

BowWOW

Facts, observations and musings about Our Best Friends

The 10-Pound Bath

Is there any difference in bathing Eisenhower, the 45-pound generic short hair dude-dog and creating a spa experience for Miss Rosalyn, the 10-pound shih tsu/maltese cross, princess of her domain? Yes and no.

The most obvious difference is that Miss Rosalyn can be brushed on the kitchen (or patio if you're squeamish) table and bathed in the kitchen or laundry sink, eliminating back strain and making clean up easy. In the kitchen you'll have the benefit of a sprayer and convenient counter space to hold your equipment.

However, because Miss R has a few special features, the process itself becomes a bit more complex. It's not as simple as Eisenhower's "lather, rinse and repeat" but not so complicated that you can't do it at home, with preparation.

First, you'll need more equipment. Long-haired breeds, especially those with specialty coats, require a slicker brush, a rat tail comb, a metal comb, a blow dryer and round-tipped trimming scissors. You'll also need a child's soft toothbrush and a couple of cotton balls.

Create a non-skid surface on the table of your choice. A folded bath towel works well. Place Miss R on the table and begin the brush-out. If you have a princess in your domain, regular grooming should already be a weekly routine, brushing Miss R before mats or tangles begin to form. Use your slicker brush, the wire one with flexible pins, to work the coat out in layers from the ends to the roots. Work from the feet up, to the legs and belly and the body and tail. When you are brushing out the legs, check the hair between her toes and between her pads. Hair between the pads mats easily so you'll want to keep it trimmed with the small round-tipped safety scissors.

Use your rat-tail comb to section the hair on the head and face but use the metal comb on the mustache and below the ears. The wider-spaced tines of the metal comb will be gentler on Miss R's sensitive areas. Living close to the ground, she may accumulate more than her share of dust and grime on her face. Pay special attention to the hair around her eyes, at the corners of her mouth and under her chin.

Once the brush-out and trim up is complete, it is time for the bath. You might want to put some cotton in her ears to prevent water from accidentally entering the ear canal. Use a shampoo with pure and identifiable ingredients specially formulated for dogs. For dogs with special coats you'll also need a conditioner made for dogs to make the after-bath comb out easier.

Wet her completely with lukewarm water and apply the shampoo. Here's where the bathing process takes a different turn: instead of rubbing the shampoo in vigorously to make a fluffy lather, rather massage the shampoo with more of a gentle squeezing motion. For the special coats remember warm water + soap + fur + agitation = felt. Once you've dampened her face, use the toothbrush to loosen any crunchy build-up around the eyes and the corners of the mouth that you couldn't remove while combing.

After you're sure you've rinsed out all the soap, apply the conditioner, again massaging it into the hair. Rinse again. Let her drip for a few minutes and then wrap Miss R in warm bath towels to remove excess water. Encourage her to shake, shake, shake once towel dried and then return her to your grooming table for the comb-through and blowout. Using the metal comb with the widely spaced teeth, comb through her hair to make sure you have not created any tangles during the bath. Use the low setting on your hair dryer, keep the air moving so as not to scorch any one place and certainly don't aim it directly into Miss R's face.

After-bath exclamations of her beauty and a special treat are always appropriate.

BowWOW! Is a production of Tracie Korol and wholeDog.
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