

Bathing Your Dog

Useful tips for grooming your dog.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. I try to bathe my 5-year old Golden Retriever once every two weeks. When I do, I always try to wash as much of her head as possible, but have never washed her face with shampoo for fear of irritating her eyes or having the lather run into her mouth. I usually use warm water, but I'm never sure if it's too cold or hot. After bathing her, I occasionally rub moisturizing lotion on her dry paws. What are your suggestions for washing a dog's face, finding the right bathing temperature, and solutions for dry paws?

A. Your golden girl is lucky to have such a caring mom. You are right to be concerned about getting soap in her eyes or having her swallow lather. Eye irritations are a common problem in many grooming shops. Using a tearless hypoallergenic shampoo should cut down on the sting factor. Eye drops also help soothe a dog's irritated eyes. Swallowing suds could give your pet an upset stomach, so lots of lather on the face is not a good idea. On sensitive dogs, simply sponge the face with a warm washcloth, using no shampoo at all.

The correct water temperature for washing a dog is what feels good to you. Obviously, overly hot water can hurt the pet and aggravate any skin problems, while a cold shower – like hosing Fido down in the backyard – is equally unpleasant. For added coat volume, comfortably cool water is good because cool temperatures close up hair follicles and make the coat stand up nicely.

Regarding paw lotions, I recommend using a greaseless, fragrance-free cream such as Skin Works, made by The Coat Handler, which also helps heal clipper burns, insect bites, and other irritations. This will soothe and soften those pretty pads, keeping them from cracking in any kind of weather. It is also nontoxic, so it won't hurt her if she licks her paws.

Kathy Salzberg, NCMG, is a Certified Master Groomer and writer who has been grooming pets since 1976. With her daughter Missi, she owns The Village Groomer in Walpole, Mass. She has also written extensively on pet care for several consumer magazines and authored three books on dogs and careers with pets. Kathy lives with her pets on Cape Cod.

[Read more Ask the Groomer columns >>](#)