

From Scruffy to Lovely

How to keep your Doodle healthy, happy and tangle free

The ultimate guide to Labradoodle grooming and care

(Grooming tips apply to all Poodle mixes, Waterdogs and fluffy coated dogs)

***boek*·scout**

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WANDA KLOMP

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Doodle healthy,
happy and tangle free

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Labradoodle grooming and care

(Grooming tips apply to all Poodle mixes,
Waterdogs and fluffy coated dogs)



Dedication

This book is dedicated to my mom.

She is a dog groomer and has been for over 45 years.

She lives and breathes grooming and since her work is her hobby and her hobby is her life, she not only takes care of other people's dogs, she has a few of her own.

Mom, if it wasn't for you Waterdogs and Doodles would have never crossed my path and I would never be doing what I am today, helping so many owners give their Doodles the best care.

You are my example of what a strong, independent woman looks like and although I never say it I am grateful for everything you taught me.

Who could have predicted I would follow in your footsteps?

If it weren't for my mom, Joy would have never come into my life.

Joy (pictured with me on the cover and on the facing page) is a Barbet, or French Water Dog, not a Doodle.

You probably don't see the difference because the look is very similar.

Not only does she have the same high-maintenance coat, she has the same lovable personality.

Joy—she wears her name well—is my emotional sidekick and fluffy business partner.

Next to my boyfriend, she is the love of my life.

Joy and I are a team. Not only in life where she acts as my personal coach, grounding me, helping me think positively and reminding me every day

how wonderful and magical life is. But also in business: I groom Doodles and teach their owners about coat care and well-being.

Joy helps teach (both of) them rules, boundaries and social skills.

I hope all of you share your lives with a four-legged lover who imbues your lives with magic and ... yes ... *joy*.

Acknowledgements

During the process of writing this book I was fortunate to interview some of the most friendly, open hearted, warm people in the Dog Product and Dog Services industry that I have ever met. Not only did these people complement the contents of this book by their knowledge and expertise, they also provided personal pieces of advice for my readers to gain extra benefit from reading the book.

They took time to do interviews with me and were patient during the whole writing process (which was a first for me, so not everything went smoothly.) It was a pleasure to get to know you all and be able to pick your brains. Thank you very much!

A special thanks goes out to Chris Onthank a.k.a. the Canine Master with whom I really saw eye to eye and who was kind enough to write this book's foreword.

Being Dutch I found myself "lost in translation" many times. Donald Oliver, one of the most dedicated Doodle owners I know was so kind to not only proofread my book, but also help me to make it even better with his suggestions and professional eye. I am so lucky to have found you. Your work has really been an asset to this book.

Petra Visser, from the Australian Labradoodle kennel "Dutch Doodles," provided most of the beautiful photos in this book. Petra was one of the first Dutch breeders to believe in me and my work, so using her photos to decorate my book only seems fitting.

Other breeders that cooperated in sending their photos (that were actually of the right printing quality) are Cheryl Sabens from Ashford Manor Labradoodles and Edyta Gajewska from Wlochata Pasja.

There were more breeders and owners that were generous enough to send me their photos. Although they were all lovely there wasn't room to include them all. For the ones I was able to use I am very grateful.

The other photos were taken during my grooming workshops. This way you get to see as much different Doodle coat types as possible.

Without meeting my publisher at the right time, this book could have taken years to be born, so I give a big thank you to the team at BoekScout. You have made it possible for me to share my passion with the world.

And last but not least a huge thank you to my boyfriend Gerben for standing by me in tough times. Having a girlfriend with big dreams isn't always easy (believe me when I say it's hard enough on myself most of the time), but you believed in me through it all and that is golden.



Endorsement

Dani Edgerton, A Place for Paws

"Doodle Love! That's really what this well written book is about! Wanda loves Doodles and it comes through on every page. This is a complete guide to grooming your own Doodle, from tools to schedules to how to enjoy the process. Plus, she goes into all the reasons that you should groom your own dog. And since Doodles are more than just a pretty coat, Wanda addresses behavior and health issues in a group of well researched chapters to round out her book.

If you want to take charge of your Doodle's coat and their well-being while enhancing your relationship with your pet at the same time, this satisfying manual is for you (and your Doodle)."



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From Scruffy to Lovely
DoodleComfort

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Foreword

Finally, we have a book that fully explains the mysteries behind one of the world's most popular dogs—Doodles! Doodles seem to be everywhere and are incredibly popular here in the United States. In my opinion, the Doodle possesses the perfect combination of characteristics in terms of temperament, coat type (mostly hypoallergenic) and appearance for many individuals and families. Above all, they are just really cute and everyone is drawn to them because of their charming personalities! They are easy to train and make wonderful companions.

I probably work with Doodles at least 3 times a week in my private practice and at my Canine Center. I have even trained a few famous celebrities with their wonderful Doodles. They love a job and are very eager to please. I have seen them work and excel in many capacities including hunting, service assistance, fly ball, agility, and obedience.



Here I am working with “Lola”, a Labradoodle owned by Kathie Lee Gifford (host of NBC’s Today show and Frank Gifford (former NFL football player)

When I tell you these dogs are very intelligent, I mean it! They are smarter than most breeds and love the “game” of learning. Teaching a Doodle to do tricks is lots of fun. I had one client in my tricks class teach his Doodle to go to the fridge, open the door and bring him a can of beer. It seemed like an amazing trick, right? Not really. The problem was the owner did not think this trick all the way through. The Doodle unfortunately would leave the fridge door open, and then puncture the beer can with its teeth and spill its contents all over the floor. To make matters worse, the dog quickly learned that the fridge housed tasty treats and would help himself whenever he was hungry! This was a disaster. A latch installed on the fridge eventually solved the problem. So a word to the wise is to make sure you know which behaviors you are reinforcing when it comes to training your Doodle.

The first time I saw and trained a Doodle was in the late 80's. A client asked me to help her with the cutest 12-week-old fluff-ball I'd ever seen. This new "designer" breed was said to be hypoallergenic, didn't shed and came with all the wonderful characteristics of two of my favorite breeds—the Poodle and the Labrador. A year later I worked with another Doodle that looked a bit different than the one I had trained previously. There were similarities but the coats were not the same (one wavy and soft and the other curly and a bit wiry) and they were also different sizes. The owner of this new Doodle said that it was her understanding that she bought a dog that did not shed. However she quickly started to find out this was not true. My client also had no idea what a Doodle was supposed to look like and how to groom her. If you are a Doodle owner, I know this is how you have probably felt too. These dogs have a lot of coat, and how they are cut determines how appealing you will find them. Every groomer I know clips a Doodle a bit differently. Some Doodles look like Portuguese Water dogs, others like Wheaton Terriers and some like Poodles. Many times I look at a dog and ask the owner what the breed is and to my surprise, they tell me it's a Doodle. Really, a shorthaired shaved down Doodle? Basically Doodle owners depend on their groomers to determine what a Doodle should look like. To me this is a bit scary. God forbid you have to change groomers—you may not recognize your dog when you get him back!

In the early 90's I started to do some research of my own on this new type of dog. I quickly discovered there was very little information on the Doodle and its coat care. What was out there was very inconsistent in its content. Over the years I have been able to draw my own conclusions as to the best way to train and raise a Doodle, but how to properly care for and groom the Doodle has remained a complete mystery to me...until now.

In the summer of 2014, Wanda Klomp requested an interview with me for her new book about Doodles. She wanted to pick my brain about my experiences in training these wonderful dogs. It was a great conversation and we seemed to connect on "all cylinders" when it came to our observations and the best way to handle and train them. As we carried on our conversation, it was as if she already knew my answers. Wanda has a deep understanding and knowledge when it comes to Doodles. In this easy to read book, she gives you all the information you will ever need to care for this remarkable dog. Because I am an information junkie when it comes to dogs, I could not put *From Scruffy to Lovely* down once I started reading it. It was so exciting to learn from an expert on Doodles. Wanda goes over in detail how to bathe, groom and brush your Doodle from puppy through adulthood. She goes over the heritage of the Doodle and clarifies the questions many people have about this unique dog. She shows you how to treat different health issues as well as what food will work best and why. You learn the importance of grooming your own Doodle and how it helps to build a strong bond. I continually go back to sections of the book to use as a reference. Yesterday I was training a puppy Doodle and went back and referred to the section on puppy coats and how to care for them. Thank you Wanda for putting your expertise into a book for present and future Doodle lovers to learn and enjoy.

If you have a Doodle, are thinking of getting one or are just curious about everything to do with dogs, you are going to love this book. *From Scruffy to Lovely* gives you as much information as you will ever need to keep your Doodle looking and feeling it's best.

Canine Master
Chris Onthank





PREFACE: A (Wo)Man's Best Friend

I grew up among dogs. Everywhere I went, there they were: at home, in the grooming salon, even in my bed. For as long as I have been on this Earth, I shared my home with dogs.

I never wondered why people are so attracted to dogs. After my brother and I both left home to live on our own, the number of dogs in my parents' house doubled. Today there are at least eight.

Eight long-haired, curly, wagging, attention grabbing, happy, four-legged friends. You can imagine that with eight busy bees running around in the living room and a busy grooming salon in the pantry that house is pretty crowded.

So what is the attraction between dogs and humans? Why is a dog nicknamed "a (wo)man's best friend" instead of a cat, goldfish, parrot or guinea pig?

One weekend a penny dropped on me while watching a Youtube video of motivational coach Tony Robbins. He was enthusiastically talking about how people's motivations are influenced by six needs. Although the needs may be different for each of us, one plays a rather dominant role. Every human being, whether the toughest of guys or a gothic freak or a wallflower, whether consciously or unconsciously, needs love and connection.

I've always thought that my parents surrounded themselves with so many dogs to fill a void, using the dogs as substitute children. I could see some logic in that. It may be a bit exaggerated to replace two kids with a whole orphanage of canines, but still....can someone get addicted to (having) dogs?

Yes, if they happen to be Doodles or Waterdogs. (Sure, people can be obsessed with Poodles or Sheepdogs or Corgis, but let those people write their own books!) I have seen this addiction all around me, some of my grooming customers even became breeders because of it. You like what you like and I get it. However bold I may sound, with my background there is no way that I could have prevented being a sucker for the "living teddy bears" too. In my opinion there is no breeds as "zen" as Doodles and Barbets. And when I see a litter of a few nipple-sucking little particles of truffles, it fills my heart with so much tenderness and softness. Nothing can beat that.

Of course a dog is "a (wo)man's best friend." Dogs are ideal roommates. Satisfied with a pat on the head, never complaining about the food, always fun-loving and happy-go-lucky. they comfort you when you're sad and keep you company you when you're alone. They are bed heaters under your blankets when you sleep, stimulants when you need energy, your personal clowns when you feel down, and emotional support systems when you're weak or ill. They protect you, watch over you and are loyal to a fault.

They excite you, surprise you, warm your heart, trust you, defend you and are always happy to see you and be with you. And unlike human partners dogs never ask for anything in return. That's pure, unconditional love. How much more real connection can a person ask for?



Who am I?

I am a certified life coach and all-around dog groomer, specializing in (Labra)doodles and Water Dogs, living in the Netherlands.

As a daughter of a perfectionist dog fanatic whose life revolved around dogs (dog grooming, dog shows, dog clubs, dog books—and since the Internet—also dog googling!), I grew up among them and was practically raised in the grooming salon, interacting and communicating with them.

After a few unfulfilling years in the corporate world I joined the family business. My mother sensed I had a talent for grooming, so she put me to work with her in the salon. To my surprise, I found that grooming was a lot of fun and a real challenge. Therefore I decided to become a professional groomer. Naturally, my mandatory internship was at my mother's salon. And my only grooming-teacher? You guessed it, my mother!

About 10 years ago, my mom introduced the French Water Dog (Barbet) to the Netherlands and started to breed both French and Italian Water Dogs (Lagotto Romagnolo) as a hobby. She was completely blown away by these old hunting breeds and ancestors of the Poodle, and every day, from old archives, she gathered as much information as possible about the origin and history of these dogs. Based on the documents and photographs she found in books and on the Internet, she developed grooming “standards” for them: a very natural look, completely different from the manicured way Poodles are styled.

Almost all other dog groomers learned their craft using Poodles as a model. I learned working on Water Dogs. Handling their unique coats, getting rid of tangles and mats and thinning their thick, luxurious locks in a natural way became second nature to me.

My mother's reputation brought Water Dogs from all parts of the Netherlands to our salon, and Doodles quickly followed because their owners loved our natural grooming methods. We were soon the only grooming salon in the Netherlands that trimmed Doodles and Water Dogs on a daily basis and it didn't take long before customers asked us if we would teach them how to groom their dogs themselves.

My mother didn't have the patience for this, but combining my life coaching with dog grooming turned out to be the ideal work method for me. And before I knew it I launched my first website, focusing on Water Dogs. As soon as my website launched online requests poured in, and because 80 percent of the participants in the workshops consisted of Doodle owners, I also launched a website specifically for Doodles.

That turned out to be an excellent move. Apparently I wasn't just the only Doodle groomer: I was also the only person who provided professional Doodle grooming workshops for owners. I discovered that there was a dearth of correct information in the world about grooming, and because owners who contacted me were desperate to learn the proper way to manage their dogs' tangles, I closed this gap through my websites, Facebook page, blogs, newsletters, and an e-book. Owners from all over the Netherlands and even from Belgium rushed to my workshops, excited to learn how to groom their own Doodles or Water Dogs in a professional and natural way.

I also reached out to the breeders and provided them with information sheets they could give to their customers. I also started a webshop, so owners could obtain proper grooming materials instead of spending a lot of money on things that are not suitable for the specific needs of Doodle and Water Dog coats.

DoodleComfort

Aside from grooming, I consider it my mission to help as many owners as possible provide their Doodles

or Water Dogs with the best possible care so they can live a nice, happy and carefree life. I named my company *DoodleComfort*.

Most Doodle owners never had a dog before, often because of their allergies or respiratory problems, and therefore never learned the basics of how to raise a dog and how to fulfill the role of a true leader. Lack of knowledge and leadership skills could easily result in communication and behavioral problems.

With my company I teach owners how to take leadership over their dog and how they can build a relationship based on mutual trust and teamwork. I believe that grooming your own dog strengthens that relationship. And if the owner takes on the full responsibility of caring for your dog in the right way from the very beginning, both dog and owner will enjoy lifelong benefits.

Now with this book, I have the opportunity to help all Doodle owners, no matter where they live in the world.



Why a book about Doodle grooming?

Water Dogs (the Barbet—or French Water Dog, the Lagotto Romagnolo—or Italian Water Dog, the Perro d'Agua—the Spanish Water Dog and the Ciau d'Agua—the Portuguese Water Dog) have become more common over the past few years. But many people are still not familiar with them. Water Dogs got a boost in popularity at thanks to president Barack Obama. They are however a very old breed, bred to retrieve shot poultry from the water. The breed is so old that the Poodle was bred from the Water Dogs, also initially as a hunting dog. It is the only breed with a coat structure similar to the Doodle, but since they are so small in numbers and there hasn't been a marketing campaign about their hypoallergenic coat, almost nobody knows them.

Ten years ago, the Poodle's popularity reigned supreme. But even though the Poodle is and always will be many people's dog of choice, their popularity has waned, giving way for the Doodles and Water Dogs of today.

With every passing year, Labradoodles, Australian Labradoodles, American Doodles, Goldendoodles and Cobberdogs become more and more popular. So popular in fact that the world is currently inhabited by thousands of Doodles, most living in the United States, England, Australia and my small country of the Netherlands.

People love these so-called “designer breeds” because many are low or non-shedding and are considered to be hypoallergenic. They still have many Poodle characteristics (all Doodles are mutts: Labradors and Golden Retrievers—and many other breeds—mated with Poodles) so Poodle genes are an essential part of their DNA. Because the coats of the dogs bred to create a Doodle are quite dissimilar, almost all Doodles and many of the Water Dogs' coats are among the most high-maintenance of all breeds.

I have tried to include lots of photos of Doodles with different coat structures in this book, so you get an idea of how many different Doodle coat types there really are. If you look closely you can see which genes are more present than others. Some Doodles really have the face, coat structure, ears and body of a Cocker Spaniel, some look more like a Flatcoated Retriever, because of their Labrador Retriever genes and some are true Poodle look alikes. Whatever your Doodle looks like, they all are magnificent, wonderful dogs.



Dog parents often choose the breed they want based on the breed's "look," and dogs come in nearly infinite combinations of sizes, coat types and colors. Obviously short-haired dogs need far less maintenance than their longer- or thicker-haired brothers and sisters. But since you have a Doodle and one reason you chose this breed was because of its full, luscious coat, it's an absolute necessity to keep that coat free of tangles. Here's why:

The truth about a hypoallergenic dog coat

One of the biggest reasons why Doodles are so popular is the fact that their coat is advertised as being hypoallergenic. **All** dog coats "shed" and **all** create dander*. Because the Doodle hair doesn't shed and the dander stays inside the coat people who are normally allergic to dogs will have less of an (or even no) allergic reaction. This is a blessing not only for Doodle owners, but for their friends, neighbors, and anyone else their dog comes into contact with.

But the downside of a so-called hypoallergenic coat is that it requires a lot of attention from you.

**Dander is tiny, even microscopic bits of skin. All animals with fur or feathers (i.e. dogs, cats, birds and rodents) produce dander. Some people are allergic to these particles of skin.*

Doodles have "hair," not "fur." Although both hair and fur are chemically identical, there are differences in their growth cycles and textures. Fur is dense, typically short in length, has a short growth cycle and continuously sheds. Hair is longer and finer, most often wavy or curly, and appears to grow continuously. The curliness traps the shedding hair and keeps dander inside the coat. This is what gives Doodles (and other dogs with hair) the reputation of being non-shedding and hypoallergenic.

Knowing that your Doodle doesn't shed gives a distorted picture of what it takes to maintain the dog's coat. You don't brush a Doodle to combat shedding, as you would with, say, a Golden Retriever. Doodles must be brushed often to prevent tangles; a coat that doesn't shed is much more sensitive to tangles than a coat that sheds.

Every day Doodle owners find out that maintaining a thick, long coat is not exactly convenient for their lives. Since many Doodles have a mix of coat structures their coats can be quite frustrating to manage.

People who brought Poodles into their homes knew (or learned very quickly!) what was required to care for the coats of their little darlings. But most new Doodle owners are unaware of how much work they must do to keep their dogs' coats tangle-free. In nine out of ten cases their lack of knowledge leads to problems.

You must start taking proper care of your dog's coat when it first enters your life, usually as a puppy. Unfortunately, many first-time Doodle owners have no clue what to do. They assume they are brushing correctly, their Doodles don't have a single tangle. Then at about 7 or 8 months a puppy starts shedding its entire puppy coat, which has a loose and soft structure and replaces it with the firmer adult coat, which suddenly makes maintenance a lot harder. A simple (cat) brush can be used for the puppy coat, but it will definitely not get through the adult coat, which tangles on a daily basis.



At this point the owner senses that the dog's coat is more than he/she can handle and takes the dog to the grooming salon for the first time. Most groomers groom multiple dogs per day in order to make a living, so when a matted Doodle arrives in the grooming salon there is either no time or no willingness to completely get rid of the tangles and mats. A dog like this messes up the entire schedule. Some groomers find it genuinely sad to have a Doodle stand on a table for hours while they painstakingly detangle and de-mat. And they deserve credit for that.

Owners are shocked when the groomer tells them that their dog's coat is tangled and full of mats. The wind-up is that several hours later their dogs emerge from the salon shaved to the skin, leaving the owners shocked and disillusioned, with big dents in their wallets. Such is the daily reality for many Doodle owners.

I'll bet you didn't think about all this when your precious darling came into your life. But you have to know that as much "trouble" as this may seem to you, grooming is not necessarily a walk in the park for your Doodle either. Since most Doodle owners don't know how to handle their dog's coat, most Doodles aren't taken to the grooming salon until they are full of tangles and mats. And no matter how carefully the groomer works on your dog, getting rid of the mess is a long, unpleasant experience for both of them. Which is why, as I mentioned in the previous paragraph, the groomer has no option in this case but to shave your dog down to the skin. Then, as the hair regrows, you must get on a regular grooming schedule of about 5-6 times a year minimum. Supposing your Doodle reaches the respectable age of 15 years, you will have to spend a small fortune just on grooming.

In order to help you and your Doodle avoid this fate you need to know exactly what to do and how to do it. Conscientious dog owners are hungry for correct, consistent, no-nonsense, workable information to give their precious, loving Doodles the best care possible. The more owners possess the right tools and insight, the more their Doodles can lead happy, healthy and tangle-free lives.

The books already written about these new family dogs usually include only perfunctory sections about grooming. And people who look for grooming information on the Internet find conflicting instructions and videos that raise as many questions as they purport to answer.

I wrote this book to make an expert out of every Doodle owner. This book will teach every Doodle parent how to keep their fur-babies' coats healthy, shiny, cuddly and free of tangles. I write about shedding, the hair growth cycle and explain what tangles are: how they arise and how to remove them, but most importantly, how to prevent them. I go into detail on how to trim and shape their dogs' hair themselves, so they will always have that "no-grooming," natural look.

And even if you own a different breed with a similar tangle sensitive coat, you will be able to use the techniques in this book to help your dog lead a more comfortable life.



Since Doodle comfort and Doodle ownership go far beyond grooming, starting with Chapter 9 I teach things that *every* dog owner should know no matter what kind of dog they have. But specifically, everything they need to take the well-being of their Doodles into their own hands. My goal is nothing less than for both owners and dogs to live wonderful, fun-filled and healthy lives together.

Don't be alarmed by what you've read so far; the next part of the book will teach you all the ins and outs of basic and advanced grooming. This involves a lot more than you would have thought but I will hold your hand and take you through it all step by step. In no time you will learn how to literally take the well-being of your Doodle¹ into your own hands.

Are you ready? Good. Then let's begin.



¹ For simplicity's sake, throughout the text when I use the breed nickname "Doodle" it refers to all types of Labradoodles and Goldendoodles, but the techniques I mention can also be used on Water Dogs, Poodle mix breeds or basically every dog with a soft, fluffy coat.



FAQ

On my Facebook page I get a lot of questions and comments from Doodle owners. Here are the ones asked most often:

The numbers listed after the questions are the chapters in which you can find the answers.

- How often does a Doodle need to be brushed? – **Chapter 6**
- When do you know for sure that a Doodle is detangled enough to prevent mats? – **Chapter 6**
- At what age do you start plucking the dog's ears, how do you do it without hurting the dog and why do people advise against it? – **Chapter 7**
- How long does it take to detangle, de-mat and groom a Doodle from start to finish? – **Chapter 6**
- Which grooming techniques are used to groom all the different types of Doodle coats? – **Chapter 2**
- Which grooming equipment is the most effective for detangling matted coats? – **Chapter 7**
- How do you groom a matted coat? – **Chapter 7**
- What should a healthy coat look like? – **Chapter 10**
- How do you remove the hair between the pads of the feet? – **Chapter 7**
- Which brushes are the most effective per coat type? – **Chapter 5**
- Is clipping the coat short in summer the right thing to do, or not? – **Chapter 10**
- How can you get the coat to shine and look healthy? – **Chapter 11**
- How do you clip black nails? – **Chapter 7**
- How do you get your pup used to grooming and at what age do you start? – **Chapter 4**
- What is the best kind of dog food to feed my Doodle and why? – **Chapter 15**
- How can I know if my Doodle suffers from allergies? - **Chapter 14**
- How can I prevent my Doodle from illnesses and allergies?
– **Chapter 16**
- How important is dental care? – **Chapter 16**

Section 1

CHAPTER 1: THE BASICS

A living teddy bear

Just as fine feathers make fine birds, a fine coat makes a fine dog. That goes double for Doodles. Anyone who has ever seen one of these adorable teddy bear lookalikes will concur.

Breed Standards

Every purebred dog breed has a so-called “breed standard” that prescribes in detail how that type of dog should look.

You can see the standard look for any breed in the photos adorning the books devoted to them, or on the dogs who enter competitions. You can also see millions of photos of any dog breed you can think of by doing Internet searches.

Properly trained, professional dog groomers know those standards and know how to groom your dogs to be shining examples of their breed. Most purebreds are not complicated to groom. Their bodies and coats are so standardized they require very little artistic skill. The only breed that has many different “standard” looks are Poodles, so groomers spent most of their training learning how to style Poodles into the four basic clips: the kennel clip, the sporting clip, the lamb clip, and the teddy bear clip. And all that’s needed to work on them is a pair of scissors and a brush.

Doodles are essentially a mixed-breed, often a combination of several different purebred dogs, which makes grooming them into a “natural look” challenging.

Since Doodle hair never stops growing, they need to be cut at a minimum of every eight weeks. The Doodle’s growing popularity emboldened their owners to do things dog owners rarely did in the past.



The Internet is not your friend ... and the dangers of YouTube

You can find a lot of information about Doodle coat maintenance online. And with a lot of people giving out that information there are many, often contradictory, opinions. How do you know whom to trust?

Doodle forums are full of questions from users about coat maintenance that are often answered by other Doodle owners who don't know the answer either but think they do. Or answered by owners who had the same questions themselves and found an answer they were happy with already, even if the answer is not optimal.

There are even Facebook groups about coat maintenance for Doodles by Doodle owners, and there are multiple "Doodle groomers" who may or not provide workshops for owners, without a professional dog grooming education. They never learned it from a professional and therefore don't have the knowledge and insight on the coat, which involves so much more than a superficial haircut.

What's good for one type of coat can be dramatically wrong for another, and if people without knowledge advise each other, without consulting a coat expert or grooming professional, the incorrect information gets repeated and then believed as if it's the truth.

For every breed whose coat periodically needs cutting, thinning or just brushing, it has always been obvious for owners to take their dog to a grooming salon on a regular basis and to fully rely on the expert knowledge and advice of the dog groomer for home maintenance. But now, because of the plethora of "instructional" videos on YouTube, for the first time in history many, many owners are starting to groom their dogs themselves without a thought about the (possibly negative) consequences.

These videos are mostly of amateurs attempting to show you how to groom a Doodle. There is no qualification requirement for posting videos on the net, so anyone with a camera can film themselves with a dog on a table and scissors or clippers in their hands and call themselves an expert. Well guess what? The vast majority of those Internet dog groomers are rank amateurs without any professional knowledge or training. You will not learn the best and safest way to do anything. These videos are being watched and imitated all over the world. They foster much ignorance and misunderstanding about how Doodles should actually be groomed and they promote harmful, irresponsible grooming practices. When you try to follow the videos you can wind up with unsightly and possibly disastrous results.

First of all, grooming takes practice. You won't be perfect the first time and that's OK. The more you do it following proper guidance the better you'll get. But people who have never held a pair of very sharp barber scissors before can cause a lot of damage to themselves and especially to their poor Doodle who has no say about it whatsoever.

Unintentional harm

Internet groomers don't tell you which brush, scissors and other grooming materials to use. They don't show you how to de-tangle and de-mat your dog. Without proper guidance, you could, without meaning to, make the entire grooming session stressful and even traumatic, causing your dog to have a negative association with coat maintenance in general.

Lack of knowledge

I believe that everyone wants to know the "right" thing to do with their dogs. So it's only because of a lack of knowledge that leads to many Doodles not receiving proper care.

... among breeders

Most Doodle owners were impressed with their own dogs and saw so much potential in the breed they started breeding for the love of it. Breeding dogs can't be done as a hobby in people's spare time, so they quit their jobs and started kennel businesses. It had to be a business because veterinary care for a litter of squealing pups is expensive, so Doodle-breeding became the focus of their lives and livelihood.



Conscientious breeders learned the ins-and-outs of their new passion. Socializing and tending to the newborns is time-consuming so breeders rely on groomers to take care of the dogs they mate. And the puppies leave the nest at around eight weeks, so there just isn't time to learn how to groom them.

Although they love their Doodles very much and lavish much time and attention raising healthy, happy, well-adjusted puppies, most of them don't know a lot about Doodle coat maintenance. How could they if most professional groomers don't have a clue either.

The best breeders share whatever they know with the people who will bring one of the adorable little ones into their lives. But as you can already assume, they can only pass along things they know, and that rarely includes more than just a passing thought on how to care for the high-maintenance coats of the fast growing pups.

If breeders had the knowledge and first-hand experience to thoroughly inform the owners about how much time, money and energy has to be spent on the coat maintenance of the dogs commanding some of the highest price tags in the world, there is a chance that a lot fewer people would choose this doll of a Doodle, cuteness notwithstanding.



Many owners have admitted to me that, even though they love their Doodles to bits, they might have chosen a different breed if they had known about how much has to go into their dogs' coats.

It actually isn't that difficult to keep Doodles coats in tip-top condition, it just requires time and patience, as you will find out when you read further.

... among owners

Many brand new Doodle owners are first-time dog owners because of their allergies or respiratory problems, and therefore never had to deal with coat maintenance. Or if they did have a dog before, it was a different breed with a completely different type of coat and different requirements for its maintenance. Sure, some prospective Doodle owners conduct extensive research for what little correct information is out there on what it's like to have a Doodle puppy but most don't do this until it's too late—which is during the change from puppy to adult coat.

The information that breeders are able to provide about coat maintenance goes in one ear and out the other once a crazy-in-love puppy buyer comes to pick up her little ball of fur. Needless to say, the right information can best be given during the waiting period when owners are excited and crave to read about what it's going to be like having the puppy.

In addition, there is so much to coat maintenance in practice, that education is required for an owner who wants to take care of this him- or herself. Some guidelines on paper do not suffice if the owner doesn't know how to exactly carry it out and which tools to use.

Many breeders and owners in the Netherlands (and abroad) take matters into their own hands and cut their Doodles the way they like, and whenever they feel like it or have the time. But they don't have the knowledge or training, which usually leads to all kinds of unfortunate consequences.



... among dog groomers

Dog grooming is a profession. A profession for which professional training and an internship are unfortunately not mandatory, but are strongly recommended.

Doodles are also a new phenomenon to dog groomers. The most established groomers learned their trade on the only breed with a coat that needed regular cutting and shaping: the Poodle. Other similar coats simply didn't exist, and Doodles haven't been around long enough to provide groomers with sufficient practice material.

Unless a dog groomer is so skilled and possesses much insight into coat and bone structures and has the artistic eye to be able to see how every Doodle should be trimmed to make it look its best, many will treat a Doodle like a Poodle, just because that's what they are familiar with. Or they will simply do whatever is expedient and make the dog look as good as the groomer thinks he/she can manage in the shortest period of time. Doodles require a very different grooming method to look natural and stay with a puppy-like appearance. This requires skills that many dog groomers around the world do not (yet) possess.

The dog grooming world used to be completely predictable: the coat maintenance for every breed was widely known, as well as the mandatory frequency of visits to the grooming salon to keep the coat healthy, free of tangles and at a nice practical length. There were dogs with underwool who came one or two times a year, dogs with coats fit for plucking who came two to three times a year, dogs with coats fit for thinning who came every two to three months, and dogs with coats that must be regularly cut who came to be groomed approximately every eight weeks.²

Since the Doodle is a mixed breed, not entered in dog shows, there is no officially published grooming schedule as there is with purebred dogs.

² In addition to Poodles, dogs in the latter category include Water Dogs, the Bichon Frisee, the Irish Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier and the Bedlington Terrier. Even though these four breeds are better known in the grooming world, many of them don't show up in grooming salons and so very few dog groomers know how to deal with them.

The first time a Doodle owners and a Doodle groomer meet, there's a huge gap. Owners and groomers don't "speak the same language" and wind up talking over each other's heads. Both sides have some good points that the other should listen to.



The groomers often don't understand why the Doodle owners don't bring their dog in sooner, why they brush them so poorly causing them to become matted, or why they didn't let the dog get used to a groomer when it was still a puppy. The Doodle owners don't understand why the groomers didn't listen to them when they ask that their Doodles should be groomed "definitely not too short" and the dog they pick up after the session is shaved to the skin. Now do you understand what is the gap?

In my beginning experiences as a groomer it was easy to get frustrated with the owners and just feel greatly unappreciated for my efforts. But then I started listening to what the owners were telling me and learned from it. I began giving grooming workshops because I realized the simple fact that the Doodle owners I had as customers weren't lazy or wilfully bringing their dogs to me in terrible shape. They just didn't know better, and so I wanted to do everything I could to help the owners provide the best possible care for their Doodles.

Once I put my damaged ego aside and made the switch from complaining, nagging and accusing to offering constructive solutions a whole new audience appeared and I suddenly had a business. I found many people who just like me had a passion for Doodles and who had the same degree of professionalism, skill, insight and love for the trade.

In order to bridge the gap I described earlier I started educating professional groomers as well. And then some Doodle owners who attended my workshops were so enthusiastic that they also wanted to learn the trade. Doodle owners became great groomers because they understood owners' needs and concerns and in their own practices were now able to reassure and patiently inform owners; not out of frustration, but out of empathy.

I put my workshop students through a tough training in which they get experience practicing on all types of Doodle coats. You will find more information about the types of Doodle coats and what to do with them as you study through these pages.

In my humble opinion owners don't have to become dependent on any groomer. Those who have the aptitude for it should learn how to do it. Learning how to groom your Doodle yourself is such a blessing.

Let me tell you why.



The benefits of taking coat care into your own hands

I wouldn't have written a book on Doodle coat maintenance if I only wanted to address the negative aspects of owning a Doodle. There are NO negative aspects of owning a Doodle, just unique challenges. As a life coach I believe that you should always think in terms of possibilities rather than limitations, and that all negatives are really just opportunities in disguise.

It has long been thought that dogs were the first animals to become domesticated. But through DNA evidence, scientists now hypothesize that dogs self-domesticated somewhere around 33,000 years ago to offer their services to man as protectors, hunters, herders and companions.

A dog in your household is a four-legged-child who needs to be cared for, a pal to share your joys and sorrows, a partner to join you in activities, and a soulful, loving presence to enhance your life in myriad ways.

But it's up to you to make the most of that natural bond. Grooming your dog yourself gives you many advantages from the practical to the immeasurable.

Saving money on grooming costs

As I've already written, in order to keep your Doodle's coat healthy and free of tangles it must be groomed a minimum of every six to ten weeks, depending on the nature of your particular dog's coat structure. An average dog groomer in the Netherlands asks about €25,00 to €45,00 (\$35 to \$60) an hour and will work on the Doodle for about three hours—if you deliver the Doodle tangle-free. In the United States professional groomers charge somewhere between \$60 and \$120 per session depending on the region in which you live. If you have to pay this every six to ten weeks throughout your dog's lifetime, it will cost you a small fortune. As noted, anyone—trained or not—can call themselves a groomer so prices can vary widely, but even if your groomer is at the cheaper end of the rate spectrum grooming will still take out a big chunk of your yearly income.

And what about the time it takes you to drop off and then and pick up your Doodle? And travel costs to get to the salon?

As mentioned, the coat maintenance of a Doodle is very pricey. If you decide to do it yourself you will have to make a one-time sizeable investment in tools and equipment. But if you buy the right stuff they will last a Doodle's lifetime. You will read about which grooming materials yield the best results in Chapter 5.

Even if you only feel capable of doing the basic coat maintenance yourself and leave the heavy lifting for a groomer you will still save a lot of money.

That alone is worth considering it, isn't it?



Determining yourself what your Doodle looks like

Many of you would be satisfied spending a lot of money on grooming if you could be certain that your Doodle would emerge from the salon looking picture-perfect. But more often than not, they don't. I've heard about an owner giving an established groomer a reasonable typewritten list of what he wanted his dog to look like and the groomer ignored every single point.

When you do the grooming yourself you can completely determine what your Doodle will look like from then on.

Making sure your Doodle receives the best care

Finding the "right" groomer can be a hit-or-miss proposition. Owners usually opt for proximity, selecting a groomer based on who's nearest to where they live. Or they select from options they find on the Internet or through recommendations. But what's good for one dog isn't necessarily equally satisfactory for another.

Highly intelligent Doodles are also quite sensitive and can have stronger reactions to negative experiences with grooming salons than do other dogs. Since groomers normally work on several clients in one day in order to make a living, it's possible the following could happen:

- Your dog could spend time in a cage while waiting his/her turn on the grooming table. Dogs not used to being locked up could become very anxious very quickly.

- There could be many dogs in the salon at the same time. This may not be a pleasant environment for all dogs.
- The groomer could work quickly, not being as careful to keep your dog comfortable and calm.
- The groomer could be too rough plucking the ears, causing pain.

... and many other unpleasant scenarios you would have no idea of—you'd only sense your dog's stress when you pick it up from the salon, or your dog's resistance to entering the salon at the time of the next appointment.

If you do your own grooming there will no longer be any uncertainty. You will give your precious Doodle the utmost care it deserves.



Taking responsibility for your Doodle's well-being

You are a responsible dog owner. You must be if you bought this book! And as such you don't want to have to depend on a groomer or veterinarian for monitoring your Doodle's health. By brushing your Doodle at least once a week you can check it for irregularities at the same time.

Grooming is an intimate one-on-one activity, during which a Doodle completely surrenders to you, out of trust, while you touch it all over its body. You feel its breathing, the warmth of its skin and you notice how it reacts to certain things. If your Doodle flinches when you touch a certain area it can suggest pain. If the ears are irritated, your Doodle will try to prevent you from touching them. The same applies to its teeth when holding its muzzle.



By feeling, brushing and blowing your Doodle with a blow dryer you will be able to get right down to the skin and detect hotspots, fleas, ticks or cuts and wounds. You will notice spots where the skin has thickened or where your Doodle has been licking or scratching itself due to itching. You will notice if the coat is dull or contains dandruff, or whether the eyes are dirty and irritated.

If you know how to recognize and interpret these symptoms you will be able to react quickly and take appropriate actions, preventing those symptoms from worsening and perhaps even saving your dog's life.

Now wouldn't this give you a much nicer and safer feeling?

Scheduling your own time

Good groomers are busy groomers. you can schedule the grooming at and not be dependent on the Careful grooming takes time; you once. You have the freedom to do it the day or night, and do it where it's You are your own boss!

And you don't have to wait six-to-



Doing it yourself means your own convenience groomer's availability. don't have to do it all at in stages, do it anytime in most convenient for you.

eight weeks. Doodle hair ability to trim and shape

as often as you want: weekly or even daily. Your Doodle will never have to look overgrown and in need of a grooming.

You will love the feeling of being a capable owner!

Spending quality time with your Doodle

Spending time with your Doodle is your favourite pastime. Playing, walking, feeding and cuddling all contribute to the development of a trusting relationship. But you often have to share your company with other people: your partner, children, friends and relatives. Every Doodle owner knows how their dogs tend to attract attention, even from people you would never have expected it from!



Doing the coat maintenance and maybe even the grooming yourself strengthens the bond with your dog and confirms your position as leader. Your puppy will have to learn to trust you and surrender to you, so you confirm your role as the leader over and over again.

Fiddling with a dog is very intimidating to it: grabbing the legs, lifting the tail or holding the head requires the dog to fully cooperate and trust you. A Doodle that will let you brush it, pluck its ears, stands on the table without a problem and doesn't protest when cutting the hair of the paws and around the anus will also be compliant in other aspects of the owner/dog relationship.

By doing the coat maintenance yourself, you not only have myriad opportunities to spend even more time with your Doodle, you'll have real individual quality time during which you learn how to get a feel for your Doodle, how to anticipate certain tendencies and needs. You will also gain more insight into its personality and quirks. Brushing, cutting and combing for a number of hours will give you so much peace and relaxation that time will fly by and you can clear your mind.

If your Doodle allows all this—and possibly even *likes* all this—there is no mountain high enough for what your teamwork is able to achieve.



CHAPTER 2: ALL ABOUT DOG COATS

DOG COATS AND THEIR REQUIREMENTS

Before you get a dog, know what you're in for

So many people, so many tastes. So many tastes, so many dogs. You can't argue about taste and it changes regularly. Look on the streets today in comparison with ten years ago. There are so many intentionally mixed breeds (I hear them termed "designer dogs") that anyone looking to get a dog can find one that exactly matches his taste, personality and/or hobbies. From frightening dogs to arm accessories. From smooth operator to curly pate.

From a "dog grooming technique" point of view there are only four basic types of coats: cut coats, thinning coats, woolly coats and pluck coats. Dogs with these kinds of coats are the ones who need to visit grooming salons. But there lots of dogs with short-hair coats that can be easily maintained at home by just regular brushing (let's call them "brush coats"). The unique coats of some breeds are twisted into dreadlocks ("corded coats"); it's not usual for a groomer to get her/his hands on those. The words I use to specify and differentiate the types of coats are not official terms, they're simple, recognizable classifications so I can talk about them without confusion.

All coat types have one thing in common: they shed. Let me repeat that: *all* dogs shed. [In fact, all *humans* also shed—normally 50-100 hairs a day, a direct result of hair-growth cycles.] Some dog coats shed a bit more often than others and some shed a bit more obviously than others. But all coats shed in the sense that every hair at the end of its growth cycle will fall out to make room for new hair. In other words: dead hair is replaced by new hair. If this was not the case hair would just continue to grow and dogs would trip over their own coats or be completely bald.

However, since the hair growth cycle differs for each coat the degree of maintenance also differs. Proper coat treatment is a part of the full care and upbringing of a dog, so it's important to know about the requirements for taking care of its coat type before getting a certain breed of dog.

This way you, as the owner, will be well prepared; you can start early to get your puppy used to a lifetime of coat maintenance—and neither of you would have to experience any unpleasant surprises (much more on this later).



Different coat types and what they require

Woolly coats

Breeds with a woolly coat are generally short-haired or semi-long-haired and require little coat treatment, but should be brushed on a regular basis to remove dead hair. These dogs usually shed twice a year, during which time the owners will find large chunks of soft undercoat in and around the house. This loose “underwool” needs to be removed from the coat to prevent itching and irritation. Tools such as the so-called Coat Kings and rakes can be used for this. Breeds that have this type of coat are the Golden Retriever and the Labrador Retriever, and also Shepherds. If the owner brushes these dogs on a regular basis they do just fine without a professional groomer. But owners often bring them to groomers to do an extra-thorough “dewooling,” after which the dog will be good for some time after.

Coats that need to be plucked

These coats are generally stiff coats that are “ripe for plucking” three times a year. Owners with (most) Terriers and wire haired Dachshunds (and some Spaniel breeds like the English Cocker Spaniel) will be waiting in line in front of the grooming salon. These coats shed very obviously; the entire house will be full of stiff, firm hairs on all the spots the dog sat or lay. The hairs on the couch can be particularly uncomfortable because they go right through your clothes and prick your skin.

In the grooming salon the loose hairs are plucked with a so-called “stripping knife”—or by hand—to make room for the new soft undercoat. If this is not being done—in a salon or at home—the dog will use devices of its own to get the loose, itchy hairs off of him.



Coats that need to be thinned

The thinning coats can also be termed the trimming coats; when they've grown long and out of shape—giving the dog a “homeless” look the owner doesn't appreciate—these coats are treated with thinning shears to make the hair fall nicely again.

Cutting these kinds of coats with a scissors would give the dog too much of a manicured look, and that is entirely unsuitable. Many of the breeds with this type of coat were originally bred with the intention to keep the coat long (except for showdogs—they're another matter entirely). Maintaining a long coat is impractical for many owners, so they opt for shorter, smoother, “natural” looks. Shih Tzus and Maltese dogs have this type of coat, but this technique can be used on Spaniel types in conjunction with plucking in order to keep control over unruly curls (and feathering). This type of coat also sheds but has a softer structure than the Terrier coat, making the loose hairs less of a problem for the dog owner. A trip to the grooming salon every three months is generally sufficient (but the exact timing of the visit can be different from dog to dog).

Coats that need to be scissor cut

The most maintenance sensitive coats are the so-called “scissor cut” coats. These coats with their soft, curly or fleecy hair structure shed constantly but the shedding is completely unobtrusive because the loose, dead hairs weave into the soft top coat. The hair doesn't end up on the furniture or on the floor, adversely affecting the owners' living spaces.

But that is exactly the reason why these coats require the most maintenance. Dogs with a cut coat should (depending on the thickness of the coat and the growth rate) be groomed at least every two months. This keeps the coat healthy and free of tangles, and therefore at a nice, comfy length for the owner.

Breeds with a cut coat, besides Doodles, are the Poodle, Bedlington Terrier, Kerry Blue Terrier, Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, Bichon Frise and all Water Dogs (Barbet, Perro d'Agua, and Lagotto Romanolo).

As the name already suggests, for the most part you only need barber's scissors for a cut coat, but how to cut this kind of coat is the most difficult technique for a groomer (professional or owner-groomer) to learn. But fear not, I will go into great depth on maintaining these coats in the next section of this book.

A Doodle is the ideal mixed breed

Every enthusiast knows that the Doodle was originally bred in Australia to be (first) a service dog with a hypoallergenic coat and (then) because of its intelligence, loving and gentle character, a pet.

An Australian Labradoodle is not just the offspring of a Labrador Retriever and a Poodle. In order to develop the most hypoallergenic coat as possible seven different breeds were used. All seven had dissimilar coat structures, hair colors and hair shedding cycles, and were bred to perform different tasks.

Seven ancestors

Australian Labradoodles and Cobberdogs carry genes from all seven of the following dogs. A (non-Australian) Labradoodle, the offspring of just a Poodle and Labrador mating, only carries the genes of the parents, and those genes are in many ways complete opposites. This is also the case for the Goldendoodle, which was developed from mating the Golden Retriever and the Poodle. Every breed needs its own specific maintenance to keep its coat healthy, clean and free of tangles.

Mixing these seven breeds gave the Doodle some fantastic looks and characteristics, but it has a coat that can't be groomed in a straightforward way.

Insight into the coat structure and shedding cycle of all ancestor breeds provides a clearer picture of the required coat maintenance of a Labradoodle.



Labrador Retriever / Golden Retriever



Djmirko (talk) YellowLabradorLooking.jpg



Janneke Vreugdenhil <http://www.hondenpage.nl/>

Task: The Retriever was bred to retrieve shot poultry to the hunter in intact condition.

Character: The Retriever is a genuine, good-natured people-loving dog who loves to work. It displays juvenile behavior (playful, rambunctious) for a long time. It is not a good guard dog because of that friendly nature and has a tendency to become overweight.

Coat structure: In order to optimally carry out its task the coat is short and shiny with a water-repellent (non-porous) wiry coat and a woolly, soft, weather resistant undercoat. The Golden Retriever has some longer hair but because of the characteristics of the coat is still considered shorthaired.

Coat colors: The Labrador can be black, brown (officially termed “liver”) and yellow, the Golden Retriever coat is in varying shades of gold, but lately can be also very pale yellow, almost white.

Hair growth cycle: A Retriever originally shed twice a year but currently sheds almost constantly, making daily brushing a must.

Coat maintenance: Originally woolled twice a year to remove the loose underwool. To minimize shedding it should be brushed daily to remove loose hairs and keep the feathering (of Golden Retrievers) tangle free.

Poodle



B. Schoener (Flying Spark at de.wikipedia)

Task: The Poodle was also initially bred to retrieve shot poultry to the hunter in intact condition. Later, the Poodle was relegated to being a pet dog and fashion accessory.

Character: Poodles are intelligent, cheerful, watchful and people-oriented.

Coat structure: Longhaired, curly, woolly coat. The undercoat has the same structure and length. Rarely, Poodles can have a corded coat.

Coat colors: Poodles come in almost all colors, apricot being the most common. They also come in white, black, grey and two-tone spotted black/white, called Harlequin.

Hair growth cycle: A Poodle has a continuously shedding (officially termed “mosaic shedding”) coat. Instead of falling on the floor the loose hair weaves through the top coat.

Coat maintenance: Optimally Poodles should be brushed on a weekly basis *and* cut every six to eight weeks; this is how to make sure that the coat doesn’t get too long—and to keep it manageable, free of tangles, shiny and healthy.

American Cocker Spaniel



Томасина - Own work

Task: The Cocker Spaniel was also bred for the hunt, more specifically to excite the poultry in order for them to come out of the water or the bushes.

Character: Cheerful, friendly, and gentle ... and a little stubborn.

Coat structure: Has both short and long hair. The coat is soft and shiny with a dense, water-repellent undercoat and feathering on the ears, chest, belly and legs.

Coat colors: Comes in different colors—also multicolored—but not as varied as the English Cocker Spaniel.

Hair growth cycle: Sheds three times a year.

Coat maintenance: They should be brushed every week *plus* plucked and thinned three times a year. This is the best way to remove the loose coat, thin out the underwool, keep the body in style and keep the coat manageable, free of tangles, shiny and healthy.

English Cocker Spaniel



Томасина - Own work

Task/character: The same as the American Cocker Spaniel.

Coat structure: Smooth, silky combined short-and-long haired coat with the same undercoat as the American Cocker Spaniel. They look very similar but differ in structure and hairstyle.

Coat colors: Comes in different colors, also multicolored.

Hair growth cycle: Sheds three times a year.

Coat maintenance: Same as the American Cocker Spaniel

Irish Water Spaniel



Pleple2000 - Own work

Task: Fetching waterfowl.

Character: Irish Water Spaniels are intelligent and lively, with a very strong will. Their obstinacy doesn't make them everyone's friend and therefore they need a clear, consistent upbringing.

Coat structure: Long haired, greasy, wiry, water-repellent, curly coat with a similar undercoat.

Coat color: Only comes in brown (liver) color.

Hair growth cycle: Has a continuously shedding coat. The loose hairs weave through the top coat instead of falling on the floor.

Coat maintenance: Needs to be brushed every week *plus* cut regularly. This keeps the coat from getting too long, and keeps it manageable, free of tangles, shiny and healthy. This breed loves to swim, its coat is water-repellant while keeping the coat's natural layer of oil.

Curly Coated Retriever



http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_Bildtafel_Hunderassen

Photo: Zwoenitzer {{GFDL}}

Task: The Curly Coated Retriever is a hunting dog, specialized in searching for and fetching waterfowl.

Character: Curly Coated Retrievers are intelligent, stubborn and mature late. Needs a lot of exercise and challenges. Not everyone's friend.

Coat structure: Has a short, firm, frizzy, curly, water-repellent coat with similar undercoat.

Coat colors: Comes in black and brown (liver) color.

Hair growth cycle: Sheds twice a year.

Coat maintenance: Not much is done on this breed in order to keep the coat as natural as possible and to preserve the natural layer of oil (that serves as protection against the weather conditions).

Irish Soft-coated Wheaten Terrier



123bob1234 at English Wikipedia

Task/character: Bred as a hunting dog and a guard dog.

Character: Confident, cheerful, active breed, with a balanced character. However, it's a real Terrier, making contact with other dogs sometimes difficult.

Coat structure: Soft, silky, long, wavy-to-slightly-curly coat with a similar undercoat.

Coat colors: Comes in varying hues, from wheat colored to goldish red.

Hair growth cycle: Instead of falling on the floor, the loose hairs weave through the top coat, but doesn't shed in the spring and the fall.

Coat maintenance: Needs to be brushed every week *plus* cut every two months to make sure the coat doesn't get too long and to keep it manageable, free of tangles, shiny and healthy.



Doodle coat structures

In theory—and in the Doodle breeding world—a distinction is made between four different coat structures.

Wavy coat: Straight to wavy in shape and can have a silky to woolly structure.

The straighter and shinier the coat, the easier it is to maintain. The straightest coats are the coats with the most Cocker Spaniel influences, and this coat is quite rare, because people prefer fleece coats. The more fleece, the more maintenance is required, because fleece coats consist of soft, porous, thick hair.

A wavy coat doesn't need to be thinned in principle; weekly brushing with a duo ActiVet brush (see Chapter 6), and grooming the coat every two, or maybe even three months will suffice. The coat can be kept a bit longer than other coat types as well, because there's a smaller chance of developing tangles.

The straighter the coat, the less hair growth in the ears, but make sure you keep a watchful eye on it.

Curly fleece coat: Coat can be dense or thin, wavy and loose or have somewhat Poodle-ish (tight) curls. This is the most common coat type because it's seen as the ideal Doodle coat. The more fleece the more coat maintenance applies here as well, but the shape of the curls also plays a major role in this: loose curls require less maintenance than more fixed curls. This coat type can greatly benefit from thinning the thicker parts with the rough thinning shears.

The more fluff the more sensitive the coat is to tangles. In addition, the integration of multiple coat structures within a single coat can lead to maintenance problems. That's why it's smart to opt for a practical but beautiful medium length.

This coat type can foster a lot of hair growth in the ears, which is why painlessly plucking it every six to eight weeks is necessary.

Curly-wool coat: This coat is most similar to that of the Poodle. It's generally dense and can vary from loose curls to tight curls.

This is the coat type that requires the most maintenance. The woollier and fluffier the more sensitive the coat is to tangles. Keeping the hair long with this coat type is not an option (and doesn't look good because the coat will show all kinds of dents and imperfections when it's longer); a longer and practical length is recommended, as well as regular thinning of the coat to keep it airy.



The ears deserve extra attention because they can become filled with hair if they aren't regularly plucked.

Woolly coat: The woolly coat is often considered a curly coat. But when I saw the first *real* woolly coat it made me realize that there are actually coats that don't really consist of lint or curls but completely of wool. These coats are similar to sheep coats and seem to be made out of cue tips.

This is the coat type that requires the most maintenance. The woollier and fluffier the more sensitive the coat is to tangles. Keeping the hair long with this coat type is not an option (and doesn't look good because the coat will show all kinds of dents and imperfections when it's longer); a shorter, practical length is recommended, as well as regular thinning of the coat to keep it airy.

The ears deserve extra attention because they can become filled with hair if they aren't regularly plucked.

And everything in-between: In reality, there are many mixed types within the mentioned coat structures, dependant on the most dominant genes in the puppy.

Many Doodles have a wavy coat but at the same time have an undercoat so thick that the coat is still difficult to maintain. Or they have a relatively easy to maintain curly coat that has so much soft undercoat the dog will look fluffy but will tangle easily. It is even possible that a Labradoodle will have a rigid but semi-long Labrador coat, raising the question of whether this dog should be cut or plucked.

Now you can understand the why the Labradoodle—and most of the Doodle mixes—are one of the most high-maintenance dogs in the world. Even though they may look similar, there are no two identical Doodle coats. Proper knowledge and insight into the coat structure and how to treat this is therefore extremely important in order to keep your dog's coat in the best condition possible.

Coat color

In addition to the hair composition of the coat, the *color* of the coat also has an affect on how much maintenance a Doodle requires. Especially in mixed coats and coats of castrated males you can see a clear difference in the hair structure, hair density and the sensitivity to external influences such as dust, water, twigs, and sand.

Although it's a very human thing to choose your puppy based on your color preference, in making your final choice you should consider the characteristics of the different colors. If you don't know anything about this, you can't make an informed choice and you might be stuck with a heavy-maintenance coat you never asked for once the dog starts shedding.

The difficult thing about coat features is that they're not yet visible in puppies. Many puppies are born lighter or darker than they will eventually be and up until five months a puppy coat is very easy to deal with.

As dogs grow, their coats can dramatically change because of interventions, such as castrations and sterilizations and can be affected by external factors, such as climate and light, and internal factors, like hormones, stress, nutrition, medicine use and so on.

If you look at the coat features of the parents of the puppy, buying a Doodle is less of a gamble and you're at least mentally prepared for what's coming.

All that being said, no matter what kind of coat your Doodle has, no matter what the color, if you have all the time in the world to brush it on a weekly basis, blow it out after every walk when it's wet outside, and bring him to the grooming salon every six to eight weeks (or do this yourself) there doesn't have to be a single problem and you can freely pick your puppy, based on your preferences or your intuition.

Breeders generally don't pay as much attention to kind of maintenance a coat needs as they do to the uniqueness and beauty of the coat. It's obvious (and understandable) that they do this because they're not dog groomers and they have puppies to sell. I, on the other hand, as a specialized groomer, see similar characteristics in same-color coats. I'm sharing my observations with you to prevent prospective owners from getting a puppy they could be unhappy with. As far as I know no scientific research was conducted on color characteristics, but my experiences with at least two popular colors are worth your consideration.



White coats

A nice, bright white coat is often stunning, but it's very difficult to keep it stunning. I don't know if Murphy's Law has something to do with it but it seems as though white dogs love to get dirty the most. They love playing in the sand, they roll through the most disgusting feces or semi-digested remains of birds or fish, they frolic through mud or swim in the dirtiest ditches.

Many white coats that are thick, curly or fluffy and, unless you've learned to prevent them, will inevitably develop tangles after getting wet. This has to do with the structure of these coats. Because of a lack of pigmentation, white hair is often softer, more porous and has more of a cotton-like structure than black or brown hair. This makes the hair more vulnerable, so it will get damaged and tangle more easily because the shaft of the hair contains more "barbs" that clamp onto other hairs (I will write much more about this in the next chapter).

Take for instance the spotted Lagotto Romagnolo (Italian Water Dog) or Perro D'Agua (Spanish Water Dog) with both white and differently colored legs. In nine out of ten cases the white legs get tangled more easily and more heavily than the differently colored legs. A completely white (Golden) Doodle with a coat as described above is one of the most maintenance-heavy dogs you could ever own. Keeping this type of coat long is nearly impossible! It is smarter to opt for a more practical length—for instance 10, 13 or 16 mm at the most—then groom the dog every six to eight weeks and thin the coat. This will help keep it free from tangles.

Sensitivity

You should also take into consideration that a white Doodle is more sensitive in all aspects than Doodles of other colors.

This sensitivity applies to the skin which will turn red more easily. The skin is also more susceptible to heat strokes or sunburn and to skin problems and allergies.

Ear infections are more common among white and light-colored Doodles than among black and brown Doodles. Also, they can react more intensely to external factors such as crowds, stress, loud noises, new experiences and too many things happening at the same time. This could cause a fight or flight response that unleashes negative associations.

It's good to be aware of this so you can be extra careful socializing and acclimatizing your white or light-colored puppy from the start.

Black coats

A black coat can be beautiful! Nice and shiny, full fleece or curly coats are a joy to the eye. Many black Doodles have a majestic appearance that gives them a certain *je ne sais quoi*. However, many jet black puppies turn grey as they get older and get a totally different adult coat you couldn't have foreseen when you bought the puppy.

And if you think white is difficult to keep white, black has its own demons. Although you often don't see it from a distance, the woolly, black coats often contain a lot of dust. This makes your Doodle look dull, as if there's a grey haze over the coat. And what's worse is that this dust makes the coat extra tangle-prone.

If this coat gets wet and is air-dried the dust will clump together and form matted sections that are impossible to comb through, potentially being the start of a completely matted bottom layer. An unsuspecting owner who uses an ordinary brush will brush over the tangles, and will later suffer the consequences. Naturally there are "rules of engagement" for this coat type as well, such as not letting the hair get too long and regular grooming.

If all this color information hits you like a thunderclap from a clear sky I hope that these new insights will help make life with your Doodle easier for you both.

Undercoat or not?

Single coat: Australian Labradoodles have what is called a “single coat.” This mis-nomer has lead to misunderstandings: many breeders and Doodle owners wrongly believe that Doodles have no undercoat, which quite impacts their understanding of the required amount of coat maintenance. Just like their ancestors the Poodle, Irish Water Spaniel and Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, the Australian Labradoodles do have an undercoat, but it developed in such a way that it has the same length and feel as the top coat.

Actually all silky, long-haired breeds and curly breeds have this “single coat.” Examples are: the Maltese, Yorkshire Terrier, Coton de Tulear, American Water Spaniel, Barbet, Bedlington Terrier, Kerry Blue Terrier, Pumi and the Silky Terrier.

Every dog breed (except the hairless dogs) has an outer coat (top coat) and an undercoat to protect it against weather conditions, injuries, hypothermia and burns. The coats of each breed were bred for optimal performance of the dog’s tasks. In the case of the Poodle, Curl Coated Retriever, Labrador Retriever and the Irish Water Spaniel since as I already wrote their tasks were to search and fetch waterfowl that were already shot by hunters, their undercoat developed in such a way that the dog could be wet for a long time without suffering from hypothermia.

Double coat: The undercoat of shorthaired or semi-longhaired breeds with a woolly coat (such as the Labrador Retriever, Golden Retriever, Shepherd, Pyrenean Mountain Dog) or pluck coat (such as most Terriers) is clearly distinguishable from the top coat. During the wooling session every six months, the soft undercoat loosens and is removed from the coat to make room for a new protective undercoat layer. If a terrier changes coats every three months the dog groomer plucks the rigid top coat to make room for the softer undercoat.

To prove that your Doodle in fact has both a top coat and an undercoat, you can do the following test.

You will need:

- a good magnifying glass;
- a white sheet of paper;
- a pencil.

Exercise:

1. Carefully pull a few strands of hair from their roots out of your Doodle's coat. Don't pull too much hair at once because that will hurt!
2. Place this pluck on the white sheet of paper and get your magnifying glass.
3. Look through the magnifying glass and see the differences in the structure and thickness of the hair:
 - the thicker, straight rigid hairs are hairs of the top coat;
 - the woolly, thinner, frizzy hairs are the undercoat.
4. Now pull the hairs apart a bit and with your pencil draw what you discover is the shape of the hair.
5. You'll see that some hairs curl more and that you can actually distinguish three or four different hair types.

Congratulations! This is your first step on your way to gaining insight about your own Doodles coat.

Keep your drawing close while reading the next chapter.

Did you love the book so far? Did you learn things you didn't know before?

Are you eager to know more? And enthusiastic about learning to groom your Doodle step by step in that natural looking, fluffy way you ADORE?

Then you will be amazed at what you will learn in the next chapters.

Go to Amazon.com, find the complete print or Kindle version of the book and start reading NOW

This is the link where you will find my book: https://www.amazon.com/scruffy-lovely-Doodle-healthy-tangle/dp/9402231323/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1495456797&sr=8-1&keywords=from+scruffy+to+lovely

Enjoy and please let me know what you think of it on my DoodleComfort FaceBook page.

I would love to hear from you!

Lots of Doodle love,

Wanda & Joy

