

Dogs Shed in the Summer

Most dogs shed during warmer weather, but some breeds shed more than others.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. Do Dachshunds shed a lot during the summer? When it's very hot in Tucson, Ariz., it gets to about 105 degrees.

A. Most dogs shed, some much more than others. The only completely non-shedding dogs are the American Hairless Terrier, Peruvian Inca Orchid, the hairless variety of the Chinese Crested, the Khala and the Mexican Hairless, or Xoloitzcuintli. Shedding is a natural loss of hair that allows the old coat to fall out so the new coat can grow in. It varies greatly from breed to breed and the Dachshund is not considered a heavy shedder. Most breeds shed seasonally, in the spring and fall. If they lived outdoors, the amount of sunlight and the temperature would send their coats the signal to change with the seasons, but our dogs live indoors so they no longer take their cue from Mother Nature and many shed year-round.

The fearless and feisty Dachshund comes in three coat varieties: smooth, wirehaired and longhaired; and two sizes, Standard and Miniature. The breed is enormously popular, ranking seventh in registrations last year according to the American Kennel Club.

I am assuming yours is a smoothie as these are the most numerous. They are also the easiest to keep, truly a wash-and-wear dog. The wirehaired Dachshund looks more terrier-like with his bristly coat, dignified beard, and eyebrows. In the grooming salon, we often hand-strip them to keep that coat harsh, the way it should be. They have a softer undercoat beneath their wiry jackets. The longhaired Dachshund has a sleek and shiny coat, much like that of a spaniel, and a fluffy undercoat, so it needs lots of brushing to keep its glamorous tresses from matting.

The smooth-coated Dachshund has much less undercoat than the other two varieties, requiring only a good weekly rub from a rubber curry or grooming mitt in the direction the hair grows to remove dead and shed hair and keep him looking spiffy. If your dog's hair is brittle or breaking, talk to your vet about giving him supplements containing Omega 3 and 6 fatty acids or switching to a dog food with fish as the major protein source to deliver more oil to the coat. When you bathe him, use only a mild pet shampoo, never one containing harsh detergents, and follow up with a conditioning rinse. In between baths, a moisturizing spray will keep his coat well-oiled and healthy.

Sometimes physical problems such as allergies, seborrhea, mange, flea dermatitis, or hormonal problems can cause increased amounts of shedding. Also, a healthy dog's coat should not grow thin and sparse as he grows older. If you see redness or bald spots as you groom and bathe your dog, take him to the vet for a thorough checkup.

In that hot Arizona weather, make sure he is well-hydrated with fresh water always available. Even a covered doghouse is not a safe place when the temperature hits 105 so keep him indoors in an air-conditioned room and don't take him in the car with you on errands. Dogs do not perspire as we do to cool ourselves down and with such high temperatures, it would take only a few minutes for him to go from panting and drooling into full-fledged heatstroke, which is what happens when a dog's body is no longer able to dissipate heat. Heatstroke is always a medical emergency and is often fatal.