



Grooming Tips

The Basics

Every Wirehair needs a couple of things done on a regular basis to keep them in good shape.

- **Ears** - Clean their ears; get some cotton swabs and wipe down the inside of the ear leather and check the ear canal to make sure they are clean. Any brown debris, redness or foul smell are signs of problems. If you notice your dog shaking his head, or scratching his ears you may have an infection starting. Probably time for a vet visit.
- **Nails** - Clip or grind their nails. Wires have very strong nails, never allow them to get too long. Start them as young puppies and get them used to having their feet handled and nails trimmed. I find trimming much easier if I use a dremel grinder. This is quick, and easier than clippers. Just be careful not to grind too short, or keep the grinder on the nail for too long. Heat can build up and this will make your dog hate having his nails done.
- **Pads** - Check between their pads for foreign objects. I've found some truly interesting things in between the toes of my guys. Seeds, weeds, grass, stickers and gum. An embedded foreign object can cause major problems, so check often.
- **Bathing** - Most Wirehairs rarely need a full bath. The harshness of their coats tend to shed dirt rather easily. Most times even the muddiest dog will come fairly clean if you will let them dry and then give them a good brushing. For the really dirty, stinky dog (and face it, most Wirehairs can find the most disgusting things to roll in!) when you decide to bathe them, use a shampoo made for Wire coated breeds. It does make difference to the texture of the coat after a bath. Make sure you rinse well!!!

Help! My German Wirehairs hair is out of control!

All Wirehaired coats need to be removed from time to time, this is what we call "Stripping" or removing the dead coat so new coat can grow in. The old, dead coat is "stripped", or pulled from the body, making room for a new hair to grow back in.

Different coat types (shorter, longer, softer or harsher) will require stripping at different times and this will depend on several factors. Most GWP's will need a good stripping in the spring and again in the fall. This is the time of the year when they will lose their winter coats (or summer coats) and get ready for the new season. If you don't keep up with their coats throughout the year (which by the way is the easiest way to do it) you will need to get to work before they become a shaggy mess.

You may notice your dog is becoming very shaggy looking, their hair will look "clumpy" and they will feel and look dirty. No matter how much you brush them, they still look very unkempt. This is a good sign that they are in need of a good stripping. Or, you may notice your dogs lovely dark liver hairs are turning blonde or red, a sure sign that thier coat is on it's way out.

So, go get your grooming table, your tools and let's get at em!

Puppies, darn it aren't they cute!

All puppies come with puppy coats! In our breed that coat should feel harsh when they are very young, but it's still a puppy coat. This coat will begin to change when they are around 5-6 months old when they will begin to shed out that puppy hair and their adult coat will begin to come in. Most young Wires will have fairly harsh coats right down the middle of their backs and at the base of their tails and this will begin to spread over the rest of their bodies as they mature. If you begin to remove the puppy fuzzies as soon as he gets to his new home, you will be one step ahead of the grooming game.

Start this grooming process after they have had a good romp and are tired. If you can get them to lie quietly on your lap or on a grooming table, life will be much more pleasant for you both. Once you have the puppy quiet and relaxed, stretch his skin with one hand, rub backwards against his coat and look for long hairs or soft fluffy hairs standing up

and away from the body. Grasp just a bit of this hair and pull it gently toward you. Just work all over the puppy pulling a bit here and there, don't get crazy at first, we just want him to get used to being worked on. If you will be diligent about this grooming on a weekly basis your puppy will not only look good, but will get used to having you touching him all over and will come to enjoy the attention.

When working around the head and mouth at this age, work gently and slowly. At this age puppies begin to lose their puppy teeth and their gums will be sore. Remember, we don't want to cause any discomfort, we want this to be enjoyable.

Advanced Coat Care (Or how to become a Stripper!)

Stripping isn't a difficult task to learn, but it does take some patience and does take some time. What exactly is stripping a coat? Let's talk just a bit about what makes a wire coat in the first place.

This breed has what we call a double coat. Close to their body they have a soft undercoat which insulates the skin from both heat and cold. Some have very thick, very fluffy undercoats and this must be removed so the outer coat can lie flat. We use a special tool for this, an undercoat knife. One brand is made by Hauptner and this works well. Just rake through the coat and the dead undercoat will come out. Be careful not to rake too roughly as you can cut the dog if you are not careful.

The outer coat consists of strong, straight, stiff hairs which are longer (or should be) than the short, soft undercoat. Wire coats don't shed like a Lab, Shepard or even a Pointer. The coarse outer hair will grow to it's genetic length and then simply die. Dead as a doornail it will be, and it won't fall out. It just stays there until it is removed. There are several ways for that dead hair to get removed- it can be pulled out when the dog is running through the field, or with a tool (knife, comb or brush) or it can be removed by stripping.

The Easy Coat

A dog with a truly great coat will need little in the way of grooming. This coat is naturally hard, stiff and flat lying. Generally the head and ears are covered with short, but harsh hairs. A good stiff bristle brush, a medium tooth steel comb and your fingers are all you will need to keep this dog looking neat and clean. This type of coat will probably shed more than a longer coat, but the upkeep is pretty easy. Give this dog a good brushing, comb thru the eyebrows and beard once a week or so, and presto...all done. Now and then, brush the coat against the grain and grasp the long hairs at their tips with your fingers, they should come out very easily. Always pull the hairs in the direction they grow!

The Longer Coat

If your GWP has a longer coat, but still good and harsh, you will need to learn the art of hand stripping. NEVER clip your GWP!! Doing so will turn a decent harsh coat into a soft matted mess in no time flat. Clipping a wire coat might seem the easy path now, but in the long run, you will regret your decision. The clipped coat will collect dirt, burrs and will mat and tangle very easily. A clipped coat will lose the texture and density needed to protect your dog from briars, and cold water. And once clipped, it can take years to get it back to it's harsh dense state. Take the time to learn how to strip your German Wirehair, it will be worth the effort.

To begin the stripping process, give them a good brushing all over, follow this with a through combing all over their body, head, legs, ear and beards. Now, brush the hair backwards with your comb or with your fingers. See those long hairs standing up? Grasp a couple between your fingers (by the tips only) and pull them out. Pull in the direction they grow naturally and they should come out very easily. It usually helps if you pull their skin in front of the section you are working on taut so you are pulling the hair, not their skin. Keep pulling those sticking up hairs all over their body. Keep moving and don't concentrate on only one section to begin with. And don't fret if you get a bit over zealous and pull out too much in one spot. It will grow back! It always grows back!!

How to find missing objects in your Wires beards!

Those who own Wirehairs know that those beards can hide not only a ton of toilet water, but last night's dinner as well. Keeping the beard free of soft dead coat helps solve some of that! Beards should be of strong stiffer hairs, not full of fluff.

Comb the beard and eyebrow forward and use your fingers to fluff up the coat. See all of those soft long hairs? They may even be blonde or red, not a pretty dark liver. Grasp those hairs, just a bit at a time, and pull them out. Use your fingertip and be gentle about it.

Make an imaginary line running from the outside corner of the eye to the corner of the mouth and pull any long hair behind that line on their cheeks. Then make another line from corner to corner of the mouth and pull down the

underjaw and throat. The throat area is always the most difficult area for me to get at. Just work on it bit by bit, hair by hair and in no time the job will be complete.

For eyebrows, you want the outside corner shorter than the inside corner, so pull those hairs a bit more.

Tails, Butts, and Privates

Many dogs don't care for their tails being worked on, but unfortunately it's something we have to do. Most Wires, even ones with poor, soft coats, will have harsher hair on their tails. Don't know why, but it's true! Anyway, you should keep the hair on the tail in neat condition, just like their bodies. And never leave a flag of hair under the tail. It just looks messy and downright silly. If need be, this is one area where you can use scissors to neaten up the coat. But try to pull it from time to time.

Around the butt is another place that is very sensitive and most dogs don't care to have messed with. I normally try to pull as much as I can here, but will use thinning shears to make the job easier on both dog and me. Be careful here, sharp scissors can make a hole in dog pretty quickly.

Male dogs sometimes carry a lot of hair around their penis, and this area can be clipped with a #10 blade. This will keep it cleaner and keep those nasty little dreadlocks from forming. Much more sanitary, and just makes an all around nicer picture in ones mind.

Finally, trim the hair around the outside of the paw if needed, and trim long hair in between the pads. This will help keep your kitchen floor cleaner!

Once you get the hang of it the entire stripping process will become second nature to you. Just take your time, step back every now and then, run the brush over the entire coat and look for areas you have missed. Again, don't panic if you make a bald spot. It may look bad, but within a week or so, you will see that new coat beginning to grow in.

Tools

Along with a good bristle brush and metal comb you may wish to purchase a couple of other grooming tools.

Furminator - This is essentially a very tight clipper blade on a handle that helps remove dead undercoat and some outer coat. Some of my dogs need nothing more, others it does a great job on the undercoat, but won't pull much outer coat. But it's a tool I will always have in my grooming bag. It also does a great job of finding fleas and removing ticks. Expensive, but worth it.

Stripping Knives- There are dozens of stripping knives on the market, each to remove coat on different areas of a dogs body. A knife will save your fingers and helps cut the stripping time. Most knives come coarse, medium and fine- each takes a differing amount of coat with each pull. I use a coarse knife for the first overall stripping, medium for more detailed areas, and a fine knife for the head, ears and throat.

- Article Contributed by Justa German Wirehaired Pointers