

Grooming Tools for a Dog's Wiry Coat

The correct grooming tools help get the job done right.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. My five-month-old puppy is Pomeranian-Spitz-Australian Terrier mix. She looks like short-haired Australian Terrier with ears that fall forward. Her hair is pretty wiry and coarse, not too soft. I am having a lot of trouble finding what tools I should groom her with. What do I look for? She sheds a lot and I have a slicker brush but it seems like it only takes the tangles out, and her hair is not exactly long enough to get many tangles. I really need something to help rid her of the hair she is shedding. When we first got her, my whole family started getting slightly stuffed-up noses (we all still have them) and we really need help.

A. It sounds to me as if your puppy is most like her Australian Terrier ancestor. These feisty, short-legged terriers were taken to Australia by early settlers from the British Isles and made themselves useful in the outback by hunting vermin, herding sheep, and guarding the homestead. Their harsh wiry coat served as protection from the elements, their own body armor as they worked in rough terrain. That rugged coat is best maintained by regular brushing and occasionally hand-stripping to remove dead coat and preserve the harsh texture.

Because of her Pomeranian-Spitz heritage, she also probably has a downy undercoat so the curved-bristle slicker will be useful in keeping that inner layer of hair from matting, packing, and shedding, but you'll need a few more tools in your arsenal. A hound glove is not one of them. With its rubberized "fingers," it works best on short- and smooth-coated dogs like the Beagle or Pug. Your little mix would also benefit from a stripping knife (it's not as scary as it sounds). It will not only cut down on shedding but keep her coat nice and coarse, the way it should be. I would also recommend an undercoat rake, great for thinning out the inner layer on double-coated breeds. Oster makes them in several sizes, but a medium-sized tool with 12 to 18 "teeth," the grooves that capture the hair, should do just fine.

I would also make sure she is getting Omega 3 and 6 essential fatty acids in either her food or supplements. Derived from plants and fish, they help keep skin and coat in top condition. Without them, dogs may have dull coat, excessive shedding, and dryness that can cause itching. Using a conditioner in the final rinse after a bath also will help loosen undercoat so that when you dry her, even more hair will come out.

As far as the stuffy noses your family members are experiencing, this reaction is usually caused by the dog's dander, rather than shed hair. In the salon, we use a product called Allerpet Single Solution on dogs or cats once they've been bathed and rinsed. It cuts way down on the dander. Apply it full-strength with a washcloth, wiping it over the pet and dampening to the skin. Towel or blow-dry the animal without rinsing it off. We recommend using it once a week for best results, but it is non-toxic and won't hurt your dog so you may use it as often as needed. Good luck with your little one-of-a-kind pet!