



## Support for adopters

INFORMATION FOR NEW ADOPTERS

### Grooming cats

The condition of your cat's coat is a good indication of their overall health and nutrition. Regular grooming allows you to spend quality time with your cat as well as providing the opportunity to monitor their health.

#### Self Grooming

Most cats will naturally self-groom and will spend a significant portion of their day grooming. Cats also appear to groom after stressful events and so grooming may actually help them to feel calm. Socially bonded cats may groom each other.

Cats are designed to be good self groomers; they are extremely flexible to permit grooming of hard to reach places and their tongues are covered with spines allowing them to remove loose hair, dirt and parasites. Grooming stimulates the skin to produce oils which assists with waterproofing, prevents matting and gives a healthy shine to the coat.

Grooming has many benefits for both owners and their cats.

Brushing removes dead hair, skin flakes and dirt from your cat's coat. It also stimulates the blood supply to the skin leading to an overall improved skin and coat condition.

The physical contact of stroking and grooming your cat is a great way of bonding and socialising with them as well as providing mental stimulation and enjoyment for your cat.

Grooming your cat helps to remove some of the loose hairs and may reduce the formation of hairballs.



#### Moulting Seasons

Cats that live in a well heated home may well shed all year round, however a cat's coat does change naturally with the seasons; the winter coat is shed during spring which triggers the growth of a less dense coat for the warmer summer months. The summer coat is then shed in the Autumn to enable new growth of a thicker winter coat. It's therefore necessary to increase the frequency of grooming during the Spring and Autumn 'high shed' seasons.

#### Introducing your cat to grooming

Grooming should be a positive experience for both you and your cat and you should introduce grooming slowly using praise and reward while you gain your cat's trust.

The advice for grooming kittens is also suitable for introducing a new adult cat to grooming.

Watch out for signs that your cat is not enjoying the session and stop grooming if you observe any of these behaviours signs that your cat is unhappy; skin rippling, a twitching or swishing tail, flattened ears, a tense/stiff body, growling/grumbling, hissing, turning to bite or swipe at your hand or the brush, trying to move away.

## Grooming kittens

It is a good idea to introduce your kitten to grooming at a young age to get them used to the feel and routine of being groomed. Kitten fur is shorter and softer than adult coats and most kittens are easy to groom; allow your kitten to investigate a soft bristle brush, then brush the head and down the back applying a gentle stroking action. Alternate brushing with stroking and gradually move to more sensitive areas such as the tummy, under the neck, the legs and tail.

Providing lots of praise and treats during brushing will help your kitten associate the rewards with the grooming. Initially keep grooming sessions short and always finish while your kitten is still enjoying the experience.

During grooming, you could carry out a basic examination of your kitten's health to help to prepare them for when they visit the vet; take a gentle look in the ears, carefully open the mouth and examine the teeth, touch the paws and gently check the toes and claws.

## Brush types

### Combs

- Flea comb - for the removal of fleas, dirt and eggs.
- Moulting comb - for the removal of tangles and dead undercoat.
- Dematting comb - designed to split and separate mats.
- Rake comb - pulls out matted and dead undercoat. Suitable for breeds with thick coats.

### Brushes

- Soft bristle brush - to distribute natural oils from the skin's surface to the ends of the hair shaft.
- Pin brush - as above, suitable for most long haired breeds.
- Slicker brush - for pulling out dead hair and breaking down matts. Suitable for long haired breeds.
- Rubber brushes e.g. 'zoom groom'
- Grooming mitt- for the removal of dead hair and polishing the outer coat. Suitable for short-coated breeds.



## Grooming Short Haired Cats

Short haired cats generally do a very good job of grooming themselves and require little additional coat care. Whilst you are stroking your cat, check their coat for parasites or any signs of potential health problems, for example sore patches, wounds or matted fur.

A good routine for a short haired cat is a weekly grooming session starting with a flea comb to first check for fleas and other parasites. Speak to your vet about flea control at your annual check or if you detect any evidence of parasites.

Start the grooming session when your cat is happy and content and begin by stroking to relax your cat and lift loose dead hairs.

Follow this with a gentle groom from head to tail in the direction the hair grows naturally, using either a soft bristle brush or rubber brush which can be particularly effective at removing dead hairs on short coated cats. Ensure you brush all over the body to include the chest and abdomen. You can finish the grooming routine with a grooming mitt which helps to remove further dead hair and polishes the outer coat.

Keep grooming sessions short while your cat gets used to them and finish with praise and a reward.

### Grooming Long Haired Cats

Medium and long haired breeds generally require much more coat care than short haired cats, it is therefore important to establish routine grooming from a young age.

Daily stroking will enable you to check the coat condition, look for parasites and detect any potential health problems. Speak to your vet about flea control at your annual check or if you detect any evidence of parasites.



A good routine for longer haired cats is a short grooming session at least every few days to prevent knots from forming. Daily grooming may be required is some thick coated longhair breeds. Start the grooming session when your cat is happy and content and begin by stroking to relax your cat and lift loose dead hairs. Follow this with a gentle groom from head to tail in the direction the hair grows naturally, using a metal wide-toothed comb; ensure you brush all over the body to include the chest and abdomen. Carefully brush behind the ears, back of the legs and axillae (armpit area) where tangles tend to form. If you locate a knot, tease at it gently with the comb or use a specialised dematting comb or brush to avoid damaging the skin and making the area sore. Keep grooming sessions short while your cat gets used to them and finish with praise and a reward.

### Dematting

Regular grooming should prevent the formation of mats, however if your cat is difficult to groom, tangled hair may knot and become matted.

Mats can be extremely uncomfortable for your cat and tend to worsen if left, attempting to cut mats out with scissors should be avoided as it is easy to accidentally cut your cat's skin. There are specialist dematting combs and brushes that you can use to break down matted fur.

You may need to seek professional help from a qualified groomer or veterinary staff to deal with the removal of difficult or larger areas of matted hair.

### Elderly Cats

Elderly cats may find it increasingly more difficult to keep themselves well groomed due to arthritic changes which affect their ability to reach all parts of their bodies.

Grooming is a great way to provide extra attention and mental stimulation for your elderly cat, it is also a good opportunity to check for any new potential health problems.

Elderly cats generally lose body condition and muscle mass, therefore it is important to be extra gentle while grooming.  
Elderly cats may also need your assistance with gentle bathing of discharges from the eye and nose area.

### Should I bath my cat?

Generally healthy cats take care of their coats and do not need to be bathed. There may be occasions where bathing is necessary, for example if their coat has become particularly soiled or if a medicated shampoo has been prescribed by your vet to treat a skin condition.

Not many cats will tolerate water very well, so start gently, remain calm and keep praising and reassuring throughout.

Only use specially prepared shampoos that are intended for bathing cats, taking care to avoid the head area, in particular the eyes, ears and mouth and always rinse off the shampoo thoroughly using warm water. After bathing, dry your cat gently with a warm towel and allow them to recover in a warm draught free room.

### Health Problems

Grooming is a good opportunity to check your cat for any potential health problems; look for signs of fleas, ticks and other parasites. Your cat's skin should be free from wounds, lumps and sore spots. Check for any bald patches or thinned areas of hair which could indicate a skin problem, allergy or other health problem. Overgrooming may occur in cats suffering from stress or ill health. In all cases, seek professional advice from your vet.

Some short nosed breeds e.g. Persians produce excess tears which can result in staining of the fur around the eyes, this should be gently bathed away to prevent the skin in this area from becoming sore. Hairballs: excess dead hair is swallowed when a cat self-grooms, this can cause a hairball to form in the stomach. Hairballs can cause retching or may be vomited up, they can also cause digestive problems such as diarrhoea or constipation and you should seek veterinary advice for a cat showing any of these signs of ill health. Regular grooming with combs and brushes helps to remove this excess dead hair and can reduce the risk of hairball formation.