

A Short-Coated Silky Terrier

Keeping a Silky Terrier in a shorter cut is easier and usually more appealing for the average pet owner.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. Is it possible to keep a Silky Terrier's coat a bit shorter than the long, parted coat on show dogs? My husband and I are interested in getting a Silky just as a household pet so we would like to keep the hair shorter because we prefer that look. Any input you have on this would be greatly appreciated!

A. If you and your husband are interested in a Silky as a pet and have no plans to show it, by all means you can keep it in a shorter trim. Although this spirited little terrier has a silky-textured coat like a Yorkshire Terrier, the hair should not fall to the floor like the Yorkie's does but should stop around knee level, which might explain why some of them look shorter to you. These "kissin' cousins" do closely resemble the Yorkie breed. Because the hair is so fine, it still takes regular brushing to keep a Silky in full coat. If kept untrimmed, the dog would require brushing at least twice a week to keep those tresses free from matting.

Silky Terriers are said to have both Dandie Dinmont and Skye Terriers in their background, both adding to the coat texture for which they were named. Although they are part of the American Kennel Club's Toy Group, these handsome little dogs are not pampered "pillow pets." Bred to be rodent-killers in their native Australia, they love to dig and romp through woods and brambles, making them prone to mats and tangles.

Using a wire-bristled slicker brush, you "pat and pull" a small section of coat at a time, starting at one of the rear legs and working your way around the body, penetrating all the way to the skin. Once your brush slides easily through the section on which you are working, move to the next area. You must be careful not to brush too hard. They have sensitive skin and can get "slicker burns," sores and abrasions from friction, if you use too heavy a hand. Because their coats have static electricity, we often use an anti-static or heavily-diluted moisturizing spray to keep the static-factor down on the final brushout after the bath. The feet are trimmed neat and clean with no toe clumps or stray hair showing, as befits these sturdy little workers.

Although the finished product should look natural, we subtly neaten the body with thinning shears for a nice outline. The Silky's glossy coat should bounce and flow as it whizzes about in its busy lifestyle. As home maintenance goes, upkeep is not really all that labor-intensive – you brush and comb your own hair every day, after all – but a shorter trim would make it easier.

For a cute pet look, we use either a #1 or an "A" snap-on comb attachment to our #30 clipper blade on the body and legs. We trim the face round like a West Highland Terrier, cleaning out the eye corners. The Silky's pointed ears should be neatly shaped with scissors. This type of a "puppy cut" looks great on a wide variety of breeds and mixes. The body length can be left longer in cold weather, trimmed closer for the summer months, depending upon which clipper blade or comb attachment the groomer uses.