

Giving a Dog a Sanitary Trim

Clipping a dog's genital area requires great care and the right tools.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. I have a Golden Retriever-Poodle mix. She is the first female dog I have ever had and I don't know how to trim around her vulva. She always gets very sticky there. Do you have any photos of sanitary trims for females?

A. You are referring to what we in the grooming field call a "sanitary trim." This refers to the genital area of both male and female dogs as well as the area around the anus. Some dogs never require such a trim but others are rather messy when they take care of business and need to have a channel cleared under their tails to maintain hygiene. Some females do have a discharge that leaves the hair around the vulva sticky as your dog does. I don't know of any photos of such a trim but I can tell you that you need to be extremely cautious if you give your girl the pet version of a bikini wax.

Use a #10 blade on your clipper and make sure it is not too hot or too dull. If you burn or cut her sensitive membranes you will cause her great pain and injury. Always use a light touch; digging the clipper blade into the tissue in this sensitive area can also cause injury. When you bathe your pet, let her sit in water that is comfortably warm to soothe her since the discharge could also be causing inflammation.

I would also suggest that you take her to see the vet right away as a discharge could indicate a medical condition that requires attention. Sometimes a discharge indicates pyometra, a serious uterine infection, or another type of vaginal or urinary tract infection. If she has not been spayed and the discharge has blood in it, that indicates she is in heat and could become pregnant from any canine suitor who happens along, so unless you plan to breed her, you should get her spayed. If she has already been spayed, she may be experiencing a false pregnancy. In any case, your vet will give her a blood test, urinalysis, and may take some X-rays to find out why she is experiencing these problems.