

Grooming a Lakeland Terrier

Clipping or hand stripping a Lakeland Terrier takes skill and dedication.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. We have a lovely five-month-old Lakeland Terrier. We are considering clipping her instead of hand stripping since it sounds like a lot of work and is difficult to properly hand strip the breed. We know that if we have her clipped instead of hand stripping her, her color will be lighter and the fur softer, but we are concerned that she will shed more hair on our clothes when we pick her up. Since we chose a Lakeland Terrier because we wanted a low-shedding dog, we would not wish to clip her if it will result in her becoming a high-shedding dog. Your thoughts?

A. Originating from the lake districts of Northern England, your breed of choice is the smallest of the long-legged terriers, as sharp in intelligence as it is in appearance. There is nothing soft and fluffy about the tenacious Lakeland Terrier, who often tunneled deep underground after its quarry.

With the exception of the distinct fall of hair between the eyes, the Lakeland is groomed like a Wire Fox Terrier, but is not as fanciful a fellow. Square-built and well-balanced, the Lakeland's narrow, coarse-coated body helped it to easily squeeze into rocky dens with fearless aplomb.

Whether clipped or hand stripped, the breed's grooming should leave very little coat covering the contours of its body. It can be difficult to find a groomer who does hand stripping and you would pay more for this highly skilled service, but if your groomer clips your pet correctly, she will sport the same spare and spiffy look called for by the breed standard.

When clipping this dog, we generally use a #7f on the body and a #2 snap-on guard comb attachment on the legs. The chest and undercarriage are short and tight, with no hint of fluffy feathers. The rump is tightly shorn to show off musculature and well-angulated rear legs.

While you are correct in assuming that clipping will soften coat and dilute color, it will not turn your girl into a heavy shedder. Of course, if you pick up a dog that has just been clipped, you may get some hair on your clothing. This can easily be remedied if the groomer goes over the finished work with a brush and blows leftover clippings away with the dryer.

On a clipped terrier, the color and texture of that wiry coat may be significantly preserved by "carding" the coat, done by dragging a #40 blade, a stripping knife, or one of the new carding tools over the coat in the direction of hair growth to remove undercoat without cutting topcoat in the process. It leaves a smooth finish and blends in any clipper tracks for a more natural-looking result.

Between appointments, you will need to brush your pet with a slicker a couple of times a week, paying particular attention to her beard to make sure food or foraging does not cause matting.