groomer is more qualified to cut your dog's nails than a vet because it's what we do everyday.

AB Well, that about covers the process of grooming a dog.

I'd just like to ask you Alison, briefly with your clients – I know you have got a lot of clients that have been coming back for years. How can someone out there who has may be got a business now or thinking of starting one up. Have you got any tips for them to maintain a good client base?

A PETIT I believe your love of animals will over ride everything. People know and the dogs know if you really love them and I think that is a quality you need to produce. You also have to be able to tell your client as well, when they are not doing the right thing by the animal.

AB Sometimes that could be a bit awkward I imagine?

A PETIT It can be very awkward but when you have been an Animal Welfare Officer like I was once, I don't find that any problem. I find if there is any ill treatment, it's usually by ignorance. They haven't meant it, it's ignorance. I find they still come back. They do respond but I don't treat them like they are naughty people. I treat them like they haven't known, it hasn't been their fault but now they know better, they must do better.

AB Right, and that's an important point.

Okay, well that draws this audio about dog grooming to an end.

I would like to thank Alison Petit for her fantastic knowledge on grooming of dogs

and I will say goodbye from Anthony Baker

Good luck with your dog grooming.

A PETIT Thank you Anthony and thank you listeners.

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