

GROOMING ROUTINE (2/6/10)



8 Weeks to 1 Year

Brushing out with a Pin brush.

1x/week brush entire dog with the Pin brush. Make sure you get down to the skin. Don't do faces. Pay special attention to behind the ears, the ears, and arm pits. This will help to prevent matting.

Metal Wide Toothed Comb (coarse):

Use a wide toothed comb (or the wider end of a dual spaced comb) to comb out the ears after you've brushed them out with the Pin brush.

Bathing:

1x month. Any gentle dog shampoo is fine. We personally recommend Chris Christensen's Spectrum 1 (for rough coats) shampoo and conditioner, or Isle of Dog's "Stand" shampoo and "Build" conditioner. These both come in a concentrated formula and should be diluted per the instructions on the label. Make sure you rinse thoroughly. Leave no soap residue or it will irritate the skin. After your bathe, clean the ears with ear cleaner using cotton pads.

It is important to brush your IWS out carefully prior to bathing. This will remove any mats, knots or dead hair. When hair is matted or knotted it only gets worse once wet. This also reduces the amount of hair in your tub.

Ear Cleaning:

You may need to clean them more often as your IWS gets older. Irish Water Spaniels have drop ears and as such can be prone to ear infections due to the lack of airflow to the ear canal. A good preventative practice is to clean your dogs ears every 2-3 weeks with an ear cleaning solution. Just squirt a bit of ear cleaner into each ear, and gently massage the base of the ear for a few seconds. Your dog will then shake its head to clear the solution out of the ear. After this you can take a cotton pad and gently wipe out the inside of the ear. **DO NOT POKE WAY DOWN INTO THE CANAL**, just clean what you can easily see and reach.

If your dog does a lot of swimming you should use the cleaning solution more often. If swimming daily, use the solution every 3 or 4 days. Squirt the solution in the ear and don't worry about swabbing it out with cotton. In this situation the solution is being used more as a drying agent and a bacterial inhibitor than to actually clean the ears.

Nails:

Check nails regularly (several times a month should actually be sufficient), and if necessary trim using either nail clippers or a dremel. We prefer a dremel and have included a great instructional in your binder that will help condition your pup to having their nails trimmed using a dremel. Patience and good treats are the key to success!

The "Rat Tail":

The rat tail is a unique characteristic of the Irish Water Spaniel. It is susceptible to becoming dry, especially the tip, and especially in young puppies. You might want to routinely rub a bit of mineral oil or baby oil on it. Also the IWS often will split the ends of their tails as a result of happily wagging them, banging them on walls, furniture, etc. If this happens, it will look like they are bleeding quite a bit, mostly because the blood gets splattered all over the place as a result of the wagging tail. Do not panic, as this is a common occurrence; however do try to be careful to keep them from banging their tails against walls furniture etc. As they get older, the skin on the tails seems to toughen up and the splitting becomes much less frequent.

Also, you may notice a quarter sized area on top of the tail, about 2-3 inches from the base, that may start to lose hair and look dry and flaky. This is completely normal. There is a gland located there which sometimes causes this condition. You can put some mineral oil or baby oil on that area to moisturize, but it is not necessary. The spot will disappear as the pup gets older. This is most noticeable in puppies, and not so much in adults.

1 Year Old and Forward

Same routine as above and add the following:

Slicker Brush:

After you brush the coat with the Pin brush, use a Slicker brush on the leg coat, body and ears. Pay particular attention to the front leg arm pit area and behind the ears. These are common areas for mats. Be gentle with the Slicker brush. This brush is great for removing dead coat.

Metal Wide Tooth Comb:

Finally, use a wide toothed metal comb to go through everything to be sure there are no knots or mats. Once you have gone through the coat and your IWS is mat and knot free, spritz the entire dog with water to get back the curl and reduce the frizziness. This comb is also great to use right after you bathe the dog, just comb through the wet coat.

Scissoring/Clipping:

Every 4-8 weeks the dog should be trimmed by a professional groomer or by yourselves. If you are interested in learning, we will be happy to show you how. We have provided some guidelines to share with your groomer, as well as a picture of a "show" cut and a shorter, more manageable "pet" cut. The top-knot is usually the challenge for groomers. Be sure to emphasize that it should not be cut like a Poodle's topknot. Rather, it should drape like a shawl over the tops of the ears and over the back of the occiput/skull. IWS's really do not like the idea of looking like a Poodle.