



## Chapter 7 Grooming Your Leonberger

*-Anybody who doesn't know what soap tastes like never washed a Leonberger.*

### Grooming and the Leonberger Standard

Whether you take your Leonberger to a grooming shop or do your own grooming at home, it is important to remember that if you plan to show your Leonberger they must be shown with no trimming, sculpting or alteration of the coat, except for neatening of the feet. Natural appearance of the coat is essential to breed type.

The Leonberger needs to be groomed on a regular basis. Grooming will reduce mats and tangles, remove debris and dead hair, stimulate the scalp and keep the Leonberger coat looking beautiful and healthy.

### Grooming Your Puppy

Grooming begins as soon as you bring your puppy home, and you should immediately start brushing him so he becomes accustomed to being groomed. Brushing should be done on your puppy with a slicker brush about once a week. The hair behind the ears and the feathering on the backs of the legs should be brushed several times a week, as these areas tend to mat easily. You can help make it a pleasant experience by giving him treats while brushing. You should start to handle your puppy in many ways, such as rolling him on his back, touching his feet, looking at his teeth, scraping the teeth, and cleaning and checking his ears. This will prepare him for when he has to go to the vet, and will make future grooming sessions easier. If you are planning to use a grooming table, you can start brushing and trimming nails on the table along with lots of treats. It will not take long before your puppy wants to jump up onto the grooming table voluntarily because he associates the table with treats.

Your puppy should have had her nails trimmed regularly by her breeder since she was a week old. You need to continue trimming them at least every other week. If you're not sure how to do it, ask your vet to show you. There are also some great illustrated articles on the internet that will help you with nail trimming. Trimming nails is as important as brushing your dog. Your dog's feet

will look better, but more importantly, her feet will be healthier and stronger and it is much more comfortable for your Leo to have nicely trimmed nails. The best time to trim your young puppy's nails is when she is sleeping after a particularly exhausting play session. Nail trimming can be made into a positive experience by giving a treat after each nail has been cut. As time goes on, you can give a treat after two nails have been cut, then three, and so on. Eventually you will have very little difficulty with this task.

### Professional Grooming

Having your Leonberger groomed by a grooming shop is convenient and easy. You can start taking your Leonberger to be groomed once he has completed all of his puppy vaccinations. Vaccinations are usually completed by six months old.

Professional groomers provide a grooming experience that goes beyond what most of us can do in the backyard. They are skilled to use tools, which effectively brush out a shedding undercoat. Grooming shops have special water nozzles that assist in getting the coat extra clean, and powerful drying systems to ensure coats get completely dry. Professional groomers are confident in clipping nails and most grooming shops include clipping of the nails with the shampoo service. Taking your Leonberger to a grooming shop for a complete shampoo and comprehensive brushing will make your brushing and grooming job at home much easier. Ask your vet's office for a recommendation on grooming services in your area or ask your local pet store if they provide professional grooming services.

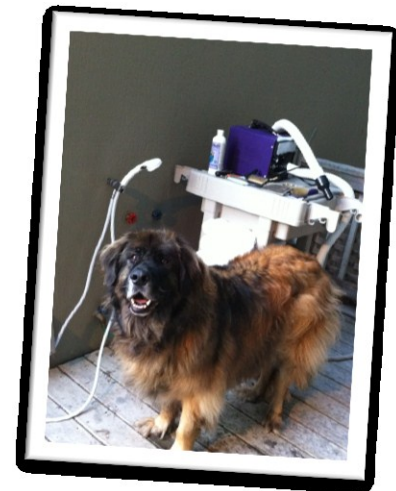
### Home Grooming

Grooming at home is easy to learn and is a great opportunity to spend quality bonding time with your Leonberger. Taking care of your Leonberger's coat, skin, and nails is very rewarding and he will delight in being praised, petted and given a treat for his good "sit," "stand," "down," and "stay" behavior.

#### **Step 1: Gather all the supplies you will need**

- **Slicker Brush**—A slicker brush will help to remove mats and can be used as a finishing brush for a silky smooth finish.

- **Undercoat Rake**– This is an important grooming brush for a Leonberger that is blowing his undercoat. The double or single row metal prongs will assist in removing the thick blowing undercoat.
- **Metal Comb**– This is an additional grooming tool to be used to remove the undercoat and excess hair that is being shed. A wide-tooth comb works best for the outer coat of a Leonberger.
- **Pin Brush**– This brush with long straight metal pins with rounded ends is good for a Leonberger coat. This brush helps to remove dead hair and stimulate the scalp. To use it, part and brush the coat in layers, brushing through to the ends. It also works well on feathering.
- **Nail Clippers**– You need a solid, mechanically sound clippers that is easy to use and works well on the Leonberger's large, strong nails. Along with your clippers you should have a styptic powder on hand. This is used in case of a bleeding toenail caused by cutting into the quick.
- **Grooming Scissors**–A good quality pair of scissors can be used for trimming your Leonberger's feet. These can include a standard shears and a thinning shears. Remember, if you are showing your Leonberger there should be no trimming except the neatening of the feet.
- **Shampoo**–There is a large variety of shampoos on the market. For normal maintenance consider using a shampoo with natural or organic ingredients.
- **Ear Wash**–A basic ear wash can be purchased from your local pet store or inquire with your vet about using a medicated ear wash.
- **Cotton Balls**–They can be placed in the ear when bathing to prevent water from entering the ear canal and to lessen the noise of the blow dryer.
- **Blow Dryer / Towel**– Look for a quiet design with enough power force to blow the water out of your Leonberger's coat. A good dryer will be pricey but it is worth every dollar you spend.



Cindy Stratton's Kingston

- **Grooming Table** – A grooming table is a very nice accessory to have as it makes grooming and nail trimming much easier. It makes grooming so much easier on your back as you no longer have to bend down or sit on the floor to groom. You can even train your Leonberger to jump up on the table, and you can give baths while they are on the table as well. Of course, a young dog or puppy must never be allowed to jump off the table without assistance.

## Step 2: Brush your Leonberger

Before you begin the bathing process you should brush your Leonberger's coat.

Working from the head to the tail, lift the topcoat, part the fur and work your undercoat rake in the direction in which the hair grows. Use the comb for



Jan Parola has a pile after Cherokee's brushing.

the areas behind the ears, tail and feet. To prevent tangled mats from occurring, brush out the coat three times a week with a pin brush, slicker brush and comb. The areas which mat the most on a Leonberger are behind the ears, under the arm pits and the feathered areas. During the spring and fall seasons Leonbergers will blow their undercoat and will shed an abundant amount of hair.

During these heavy shedding times, brush your Leonberger more often! When you have completed all the brushing, run a slicker brush all over the outer coat to distribute the natural oils and to give your Leonberger a finished look.

Leonbergers love to swim and swimming can cause mats. Not brushing the coat often enough will also cause mats to develop in the feathering. To loosen a mat, soften the mat with conditioner (baby oil and dry powdered cornstarch may also work). Work your slicker brush through the mat in the direction of the hair growth. You can also use a comb or a dematting tool. Too much tugging and pulling will cause pain so be gentle! If you must use a scissors or thinning shears to remove a mat, be sure to place a comb between the mat and skin (the comb will act as a barrier between the skin and scissors) and carefully cut out the mat.

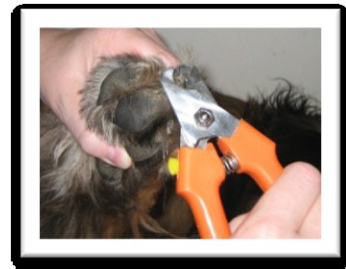
## Step 3: Cleaning the Ears

In general, most Leonbergers need to have their ears cleaned about once a month. Some dogs will require ear cleaning more often if they are prone to infections or swim often. Regular ear cleaning prevents wax build up and provides an opportunity to do an inspection of the ear to look for possible infections. If the ear smells really bad, looks irritated, is swollen or just doesn't look normal, you need to call your veterinarian. If the ears appear healthy, put ear wash down the ear canal and gently massage the ear for 10 to 30 seconds. To remove the loosened wax, gently wipe the inside of the ear (do not go too far into the ear as it can cause damage) with a cotton ball or clean soft cloth. This should be done to both ears.

#### Step 4: Trimming the Nails

Trimming the nails is important for general comfort of the Leonberger and has shown to have major medical importance in some breeds of dogs ( i.e. overly long nails can cause slipped disc syndrome, bruised cuticles, degenerative arthritis, torn toe nails, etc.)

Incidentally, the rationalization that walking on concrete wears the toenails down is almost never true. Trim a small amount of the toenails weekly or a minimum of every three weeks.



It is best to begin training your Leonberger with daily handling of his feet, then gradually start with clipping just one nail. Be sure to praise your Leonberger for his good behavior and give him a treat. You may only be able to trim one nail in the first sitting but slowly you will be able to trim several nails at one time. Eventually you will be able to trim his nails in one session.

Put your Leonberger in a down or sit position. With one hand, pick up his paw and hold it firmly. Because Leonbergers have dark black nails, you may not be able to locate the quick so you will need to make several smaller clips.

Clip the upper surface of each nail, cutting at a 45-degree angle. Do not cut the toe nail straight up and down as you can easily cut the nerve and vessels. The removal of the upper surface allows the nail to readily wear down. Also, if you do cut too deeply, you usually only cut the vessels, not the nerve, so there is no pain. Repeated clippings cause the quick to retreat so the nail can be cut shorter with each clipping.

If you clip the quick, wipe off the blood and apply a dab of styptic powder on the end of the nail.



Shannon White trims Faran, Fina and Bravo – showing how it's done.

### Step 5: Neatening Leonberger feet

To neatening your Leonberger's feet before a show or simply to have your Leonberger's grooming at home look complete with trimmed feet, you will need a good quality, sharp pair of shears. Thinning shears are nice to have but are not essential for creating neat Leonberger feet. Before you begin, the nails should be trimmed; it is much easier to neatening the feet when the nails are short. Take a small slicker brush and brush the feet in the direction of hair growth. Use your shears to trim the loose hair standing up between the toes. Always cut with the direction of the hair growth, never across the hair. Cutting across the hair growth will give you a choppy, obviously cut look. Then trim the hair on the bottom of foot and along the edges of the pads. Never trim hair which you have pulled out from between the toes on the top of the foot or you will have over-trimmed feet!



## Step 6: Bathing your Leonberger

With a water temperature mixer valve attached to your existing washing machine water supply and a long hose with a detachable shower spray nozzle, bathing your Leonberger outside is a breeze. You can find showerhead attachments at most hardware stores. You don't need to shampoo your Leonberger much more than every 2–3 months. This will ensure that the healthy oils remain in the skin and coat.

Place cotton balls in your Leonberger's ears and a little petroleum jelly or mineral oil around the eyes. If you need to keep your Leonberger from trotting off, secure him with a collar and leash. Thoroughly wet down your Leonberger with lukewarm water. Using your natural or organic dog shampoo, lather your Leonberger from head to tail. Don't forget his belly, legs and feet. Remember to praise him and tell him he is a very good dog! You do not want to leave any soap behind as it can irritate his skin, so rinse thoroughly until the water runs clear. Use an extra large absorbent towel to gently dry off the excess water from his fur. Too much rubbing can cause mats so don't rub too vigorously.

Using your pet dryer on a cool setting, blow the fur in the direction it grows. Never blow the dryer at your Leonberger's face. You can use a pin brush or comb at the same time you are drying and this will assist in blowing out any loose fur. It will also help to make your Leonberger extra fluffy!