

# ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

## **To Shave or Not to Shave**

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

I often hear many questions about whether or not someone should get their pet's hair shaved off. Of course if you have one of the many breeds that normally get groomed such as cockers, poodles, schnauzers and bichons, it is obvious that regular grooming will be needed. But then there is the long haired dog or cat that is hot, dirty, matted or has a skin problem and just looks miserable with all that hair. What about them?

Will shaving your pet's hair off make it grown back thicker? No. The thickness of your pet's hair is determined by the time of year, breed, and health status. Older pets do not shed their winter coat as early in the spring as younger pets and as a result, can suffer from a hot, matted coat well into the summer.

Will cutting my pet's hair make him more prone to disease? No. It is the thickness of the hair, not the length that protects your pet from sunburn, rain and cold. Shaving does not decrease the thickness more than is normal for your pet. Hair does not protect your pet from heartworms as we have seen many dogs with long hair with this disease. The mosquito that carries heartworms can usually find a spot on the bridge of the nose to bite even the longest haired dog, and as you know, a hungry mosquito is not going to stop until he finds a place to bite. I often see dogs and cats that would be healthier with their hair trimmed off. These pets often have red, irritated skin, fleas or even fly larvae on their skin that many owners weren't even aware of. Some of these pets are absolutely miserable.

Will my pet be embarrassed if his hair is shaved off? No. The only thing that makes your pet uncomfortable is the way you react to his new hair cut. How would you feel if you spent a lot of time and effort on a new hair cut and when your family saw you they just pointed and laughed? You would cower and cringe just like your pet. Once you get used to your pet's new hairdo, you will like it better than the old because it always looks cuter and more comfortable than long, hot matted hair.

Is it painful to have the hair cut off? No. The only time grooming is uncomfortable is when an owner brings in a pet that has thick, tangled hair and wants us to comb it out. Just think if your whole body was covered in thick, matted 4 inch long hair and someone spent 4 or 5 hours pulling at it. You would be sore and exhausted, maybe even a little mad. Don't have unrealistic expectations. Unless you take a comb and go through to the skin every day, just like you do

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with your own hair, don't expect the groomer or your pet to put up with getting 6 months worth of tangle out in one day. In that case it is best to shave the hair fairly short, especially if you do not have the time to keep up with it at home. Most people realize that much effort is only worth it for the show ring, not the back yard.

So whether or not to shave depends on your pet's comfort more than anything. If your pet is older, has allergies or drives you crazy with shedding, don't be afraid to have him shaved.

If you have more questions, please call us at the Animal Hospital of Lanesville at 952-3643. 🐾