



STARTING OFF ON THE RIGHT PAW – DVGRR TIPS FOR ADOPTERS

Put Your Golden's "Best Paw" Forward

In talking with our adopters and prospective adopters, we often find a lot of misperceptions about grooming needs for Golden Retrievers. All Goldens, regardless of coat length or thickness, require regular grooming to keep their skin, coat, and nails in good condition. You don't want painful mats to develop behind the ears or elsewhere on the dog's body, and you don't want your dog's nails to get so long that walking becomes uncomfortable. (Yes, that can easily happen.)

Even if you use a professional groomer, you'll need to keep up with regular brushing in between "beauty appointments" so your Golden will always look and feel his best! The grooming room at Gateway gets a lot of use, since each dog who goes through our program receives a bath and grooming at least once during their stay with us. We want to help you keep your dog looking his or her best after adoption, so our staff has compiled the following series of "Golden Grooming FAQs" for our adopters:

How often should I take my Golden for professional grooming?

Depending on the thickness and rate at which their fur grows, we recommend every 6 to 8 weeks.

Does shaving a Golden's fur help cool them down in the summer?

Possibly, to a small extent, but Goldens have an undercoat that actually helps keep them cool in the summer months AND protects them from sunburn. We much prefer not shaving Goldens because it takes away from their natural beauty.

How often should I trim my dog's nails? And should I use a traditional nail clipper or a grinding device?

In theory, you should assess your dog's nails every two weeks. In reality, clip or grind once every month or two. If necessary you can clip or grind, wait about 4-5 days for the quick (the vein carrying blood to the nail) to retract, then grind or clip again and keep doing this. Rule of thumb – if you can hear your dog's nails clicking on the floor, they are too long.

Traditional nail clippers are fine to use, however at Gateway we prefer using a Dremel™ tool (grinder). Some dogs tolerate clipping better than grinding and some dogs tolerate grinding better than clipping. Grinding takes a little longer, but there is less chance of damaging the quick. Using a Dremel or any grinding device takes some practice to use correctly and confidently, but it's not really difficult. You should use a fine sanding band with your grinder (a coarse one can splinter nails) and always wear protective eye cover.



A battery-operated nail grinder (corded versions also available) and two variations of nail clippers. We like the grinder, but some dogs do better with traditional clippers.

Ask your groomer if he or she can show you how to properly use a grinder or ask a staff member at DVGRR. If you are not comfortable doing your dog's nails yourself, you can always bring him to your groomer or vet in between full groomings for a quick pedicure!

My dog hates having his feet touched – what should I do??

Lots of dogs are especially sensitive about their feet and do not want their paws touched or their nails clipped. We see this frequently with rescue dogs, most likely because they were never acclimated as puppies to having their feet touched and handled (a critical part of early socialization) or they have had bad experiences with grooming.

If such reluctance describes *your* dog, don't despair...it's never too late to start working on this. You can use extra yummy treats and very slow, "baby steps" to help your dog start associating *good* things with having his paws touched, not bad things. Go at whatever pace keeps your dog from getting stressed, and work on increasing his comfort level several weeks prior to each grooming appointment. A great trick is to use a treat like Frosty Paws™ or a sterilized bone stuffed with peanut butter to help distract your dog – allow him to lick the Frosty Paws or peanut butter while you do the grinding, or use it as a reward for getting him accustomed to grinding or just to having his feet touched. Cofounder Robin Adams only has to pull out three Frosty Paws cups and Woody, Sterling, and Bobby start pushing each other out of the way to see whose nails can be done first!

Until you have reached a point where your dog is fine with touching his feet, you may want to use a muzzle during the grooming session if you think there's a chance your dog may snap. An experienced groomer will be patient and caring with your dog, and keep grooming time positive and calm.



A typical ungroomed Golden paw ("slipper feet!") and the same paw following just a few minutes of trimming and shaping.

What should I be doing in between grooming appointments?

Most important, of course, is to keep up with regular brushing. You should be brushing your dog at least once a week, more frequently if possible, and definitely more often during shedding season. If your dog is prone to dry or flaky skin, you may want to use a spray-on coat conditioner and/or consider adding a fish oil supplement to his diet. During the winter months, you may want to carefully trim any excess hair on the bottom of your Golden's paws to keep him from getting painful ice balls in snowy weather. Leave trimming in between the pads for your groomer; just clip away the hair that is starting to extend out from the bottom of the feet. Don't forget about cleaning ears and brushing teeth on a regular basis in between grooming appointments!

How often should my Golden be bathed?

Goldens should be bathed once every two to three months, so depending on how often you take your dog to the groomer, you may want to give your dog a bath at home. If you have a dog that relishes a good roll in something smelly or disgusting (disgusting only to us, of course!), you may be getting that tub ready more often! Keep the process happy and upbeat so your dog does not perceive bathing as something to be upset or scared about. Use a good quality dog shampoo, lather up well and rinse VERY well. Be sure to thoroughly dry your dog after his bath to avoid the development of “hot spots” (nasty, quick spreading skin irritations that thrive under moist skin conditions).

My Golden has allergies – what kind of shampoo should I use?

There are many dog shampoos on the market that are gentle enough for a dog with skin allergies. Check with your vet first for his or her suggestions. Your vet may recommend a medicated shampoo if the allergies are severe enough. Otherwise, find a hypo-allergenic or oatmeal based shampoo.



Grooming ears takes practice but makes a huge difference in the dog's neat appearance. This pretty female arrived with some of the scraggiest ears we'd ever seen. Here she shows off her "before and after" look....all those flyaway, unruly pieces are now sleek, lovely, and oh so tidy!

There are so many different kinds of brushes available! What should I use?

At Gateway, we use several types of brushes for our Goldens including a rake, an undercoat rake, a pin brush, a slicker brush and a comb. Any of these will work well for a golden – especially the rakes. (Always use the rake gently, so you don't scratch the dog's skin.) Make sure to brush carefully behind the ears and the rear feathering, as these are the most common places for mats to occur. If you do find a mat, work it out very slowly and gently, as too much pulling will be very painful for your dog. You can use a dematting spray or specially made mat cutter.....or, if the matting is very extensive, please call your groomer for help. Below and on the next page are some examples of grooming tools typically used on Goldens:



From left: oblong pin brush, oval pin brush, two kinds of rakes.



From left: mat breaker, undercoat rake, mat detangler rake, two kinds of Furminators.

From left: two slicker brushes, paw slicker brush, three kinds of combs.



Learn at home!

Finally, would you like to see a detailed grooming demo, right in your own home? You can, with DVGRR's award winning "Grooming Your Golden" video. The video sells for \$22.00 in Pap's Place or through our online store and includes a list of recommended tools for grooming and where to purchase them. Check it out at www.dvgrr.org!

P.S. A Note about thyroid deficiency:

If at any time during your Golden's life you notice his or her coat becoming unusually thin, dry, sparse, or coarse, please talk to your veterinarian about thyroid testing. Many Golden Retrievers are prone to having low thyroid levels and one of the primary symptoms can be an undesirable change in their coat quality. If your Golden's thyroid levels are low, you may also see a loss of hair on the tail ("rat tail" appearance), excess weight gain, and a significant decrease in energy. Testing for low thyroid is very easy and just requires blood to be drawn and analyzed. Treatment consists of daily medication, which is not expensive and can make a big difference in your dog's quality of life by keeping thyroid levels regulated.