



---

## BASIC GROOMING

---

*The information in this booklet is intended as a general guide only*

All cats need to look their best; not just for aesthetic purposes, but also to maintain optimum health and happiness. Every cat owner needs to know some basic grooming skills. Even short-haired cats need basic grooming and all cats benefit from the one-on-one contact and bonding that a grooming routine develops between them and their owners.

### Brushing

Cats spend much of their time grooming themselves by licking their fur with their rough tongues. This dislodges any loose hairs from the cat's coat, but it also causes hairballs to form in their stomachs. Regular brushing of your cat's coat will get rid of any dead hair and lessen the amount of hairballs that form.

- Long-haired cats will need to be groomed everyday
- Short-haired and medium haired cats will need to be groomed about once a week

Brushing sessions can provide a perfect bonding opportunity for you and your companion cat. Many cats will be happy to sit on your lap or next to you whilst you groom them. Otherwise, you can use a table with a non-slip surface.

### *Short-haired Cats*

When brushing cats with short hair, you can simply use a fine-toothed steel comb to remove the dead hair.

You can also use a rubber glove or soft cloth to lightly stroke over the coat to bring out the shine.

## *Long-haired Cats*

You will also need a steel comb to start off with when grooming a long-haired cat. You will need a comb that has fine teeth on one end and wider teeth on the other.

Check first to see if the cat has any tangles in its fur. Start with running the wide tooth comb gently through the coat from head to tail, then along the stomach and front and back legs. After this, repeat the whole process using the fine-toothed comb.

A small fine comb is good for brushing areas such as the face and ears, but these are very sensitive and will require gentle handling. It helps if the cat knows and trusts you and grooming is a regular routine.

The most important thing when grooming long-haired cats is to avoid mats forming in the coat. Avoid this by making sure that when you brush the hair you brush through the entire length of the coat, not just the top layer.

If you do notice some matting in the fur, gently separate the matted hair using your fingers first. Then gently comb the knot out. If the matting is too clumped together you may need to cut the knots out or even seek professional help from a vet or groomer if the coat is very bad.

Failure to regularly brush a long-haired cat can result in severe matting which is painful for the cat as it pulls on the skin. Severe matting may even require the cat to be anesthetized in order to shave the matt (such as in the Persian in the picture above).

## Claw Trimming

If your cat lives mostly or exclusively indoors you may need to trim its claws. Living indoors your cat may not have the opportunity to naturally wear the claws down like it would if it were outside. Scratching posts can help with this; however, you may still need to trim down their claws occasionally.

Cats will need to have practice before they are comfortable with you trimming their claws, and even then most cats don't like it very much!

*Below: a Persian at the AWL that had to be clipped due to poor coat condition*



*Above: The correct position for holding a cat whilst trimming its claws*

*Below: Gently squeeze the cat's toe to extend the claw*



It helps to have your cat standing on a table and facing away from you. Reach over your cat and pick up its paw, lifting it towards you. Extend the nail by gently squeezing the toe between your thumb and forefinger. It is most important that you trim well clear of the quick, which is the pink blood vessel you can see through the nail. If you do cut the quick it will bleed and hurt your cat.

If you don't feel confident about trimming your cat's claws yourself, you can ask your vet to do it during a regular check-up.

## Face and Ear Cleaning

Some cats will form discoloration or discharge around the eyes. You can clean this by dampening a soft cloth and gently wiping the area.

It's important to regularly check your cat's ears. If your cat is scratching and shaking its head frequently and you notice dark-coloured wax, then it's possible your cat is suffering from ear-mites. This will need to be treated by a vet.

You can clean your cat's ears by moistening a cotton wool ball with baby-oil and gently wiping inside the ear, being careful not to probe or poke inside the ear canal.

## Bathing

Because cats clean themselves, they only need to be bathed occasionally. Your cat may need a bath if it needs to be flea treated or if it spends a lot of time outside where its coat can get dirty.

Being bathed can be stressful for cats, and it helps if you are well prepared. Follow these steps to ensure that when you bath your cat it is as least stressful as possible.

1. Before you begin, brush your cat's coat, removing any matting if needed. Trim the cat's nails (if needed) and wipe their ears and eyes as described above.
2. Use a laundry basin, sink or bathtub. It is best to use a basin that is a comfortable height for you so you don't need to bend over. Close the doors in the bathroom or laundry so your cat can't escape if they happened to just out of the basin.

*Below: A Chinchilla Persian none too happy about having a bath!*



3. Place a rubber mat on the bottom of the basin so your cat doesn't slip. Attach a spray nozzle to the tap and have the shampoo (specifically for cats) and fresh towels ready at hand. Also have the hand-held hair-dryer ready if your cat is being bathed in cold weather and needs to be dried afterwards.
4. Using the spray nozzle, dampen your cats coat from the neck down, avoiding its face. Make sure the water is warm, not hot or cold. Be sure that you do not get any water in the cat's ears, eyes or nose.
5. Work in the shampoo, being sure to lather in one direction for long-haired cats (this will avoid matting). If you are using a medicated flea shampoo, it will need to be left on the coat for the required time.
6. Rinse the shampoo off the coat, working from the neck down. Wrap your cat in a dry towel and gently squeeze and blot the coat to remove the excess water. Do not ruffle up your cat (such as you might your dog after a bath) as this will only annoy and upset it.
7. If you are going to blow-dry your cat, use a low setting on the hair dryer and gradually work from the rear of the neck downwards. Avoid the face and ears. Make sure the dryer is not on one spot for too long.



## DIY health checks

Apart from relaxing and calming your cat, stroking and massaging your cat (whilst he's relaxed) can be used to check your cat's health and physical condition. You can feel for lumps, skin conditions, dandruff, fleas, ticks or any other infections that may be causing discomfort to your cat. You can also gauge your cat's reaction when you touch certain areas of the body to check for lumps, sensitive muscles or limbs that may indicate some stress or some other condition which may require veterinary attention.



*Above: The perfect opportunity to check all is well with your cat.*

If you require further advice or help with your new companion cat, please contact the AWL Education Division on (07) 5509 9032 or [education@awlqld.com.au](mailto:education@awlqld.com.au)