

Grooming the Brussels Griffon

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Kennel Gazette September 1992

Coat types

There are two distinct types of coat smooth and rough. The Smooth should have no suggestion of wire hair on any part of the dog and should have a coat not unlike a Pug or Smooth Coat Fox Terrier. The rough coat should be wiry, dense and harsh to the touch. It should not be so long as to appear shaggy but should be distinctly different to the smooth. There should be a thick undercoat, often lacking in blacks. An abbreviated description of the coat would be "longer on the back, crest of neck, hind quarters and back of the front legs, a bit shorter on sides of the neck, shoulders, brisket, flank and thighs, shorter still on throat and front of the forelegs, nearly smooth from the hocks down on hind legs. Head should be covered with short wiry hair with wiry longer around the nose, cheeks and chin, forming a moustache and beard.

Grooming the smooth Brussels Griffon

To keep the coat in good condition brush very regularly with a firm bristle brush or rubber hound mitt. The smooth only needs bathing if it gets very dirty. Between baths a hot wet towelling will help to stimulate the skin and coat and when dry a coat dressing or light conditioning oil with the help with the help of a hand massage or polish with a silk or velvet mitt give a wonderful shine.

Hair under the belly is often untidy and could be clipped to give a clean line, the curl on the end of the tail should be scissored neatly with thinning scissors as should the hair on the trousers if becomes excessively long. The feet should be tidied, nails trimmed regularly, ears and anal glands should also be checked on a regular basis. Griffon eyes are only set in shallow sockets and can be irritated easily, they should be checked daily and wiped with moistened cotton wool, at the same time cleaning out the fold of the nose, drying carefully.

Grooming the rough Brussels Griffon

The equipment needed for the rough Griffon coat is a firm bristle brush, a terrier palm pad, a fine/coarse comb, a pair of sharp scissors (can have rounded tips for safety around eyes), scissors type tweezers, hard grooming powder or chalk and if you find it difficult to strip with the finger and thumb method a pair of stripping knives. I suggest the McClellan brand as they also help card out any unwanted undercoat without damaging topcoat.

Never use any form of stripping knife with a blade as this will cut and damage the coat giving it a tendency to curl.

How to strip the coat

The length of time for the regrowth to reach the correct length for showing varies with each dog, it will necessitate your stripping for the first strip to be carefully monitored and charted to be able you to correctly time each dog. Stripping is done in various stages over approximately 10 weeks to the show depending on the desired coat length. Stripping should begin when the old dead hair stands out from the body, this is termed "blown" and is in a natural state to start shedding. At this stage, the dead hair can be removed easily with little discomfort to the dog. Before commencing to strip, comb the coat thoroughly, first with a coarse comb, then a fine one and finally use your coarse McClellan stripper to card "comb" through the entire coat to remove as much loose, dead undercoat as possible. The stripping process will be easier if this is done first. Next chalk the area to be stripped or sprinkle and rub in a harsh grooming powder. This will improve your grip whether you are using finger and thumb or stripping knife as it dries up the oil that can make the coat slippery.

Plucking

Is removing the dead hair with your thumb and first finger. Holding a few hairs fairly close to the skin (not so close as to catch the undercoat) pull back wards firmly in the direction of the coat and with a very slight twisting motion.

Stripping

The correct method of stripping is to firstly ruffle a bit of the coat then firmly grasp the hair against the blade and pull straight back in the direction that it grows, remembering to change direction with the direction of the growth-see chart. Do not use the knife in an upward motion, as this tends to cut instead of pulling, complete a small section at a time until the entire to be stripped is finished. Plucking is often more comfortable with the dog facing you whilst using a stripping knife it is best to have the dog facing away. It seems more acceptable to the dog to start stripping behind the ears working backwards towards to the tail. Using the charts, strip the shoulders to make clean line when view from the front, strip from the shoulders down to the elbows and where the front legs joint the body. Be specially careful to remove all stray hairs that make the dog look “out at elbows”. At this stage it is a good idea to put the dog on the lead and have someone walk and stack it a sit is most important that the shoulder and elbows have a clean line when viewed from the front. The body hair should be stripped close and blended in to the longer hair under the brisket. Do not take off too much hair as it will tend to make the dog look shelly or tubular and lacking body but don't leave too much length or it will tend to have the opposite effect of looking long and short on the leg. Strip the hair on all sides of tail. Remembering you want a short compact appearance, the hair on the hindquarters and under the tail and down the back legs to the hock joint quite tightly stripped, the hair on the inside of the thighs stripped quite close so that when viewed from the rear hindquarters should appear like and upside down “U”.

The forelegs should be stripped so that they appear straight, pull carefully any untidy hairs on the legs to create a tubular effect. Leg hair can be encouraged as continual tidying is done, rather than a complete strip.. Do not trim much hair on the top of the toes as this can make ten appear flat. Scissor the hair from under the pads, place the foot down in normal standing position and scissor around edge to give the appearance of round and compact.

Stripping the head

Stripping the head must be done carefully as there is a tendency to overstrip leaving the skull almost bare. Correct stripping is necessary to achieve the Griffon's unique expression. The hair on the skull is stripped with the fine stripping knife or plucked carefully and should be approximately 1/4" to 1/2" long, the eyebrows should be a little longer, merging into the cheeks, the cheeks should merge into the longer hair on the neck and the longer hair of the moustache, creating the distinctive and lovely "chrysanthemum" face. To determine a stripping line for the face locate the smallmole on the cheek behind the corner of the mouth, take a line from this to the corner of the eye and right around underneath to the other mole, angling slightly forward directly under the chin. With the tweezers, carefully shorten the hair at the inside corners of the eyes near the stop. Do not overpluck. Shorten just enough to prevent long ends from falling into the eyes. The hair left should create a thick fan between the eyes, it also prevents a dog from looking "nosy". The ears should appear velvety and smooth, they should be carefully stripped to the edge taking care to strip right around the edge. Hair left in will tend to give them a hardened edge.

When all stripping is finished it is a good idea to bath your dogs in a baby shampoo or a mild medicated shampoo to help stop irritation. If the skin appears red, after the bath when the dog is dry you can rub the skin with a little baby oil. Brush the coat daily as the stimulation will encourage quicker regrowth.

Show preparation

Check weekly and pull out any stray long hairs, a week before the show pluck and shape the leg furnishings, tidy up ears, scissor edges if necessary to look neat. Trim feet. Check for stray hairs on tail. Shorten any long hair on chest and hindquarters and tidy any uneven hair on cheeks and forehead.

On the day of the show, the product "Auspicious Plus" when layered into the furnishing will give them body and thickness. This product is a natural product and is not a hairspray. It can do no harm and when used in conjunction with the Auspicious

conditioner will help coat growth. The correct method of applying is to spray right to the skin and blow dry, brushing in the direction you want the coat to stay. A final spray on the body with a protein type coat spray and polish with a silk cloth, velvet cloth or chamois for a final finishing touch.

Puppy coats

As Griffons have a mind of their own it is a good idea to start the grooming process very early-even as early as 3-4 weeks beginning with a gentle brushing. The hair on the forehead should be kept as short as possible. And should be stripped early, particularly if it is inclined to be soft and silky, texture can be improved by continual plucking. If the puppy is brushed and combed regularly, long stripping session will not be necessary as the coat comes out gradually. As the dog gets older the best way to improve texture is to complete strip twice a year. Best done during normal shedding periods if it is not being shown. Maintenance of the profuse face furnishings and to help keep beard from discolouring and tangling, after each meal spray the beard with Auspicious Conditioner or detangler and comb carefully. Remembering that hair is absorbent so to protect from moisture which create staining a product that seals the hairs will protect them from staining.

Grooming your pet Griffon

Would Show People stop reading now:

Grooming a pet Griffon can be a pleasure to some pet owners but a horrifying experience to others. For the ones who are happy to strip their dogs themselves they can follow the guidelines for the show dog but can do the whole strip in one go or stagger it to suit themselves and the comfort of the dog.

For the more fainthearted they have two choices the first is to find a Qualified Professional Groomer and ask them to 1. Hand strip for you or 2. Clip your Griffon about three times a year.

Clipping can produce a wonderful job in a very short time for a minimal cost as compared with hand stripping. A good clipper will produce a job that is very difficult to detect from a hand strip.

It is not correct to say that a coat will become soft and lose its colour when it's clipped. Coat comes through the skin the same way whether it has been clipped or stripped, the only difference is, if you neglect to remove the dead hair. Regular brushing with a stiff brush and carding or "stoning" to remove dead undercoat will give the same result. It is very hard for a conditioned show groomer to understand the horror of a pet owner when they are told their dog is going to have its hair pulled out. Any amount of careful explaining (that it doesn't hurt) or is better for the dog will convince them. For these people it is much better to clip the coat than leave straggly and untidy for the rest of its life.

If a Griffon is taken to a Professional Groomer he/she will cut toenails, check and clean ears and anal glands. Maintenance of the moustache and beard can be explained to the owner as can care of the eyes, if these instructions are followed there is not reason why every Griffon shouldn't be a credit to the breed.

For clipping guidelines and suggested blades to use see chart below.

Clip head to just over occiput,
Ears inside and out, scissor edges
No.10 Blade

