

Soothing a Shaved Dog's Skin

Tips to keep a dog's skin healthy after shaving.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. My 2-year-old Bichon Frise was "accidentally" shaved at the groomer. I am horribly upset as my dog had a beautiful coat. I need to take care of his skin; he has very pink skin and very little hair. What do you recommend to keep his skin healthy until his hair grows back?

A. I don't blame you for being upset. No dog should be "accidentally" shaved or stripped at the groomer's. Usually, the only reasons a dog would be shaved down is because the owner requested it or the coat is so matted that it cannot be brushed out. In either case, the groomer and owner should have communicated about what was to be done when the dog arrived at the salon. The grooming shop can be a busy and hectic place, but communication is of the utmost importance.

We always go over the coat and inform the owner of what we can do. If it needs to be taken down and re-grown, the owner is asked to sign a release form. When it comes to pet care, nobody likes surprises. I learned early on that presenting a client with a naked dog when they thought they would be getting back a fluffy little teddy bear was disastrous for the groomer as well as the owner!

Part of our job is educating clients. The last thing we want to do is hurt a dog. If it is heavily matted, brushing the coat out could be a long and painful process. In addition, the coat could look sparse and unattractive once the job is done. Even clipping down such a matted dog can present problems. "Clipper burn," or irritated skin, can be avoided in most cases by proper use of our grooming equipment but in the case of pets who have been badly neglected, the stripping process itself can make them red and sore.

The best thing you can do for your bald little boy while you are waiting for his coat to grow back is to brush him regularly with a gentle slicker to keep mats at bay. You might also give him baths with oatmeal shampoo to soothe his delicate skin but make sure he is brushed out first. For a groomer to sculpt him into the softly-rounded powder puff he should be, his coat must be mat-free. I wish you and your pet a happier experience the next time you visit the groomer!