

Groomer Trims Bichons Like Poodles

Contact a local breeder or breed club to find a dog groomer who will groom your Bichon Frise as would like.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. How can I get my dog groomer to stop trimming my Bichons like Poodles? I have gone to several different groomers with specific instructions such as "do not shave his/her face," but I pick them up and they look like Poodles.

A. Perhaps your little Bichons need to wear T-shirts that say, "I am not a Poodle." This is a common problem even though in the United States, these adorable dogs now rank 32nd out of the AKC's 157 official breeds. Although both the Poodle and Bichon Frise are considered low-shedding breeds and have similar curly coats, they are quite different in body structure. The Bichon has a more compact body and a somewhat sturdier appearance overall. Its legs are shorter, feet rounded like columns to match the width of its legs, not clean-shaven like the Poodle. Rather than the pom-pom Poodle tail, the longer Bichon tail is left like a natural plume, curling up over its back. Along with its broader skull and shorter muzzle, the Bichon's short ears are rounded to the match length of its full fuzzy face. In fact, everything about this dog is rounded, giving the well-groomed Bichon the look of a living powder-puff.

The hardest thing for the novice groomer to master is the head and neck. Unlike the Poodle, the Bichon sports a full mane that gives its neck a powerful arched look, extending all the way back to the withers (shoulders). Those unfamiliar with the correct pattern will usually trim the round head to the back of the skull like a Poodle topknot. Both dogs are groomed with scissors and clippers, and snap-on guard combs for pet trims.

The best advice I can give you is to get in touch with the breed club or a Bichon breeder in your area and ask for a recommendation. You might also look for a Certified Master Groomer. In order earn that title, he or she must be familiar with correct trims on all breeds. Some groomers have portfolios of their work or photos on a website to show samples of their work. Unless a groomer can visualize this beautiful dog the way it is supposed to look, I'm afraid it might still leave the salon looking like a Poodle.