

On July 14, 2002, the Border Terrier Club of Ontario held its second on-line grooming Seminar. The seminar was held on the Yahoo Groups Canadian Borders Chat site, with Beverly Kolb moderating and Guest Speaker Phil Klosinski of Kandu Borders answering questions. Questions and answers are summarized below.

1. Head Grooming (Where should hair be left on and where shorter)

- How do you compensate for, for example, a longer muzzle?

Answer: I groom the head to fit the dog, and to complement the Border Terrier Standard. If you have a long muzzle, you would want to leave more hair on the sides and on the top of the muzzle. If you were to reduce the amount of hair on the sides and top of the muzzle, you would be, in essence, accentuating the longer muzzle. You have to picture in your mind what would look best to the judge.

The muzzle also has to be rolled, just like the topcoat in order to build in more face furnishings. The lighter colored dead loose hair needs to come out, but cannot be pulled out all at once. I will use a coarser knife to thin out dead hair, or a Dr. Scholl's to pull out a little at a time, taking into consideration the comfort of the dog.

- How much muzzle hair "moustache" and eyebrows should be left on?

Answer: The muzzle hair "moustache" is in accordance to the type of head of the dog I'm grooming. I want the muzzle to look like it is a full muzzle. In the real world, not all dogs have a ratio of muzzle to head (grin), or a full muzzle. Often times, I have to be very creative to produce this effect.

You need to try to visualize in your mind what looks the best on your dog, and what hairs need to be left in or removed. It is a gradual process in shaping the muzzle for a dog that is to be shown. On a pet, I will often comb out the moustache and use thinning scissors to shape the moustache for the comfort of the dog.

Some dogs just hate to have this area pulled. The beard can also be considered part of the moustache. In no way do I want a profuse beard, and I will shape this to fit the contour of the lower jaw.

Eyebrows: When it comes to eyebrows, I've never seen an Otter that has profuse eyebrows (chuckle). When you keep the eyebrows tight, it helps accentuate the flatness of the skull and a good stop, if you have one.

If the dog doesn't have a great stop, I will leave hair between the eyes to help give the illusion of a good stop. The amount depends upon the type of stop that the dog has. I do not leave a large clump of hair between the eyes because it would only draw attention to the lack of stop. Grooming is a balancing act, and an art form.

- I think that I am finally okay when it comes to rolling a coat, taking care of delicate private parts and so on - what I would appreciate is some discussion on the head: How much mustache-y stuff, eyebrows, not “chiseling” cheeks and so on. I am keenly aware that we do not want our dogs to have schnauzer type furnishings but would appreciate some guidance and talk about the head.

Answer: I believe we've covered everything except cheek grooming. In rolling the cheeks, you will see a discoloration of hair, usually lighter with black tips. This needs to be thinned out. If not, it looks bushy and out of proportion to the rest of the head and the body coat. Remember that “moderate” is what the head is suppose to be. If there are any specific questions about cheek grooming that I haven't addressed, I will try to answer them for you.

2. Body Coat

- At what age do you start grooming puppies and how do you begin?

Answer: ONLY if the coat comes out easily, will I start to pull a puppy coat. One cannot say at a specific week when to start, as all coats grow differently. Remember that this is the first impression the puppy has of grooming, and we want to make this a pleasurable experience! When it will pull easily, I place the TIRED puppy in my lap and use a Dr. Scholl's to remove the entire puppy frizz.

I only pull a few hairs at a time, being extremely careful not to cause the puppy any discomfort. I do not worry about the undercoat at this time. Remember that grooming doesn't have to be done in one session with a puppy.

- How do you know which hairs to pull out while leaving good texture?

Answer: This is more of a question having to do with rolling the coat, while still retaining hard coat. As the hair ages, we end up with three different colors of hair on one shaft, the tip being black on a grizzle and tan. Look at the longest hairs on your dog to see growth bands of hair—you should notice a pattern. I will try to pull out only the longer hair growth. I will often times take a comb and comb in the opposite direction to raise those hairs up so I can be selective in which hairs I pull. I may often comb the hair at a different angle than its growth to accentuate those hairs that stick out and need to be pulled. In this way, I can create multiple layers of growth, which develops the texture. I always have multiple layers of coat growing at one time for a show dog. This is called rolling the coat. It also applies to the head in the same manner.

- How do you “finish” the coat pre-show?

Answer: After creating multiple layers of coat through weeks of grooming, I will take a hounds glove and a washcloth and alternately stroke the coat from neck through tail to pack the coat down. This will lay the coat properly and cause any odd hairs to stick out so that I may pull them to balance the coat out.

- Should you ever use thinning shears or scissors, and if so, where?

Answer: In show grooming, you minimize the amount of scissoring, taking into consideration humane grooming practices when it comes to sensitive areas such as the anal and reproductive organ areas. I do scissor around the anus, the vulva and sheath. I do use clippers for the belly hair and upper inner thigh area. Knives or fingers are used on the majority of the dog. If I were doing pet grooming, I would use the thinning scissors on the back part of the thighs only after I had reduced the amount of hair with the stripping knife until the dog let me know "Enough is enough!" Comfort of the dog is of the utmost importance to me.

3. Rear and Tail Grooming - How do you groom the rear?

- How much hair should be left on the butt and back of legs?

Answer: It depends on the conformation of the dog. For the back of the legs, you need to see where the hairs converge to create a nice line. You really do not want to leave any "feathering" here, or up at the rump area. Being a delicate area to work, take your time and work out only a few hairs at a time. A "puff ball rump" is not what you want...tighten it up! Good luck! Most dogs hate having this area groomed.

I have gone to using a padded grooming saddle from New England Serum to make this easier on both the dog and myself. This holds the dog in position, so I can see what I'm doing. Again, I cannot stress enough to pull JUST A FEW HAIRS. Just because the dog is strapped in doesn't mean you don't have to play fair! The comfort of your dog is very important. Food rewards at the correct times help to make this a more pleasurable experience for the dog. Food is always pleasurable for a BT (smile). I have found a Mars thumb comb is good at taking out only a few hairs, or an extra fine finishing Pearson stripping blade.

- How do you groom the tail, is it done in stages and what should the final appearance be?

Answer: When I first groom a tail, I do it in three stages about a week apart. Stage one is the base of the tail. Stage two includes the caudal gland area where one has to be careful not to take too many hairs out, as they are very slow to grow back here. Stage three is the tip, which one should only pull out a few hairs at a time, as this is a VERY sensitive area for the dog. The Standard calls for a "carrot like" tail. I usually use a fine to extra fine blade to work the longer hairs off of the bottom and sides of the tail. I knock them back in the opposite direction of growth so I can see which ones need to be removed. I gradually work from the base to the tip, shaping the carrot. A medium blade is usually used on the top. Doing "good tail" takes time (smile).

On pet tail grooming, I will often use thinning scissors on the bottom and sides of the tail for the comfort of the dog. I am extremely careful at the tip of the tail and will use smaller curved scissors here. I make certain that my fingers are over the tip of the tail to not cause any accidental mistakes. Always take time in this area. Mistakes should never happen here.

4. Feet

- Do you pull the hair or scissor and how?

Answer: I prefer to use a knife to shape the foot to look like that of a small cat's paw. As we know, feet come in different shapes and sizes, and the feet are always a challenge. With a flatter foot, I will build up hair on top to work into the front leg, therefore, trying to mimic the cat's paw. With a bigger foot, I will keep the hair extremely tight on the sides to try to reduce the appearance of the size of the paw. I do scissor underneath and often to outline the outer edges of the paw, being careful not to go up above the toenails. Scissor marks do not look good on the feet. At the back of the paw in the pastern area I prefer to pull this with a fine or extra fine blade. If the dog will not let me, I remove the hair with scissors. This is, once again, a sensitive area with some dogs. Sometimes the hair doesn't pull easily, and can be quite painful. In the hind foot, I will work the rear pastern area down with a fine blade so that no tufts of hair are sticking out. I will scissor the underside of the paw again and use the knife to shape the upper foot as needed.