

Maintaining a Harsh Coat

Much is said about conditioning and softening dry coats but there is not a lot of info on what to do with those breeds that need to have a harsh texture to their coat. Typical of this are most of the Terriers which are required to have a wiry harsh outer coat. Labradors are required to have a fairly hard feeling to the coat as are Wire Haired Dachshunds and German Wirehaired Pointers etc. There are a number of breeds that call for that harsher feel to the coat.

One assumes the dog in question has a correct coat to start with or as close as one can get and that the aim is to maintain and keep the correct texture for ring presentation.

I often see these breeds unwashed. I often hear they have been dry-cleaned if cleaned at all - meaning that they are powder cleaned or "dust and brushed". I can just envisage all that powder lying close to the skin causing heat and irritation to the dog. Maybe this is why a lot of the Terriers appear to have skin problems. Let the skin breathe free! It can be done - one can wash and clean and still have texture.

I never subscribe to the old belief that "this is the way it has always been done and this is the way it has to be." Heavens! We don't sit and listen to crystal radios anymore either. Life moves along and progress presents new opportunities to do things better. Quite often tradition is just bad habits passed down the line. Who knows if those before us knew what they were doing? Maybe they just did the best they could with what they had?

The trick is to cleanse without softening and as we all know that conditioners soften, make sure you don't use one if you want to keep harsh texture. You see, conditioners are acid balanced and that flattens down the outer cuticle layer of the hair making it slippery and smooth. They also contain softeners and that is not what you want in this scenario.

Cleanse without softening! You now need to use a cleanser that doesn't have a high foaming action. High foaming action gives you a lot of froth and bubbles and means a lot of static and fluffy coat. Great for those coats you want to boof up and look soft and fluffy. Not good for coats that have to be wiry, coarse, harsh or flat lying. The quest is for a shampoo that has low foaming action and small bubbles. Wow! A Clayton's shampoo, the one you have when you aren't having one! We use the Plush Puppy Hydro Bath & Bath Wash. This is low foaming and almost a non shampoo. Frankly, if you can see a lot of bubbles you are using too much. I recommend 1 desert spoon to a gallon/4.5 liters of water. You can either use this in your hydrobath tank e.g. 1

dessert spoon to a tank or use as mentioned prior in a bucket and sponge through the coat. You can also add to a bathtub if that is the preferred method.

You ought not to see lots of froth. It is almost as if there isn't any shampoo being used. However, it will still cleanse and refresh the coat -without softening or causing static and fluffiness. This is a great technique also to prevent over washing or dehydration of a coat. Now just rinse out as best as possible without fussing too much. It is not necessary to rinse out entirely. Handy for those who are on tank water and where water is precious.

If you are a purist and like to cleanse your no nonsense dog a few days earlier to the show, then by all means do so but make sure you do give him a hot wet towel and rub a dub before the show. Really, you don't have to resort to that, you can wash using this technique a day before the show. It's a matter of settling the coat to behave and have correct texture. Those with soft coated and flowing coated breeds know that one has to groom to get high performance from their coats and this is what you do with those harsher coated breeds.

Give it a light oil. Not a greasy yukky heavy mechanics type oil - just a light spritz onto the hands with the Plush Puppy Seabreeze Oil. This is light, water soluble and smells great. It is an old Ayurvedic recipe and contains Calendula Oil, Evening Primrose Oil and other goodies. Now work it lightly through the coat. You don't need to over do it. I like to add a dessert spoon - 1 tbspn to a bucket or hydrobath tank and whoosh it through the coat and leave in as a final rinse. This ensures a good healthy coat without softening.

I am also an advocate of using a dryer to rid the coat of unwanted loose hairs. I even blow dry those short coated breeds such as Weimaraners and Dobermans. Get that dead hair out! Make sure you use a cool dryer but one that has a bit of oomph. Not those little "putt putt " dryers please. They do nothing and one could die of old age waiting for them to do it.

The dryer is useful for those full headed looks on some of the breeds such as a Westie etc. Lift and sit it up so it frames the face. Cairns look brilliant with a fuller framing too. Now one needs to use something to give the coat "that texture" and help the coat to look kind of grungey again but still be clean. You also want some substance to the coat. We have just released our new Plush Puppy Ruffy Tuffy Coat Spray. Yeah! I have been asked for something like this for so long and have at last got it for you.

Ruffy Tuffy adds texture. Boy does it ever! Yet it does it without feeling sticky. Did you ever have "surfy/beach" hair? Well, that's kind of like what it feels like. That harsh, dry feeling to the hair is what you will

get with this. It strands the hair out, individualising the hairs without drying hard or sticky. It is different from anything you have used before. It is not like the old bodifiers. Just spray it in on damp hair or dry hair and let it dry or use a dryer. Use it to style the coat into a full framed head or just to lay down the coat or separate the hairs and give definition and texture. It is water soluble and therefore will not build up.

You can use your Plush Puppy Sit N Stay to piece out the coat still or use the Ruffy Tuffy. The Sit N Stay is creamier, stickier and heavier. Don't forget to spray with Plush Puppy Odour Muncher and a light spray all over with the Plush Puppy Shine & Comb. Not too much. Just a light spray for low level shine.

I really love these outdoorsy dogs. They bristle with attitude and vigour. They appear fearless, fiesty and very no nonsense. One could be fooled into thinking their presentation is no nonsense too. Wrong! There is just as much work goes into the preparation of the hand stripping on a Terrier to shape the silhouette as there does in the eternal blow drying and smoothing of an Afghan.

I know some of the older exhibitors like to powder a harsh coat and use all sorts of things to do this but that is another story and frankly, with the styling products of today, one can achieve the desired outcome and do so cleanly and efficiently. Let's hear it for some glam on these outdoor boys and girls. No-one ever said you can't be titivated and no-nonsense at the same time. No-one ever said you can't look as special as those hairdo breeds either. Maybe we need some "Queer Eyes for the Straight Guys" for the dogs too?

CHERYL LECOURT

Don't forget to check out these products that relate to this article in our online shop:

Natural Hydrobath and Bath Wash
Odour Muncher
Ruffy Tuffy Coat Spray
Seabreeze Oil
Shine and Comb
Sit N Stay