

Bulldog Shedding Issues

Tools and techniques to help deal with the amount of shedding common to bulldog breeds.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. Is it normal for the English Bulldog puppy to shed heavily? She is fed Innova Puppy food and she gets brushed as much as she will let me.

A. There is no more endearing and amusing pet than a bulldog. Although now registered simply as Bulldogs with the AKC, some folks still refer to them as English Bulldogs to differentiate them from Pit Bulls, Bullmastiffs, Bull Terriers, and other bulldog breeds. Shorthaired, but doublecoated, they do shed more than you might expect. Their short, coarse hairs are left on your hands when you pet them, your clothes when you cuddle them, and your furniture and carpeting where they snooze and play.

The food you are giving her is a quality holistic one, but I would consider switching to a version called Innova Evo, a grain-free variety. It has the highest protein content of any meat-based dry pet food and uses whole, fresh meat sources such as turkey, chicken, and herring meal.

Dogs are carnivores so their systems are not designed to eat wheat, corn, soy, and fillers derived from grain. They often end up with too much yeast in their systems, causing ear infections, itching, and excessive shedding. This food will help, but with her potential skin and coat problems, she may also benefit from omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acid supplements.

Despite their happy personalities, bulldogs do have a stubborn streak and need to learn that they are not the pack leaders in their families. If you do not assume that leadership role, your girl will be happy to do it herself. In other words, she will have you trained to obey her wishes! To help with this, I recommend that you and your girl enroll in a basic obedience course. Once she has the security of knowing that you are in charge, she will not grumble and gripe about being groomed.

Food rewards when she cooperates will also help. There will be plenty of instances when she will need to put up with things she may not like: nail trimming, veterinary procedures, or even waiting for her food instead of demanding a share of yours.

As for grooming tools for short-coated shedders, I have always advocated a rubber curry brush like the Zoom Groom, but have added another tool to my arsenal for such pets — the FURminator. Use it like a brush, with steady strokes in the direction the hair grows, never against the grain. It won't cut the hard hairs of her topcoat, but will remove shed hair and looser, finer undercoat to prevent lumpy pockets of buildup. You'll be amazed at how much hair piles up! Frequent brushing and currying will keep her coat looking sleek and cut way down on the shedding.

Her facial wrinkles and tail pocket must be kept clean and dry as well so bacteria will not build up in these hidden spots, potentially leading to skin problems. Use a cotton ball moistened lightly with baby oil or tea tree oil to clean them a couple of times a week. Bathe her in a tearless puppy shampoo or one containing oatmeal or tea tree oil. Follow up with a conditioning rinse to loosen any additional dead hair and make her smell sweet, then rinse thoroughly and towel her dry.

Keep her inside to prevent a chill, or a roll in the yard will quickly undo all your loving attention.