

Correctly Grooming a Cocker Spaniel

As long as the dog is not harmed, whatever trim an owner prefers is the right one.

By Kathy Salzbert, NCMG

Q. I have Cocker Spaniel and have a great love for the breed, but people think I go overboard about the way she gets her hair cut. I just think she should have a correct Cocker cut. Do you think I'm wrong about this?

A. When it comes to the way you like your dog to look, as long as you are not harming her in any way, I think whatever trim you prefer is the right one for you and your pet. I agree that the traditional Cocker trim is very attractive with its flowing furnishings, full legs neatly beveled around the feet, distinctive crown on top of the skull, and long ears clipped only on the top third of the leather so they frame that adorable face. When you see one of these dogs moving around the show ring beneath those gorgeous tresses, it is truly a beautiful sight.

When groomed for show, the hair on their "jacket," the smooth area from the neck to the tail and down over their shoulders, ribcage, and rump is hand stripped, stray hairs and fuzzy undercoat removed with a stripping knife and carding tool. This keeps the body coat hard and shiny and helps retain its color. Cockers come in a kaleidoscope of colors: solid black, black and tan, parti-color (combinations of red and white, black and white, and roan), as well as what the show folks dub ASCOB – any solid color other than black.

Most pet owners opt to have their Cockers trimmed with clippers instead, preferring a shorter pet trim to make coat care easier. If they get too matted or if their owners request it, we clip them down all over, but in our salon, we offer a happy compromise with what we call the "summer cut": the body is clipped short with a #5f or #7f blade, also removing the skirts and chest coat as well but using a #1 ½ or #2 plastic or stainless steel snap-on comb attachment on our clipper blade, we leave enough coat on the legs to retain that cute Cocker look. The legs are artfully blended where they join the body, and the ears trimmed shorter to complement this style.

One more thing – if it were not for people like you who "go overboard" about their dogs' grooming, people like me would not be in business!