

## Grooming and Bathing Your Afghan Hound

***One of the cruelest things you can do to ANY long haired breed of dog is to let its coat get tangled and full of mats. The mats will pull on the skin causing the dog pain on every movement. Dirt and parasites can get under the mats and make habitat there, causing the dog more pain and discomfort. Trying to unmat a dog's coat can be sheer torture to the animal, if it has not been maintained. Regular maintenance of an Afghan coat is a commitment, but a requirement for owning an Afghan Hound.***

If you can afford to take your Afghan Hound to a professional groomer, expect to pay around \$60-\$70. Otherwise you will need to learn to groom and bathe your hound dog.

### Grooming

There are many schools of thought on grooming an Afghan Hound. These thoughts range from brushing them every day, to brushing only after bathing. I am of the later thought and only brush/comb out my Afghans when they are almost dry / just slightly damp after their bath. The hair tends to be more resistant to breakage when slightly damp. Combing and brushing a dry dirty coat can cause damage to the coat. If they have mats, I will comb the mats out – but only the mats, prior to the bathe so that the mats don't become tighter after the bath and you can make sure to get the hair that was involved with the matt clean.

Using a Pin Brush you should always start from the bottom of the coat, moving up the coat in sections. You will soon be able to find a knot or mat with the sound and feel of your brush.

High-mat areas include behind the ears, the underarms, behind the elbows, the groin , rear hock area and the hair between their toes on the top of the foot. Be extra gentle in these areas. Use a small soft slicker brush to aid in removing these mats.

When you encounter a matt, start by using your fingers to gently pull the matt apart, then use the slicker brush (starting at the longest point of the hair working towards the skin). Depending on the severity of the mat, you may also have to bring out your big guns (the matt breakers, large and/or small, thinning scissors or in worst case scenario regular scissors).

Where you choose to do your grooming is your choice. For a maintenance bath and groom I usually throw them down on the bed and turn on the TV and start combing. It can be very therapeutic if there are no 'time' requirements and not a lot of mats to deal with. Kind of like playing with Barbie dolls. For show grooming where I'm going to blow dry them to achieve the maximum 'fluff' out of the coat – I will stand them on the table for the grooming process with stand dryers and brushing as the hair becomes dry

Rewards, I always finish our grooming process with a treat for the 'victim'. I attempt to make the process as enjoyable and pain free as possible.

### Bathing

Afghan Hounds need to be bathed often, so it is a good idea to train your dog to tolerate baths as young as possible. Some dogs hate baths their whole life; others will voluntarily jump into an unattended tub full of soapsuds. The majority of Afghans simply 'tolerate' their bath as a normal routine in their lives, if started early.

#### Bathing Schedule

Bathing schedules will vary for each dog according to the length and texture of the coat, lifestyle of the dog and owner, and whether the coat is a 'show' coat or a pretty pet coat. A generic guideline is once every one to two weeks for a full coat, and once every three to four weeks for a short coat (puppy or clipped).

## Shampoos, Conditioners and Oil

Selecting a shampoo and conditioner may be a challenging. Many types are available, from the affordable moisturizing human shampoos to special canine ones and some designed for horses works well. Your choice depends on coat condition, degree of cleansing needed and the time of year. Cold winters can tend to dry the dog's coat. (Oils can be added to help with dandruff and dry skin/hair as needed).

Some of your choices can be:

Normal 'dog' shampoos - Avoid normal 'dog' shampoos, which you can pick up at the most local pet stores. They tend to strip the natural oils as they are designed to wash a dog that perhaps gets a bath once a year.

High Quality Dog Shampoos – High Quality Dog Shampoos are available from a groomer, high end pet store, show supply catalog or website will be less stripping. I find that animal shampoos are low sudsing and rinse out of the hair better than human shampoos. Espree and Bio-Groom are two that I am aware of. They can be purchased at dog shows or online at some of the following websites: [www.petedge.com](http://www.petedge.com), [www.cherrybrook.com](http://www.cherrybrook.com), <http://www.summerwinds.com/>

Human Shampoos – Some people choose human 'moisturizing' shampoos. Pantene is one brand that is used quite often with success. If you choose a human 'moisturizing' shampoo make sure to rinse very well.

Other Shampoos

I prefer a shampoo called 'Cowboy Magic' designed for horses but can be used for dogs as well. It is available at horse supply stores.

A variety of conditioners is also available. Too much conditioner can build up in their coat and cause more matts and knots than they would get without it. Choose a light conditioner and rinse or dilute well. A good one that quite a few Afghan owners use is 'Cure Care Conditioner'. This can be found at Sally's Beauty Supply with a gallon costing around \$11.

Oils can be added as needed. Some people do not use any oils, others will on occasion other use it regularly. It all depends on the coat you are dealing with. There are special oils formulated for dogs coats such as 'Pure Soft' or you can use herbal oils such as Tea Tree Oil. Experiment to find the right amount, but as a generic guideline 2 drops of Tea Tree Oil is about all you want to use.

## **The Bath**

***Be careful when bathing any dog. Dogs do not have the same thermostat as humans and can easily be burned. Keep the water a bit less warm than you would use, but not to cold either.***

*The Tools:*

- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Bathtub
- Hand-held shower massage (not the rubber kind that hook into the faucet)
- Nylon or cloth lead to aid in holding the dog in the tub
- Two empty clean milk gallon jugs
- Towels
- Washcloth
- Bathing suit optional
- Crate for drying

*The Process*

Mix up your shampoo and/or conditioner. Fill your milk jug to almost full with warm water. Using trial and error, find the right proportion for your dog then mark the bottles for accuracy each time. A generic guideline is ¼ to ½ cup of shampoo or conditioner per gallon of water. Either put the cap back on the milk jug or holding your hand over the top, shake your gallon jug to mix up the shampoo/water mixture evenly.

Get them ready and in the tub. Use your bath lead to help with this process. Some people will put cotton balls into their ears at this point. This will ensure water doesn't get in the ear canals. Water in the ear canals can lead to ear infections, especially with long eared breeds as there is limited air flow to the ears.

Get them wet. You can either do this by standing them in the tub and spraying them, or by putting water in the tub then putting the dog in the tub and teaching them to lay down in the water. I use a small plastic bowl to pour water over areas that are not in the bath water I find getting them to lie down gets them more thoroughly wet.

To Shake or Not to Shake: I typically allow my dogs to shake as needed, hence the bathing suit. Some people train their dogs not to shake at all. I'm not sure how they do this, but I prefer allowing them to shake. At times during the bath I actually want them to shake and can gently blow in their ear which will cause them to shake – used with the verbal command you can teach them to 'shake' at times when you are ready for it.

Once the dog is wet, pour the diluted shampoo mixture on the dog, gently massaging it into the coat. For long coat, a downward stroking with cause the least amount of tangling. I typically start with the head and then do the body. I teach the dog 'head back' so they will lift their noses upward to avoid having shampoo run in their eyes or ear canals. If they don't know the command gently tip their head backwards and pour the mixture around their head avoiding the eyes, ear canals and muzzle. If soap does get in their eyes use your washcloth to gently remove it from their eyes. Generally, wiping the muzzle with a damp washcloth is sufficient or using a baby shampoo no tears.

Rinse the shampoo mixture out, starting with the head, again tipping it back. Rinsing may well be the most important step in the bathing process, as un-rinsed shampoo can cause irritation and excessive scratching, damaging the skin and coat.

Apply conditioner. You can apply conditioner as you did the shampoo and rinse the conditioner out. Another method that I use is: I fill the bathtub full of water again and put ½ cup Cure Care Conditioner and 2 drops of Tea Tree Oil into the water. I have the dog lie down in the water and use a small bowl to pour the mixture to areas that are not in the water, I don't rinse this mixture out.

Squeeze as much water out of the hair as you can gently do. Once they are hand wrung out, then get your bath towels. Dry their hair in the same manner you would human long hair, making sure not to tangle it by rubbing but more by squeezing the hair with the towel to remove water.

Dry out the ears. If you had put cotton balls in their ears make sure to remove them. I typically will take Kleenex and dry out the upper part of the ear canal. I will also clean out the lower part with Kleenex. I believe cotton balls and using cotton leaves fibers – so my preference is Kleenex.

Saddle. I will sometimes put about 2 drops of baby oil or Neutrogena Body Oil in my hands and rub together then massage into the saddle area ONLY. That area tends to build up dandruff and I believe putting the oil in that area helps with the dandruff and also helps with stripping and makes the scraggly hair remove easier.

Put them in the crate to dry. Before the bath I get my crate ready. I have a wire crate and throw a blanket over the crate. I remove the crate pad and put blankets and towels in the bottom. Once we're done with the bath, I put the dog in the crate and turn on the crate dryer. You should start with attempting to get their chest dry first. Avoid pointing the warm air directly at the dogs head and more towards the body and up. The concept is the blanket on the crate or crate side (if using a plastic vari carte) will reflect the air – so they will in essence be getting direct air from the front and less direct air from the rear.

Make sure you don't over heat them in the crate with the dryer. I typically leave mine in for a maximum of 30 minutes and never leave them alone in the crate with the dryer. Always check on them about every 10 minutes or so. You will probably have to adjust the angle of the dryer as they will manage to curl up in a ball trying to avoid the warm air flow.

After about 30 minutes I will take them out and finish drying their feet – I have one with white feet – then let them outside to relieve themselves.

As stated earlier, this is the point I would start grooming. This process can take anywhere from 1 hour to 4 or 5 depending on how much coat and the condition of it.