

## Everyday Care of Your Yorkshire Terrier

**Enter into a sensible discussion of dietary and feeding considerations, exercise, grooming traveling and identification of your dog.**

*by Rachel Keyes*

### Senior Diets

At around seven or eight years of age, the Yorkshire Terrier can be considered a senior. As dogs get older, their metabolism changes. The older dog usually exercises less, moves more slowly and sleeps more. This change in lifestyle and physiological performance requires a change in diet. Since these changes take place slowly, they might not be recognizable. What is easily recognizable is weight gain. By continuing to feed your dog an adult-maintenance diet when he is slowing down metabolically, your dog will gain weight. Obesity in an older dog compounds the health problems that already accompany old age.

As your dog gets older, few of his organs function up to par. The kidneys slow down and the intestines become less efficient. These age-related factors are best handled with a change in diet and a change in feeding schedule to give smaller portions that are more easily digested.

There is no single best diet for every older dog. While many dogs do well on light or senior diets, other dogs do better on puppy diets or other special premium diets such as lamb and rice. Be sensitive to your senior Yorkshire Terrier's diet and this will help control other problems that may arise with your old friend.

### Water

Just as your dog needs proper nutrition from his food, water is an essential "nutrient" as well. Water keeps the dog's body properly hydrated and promotes normal function of the body's systems. During housebreaking, it is necessary to keep an eye on how much water your Yorkshire Terrier is drinking, but once he is reliably trained he should have access to clean fresh water at all times. Make sure that the dog's water bowl is clean, and change the water often.

### Exercise

All dogs require some form of exercise, regardless of the breed. A sedentary lifestyle is as harmful to a dog as it is to a person. Fortunately for the Yorkshire Terrier owner, meeting the breed's requirements is simple. Regular walks, play sessions with you around the neighborhood, or letting the dog run free in the yard under your supervision are all sufficient forms of exercise for the Yorkshire Terrier. Not only is exercise essential to keep the dog's body fit, it is essential to his mental well-being. A bored dog will find something to do, which often manifests itself in some type of destructive behavior. In this sense, it is essential for the owner's mental well-being as well!

### Grooming

Whereas the Yorkshire Terrier does not require much special care or accommodation in terms of feeding, exercise or space, the care of the coat does place considerable demands on the owner. Grooming is not the breeder's first concern for the Yorkshire Terrier's coat. Any experienced dog person will agree with the adage, "First you breed a coat, then you feed a coat." Combing, brushing and bathing are secondary. Nevertheless, the Yorkshire Terrier is a true "coat breed," which means his long, silky hair in his unique blue coloration is one of his hallmarks.

Keeping the Yorkie in a fulllength coat requires special care and is usually only pursued by the show set. Pet owners usually keep the Yorkie's coat trimmed to a manageable length. Indeed the dog's fall (tuft of hair on the head) can impede the Yorkie's eating (by dangling into the food bowl), and the characteristic mustache and beard can easily be damaged in chewing and playing. A Yorkie kept in full coat must be supervised when exercising or playing since the coat is easily damaged and tangled. Most owners tie the coat up so that the dog can maneuver about more freely and enjoy frolicking about in the yard. Pet owners should never sacrifice exercise and sunshine for the sake of a long coat.

Owners of show Yorkies must familiarize themselves with the art of wrapping the Yorkie coat, a very complicated procedure involving over two dozen "paper wraps." By wrapping the coat, the coat is protected from breaking off and becoming worn from trailing along the floor. If you are considering keeping the coat at its full length for showing the dog, discuss wrapping with the breeder or another Yorkie expert. It cannot be sufficiently explained in a book and needs to be demonstrated to understand properly.

Accustom the young Yorkie to a daily brushing regimen immediately. There is nothing amusing about wrestling with a Yorkie every morning simply to brush his coat. Most Yorkies welcome the attention, but early acclimation is well advised. For the young puppy, a long bristle brush will help to keep the growing coat neat. Avoid brushing the puppy's face with the

brush since a slight slip of the hand can badly injure a Yorkie's eyes. Since puppies tend to be busy, an occasional bath may be in order to keep the baby smelling clean and fresh. If the puppy is still eating wet food, the owner will need to wash the dog's face after every meal. Many owners start the Yorkie on dry food simply to keep the dog as clean as possible.

Daily brushing is effective for removing dead hair and stimulating the dog's natural oils to add shine and a healthy look to the coat. For the Yorkie, daily brushing will minimize tangles and mats, get rid of dust and dandruff, and remove any dead hair. On the adult, a natural bristle brush used from the skin to the end of the hair, through each layer of hair, is the best course of action. Never skip a day's grooming session or the next day will be more difficult. Over-brushing should be avoided since it inevitably causes split ends. The application of oil or lanolin is recommended by most breeders in order to keep the Yorkshire's lustrous coat looking its best. Oil stimulates the hair and prevents the hair from becoming matted.

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