

Old English Sheepdog Maintenance

Daily

1. Clean away any "sand man" deposits from eyes.

Reason: If the deposits are not cleared away from the skin, the moisture will attract bacteria. Bacteria will produce an infection, and a trip to the veterinarian will be in order.

2. Check hair around eyes to see if there is any debris caught in the hair.

Reason: If there is a leaf or small twig, etc. caught in the hair, the sheepdog cannot, because of the density of the hair, remove it by pawing at it. If anything is rubbing on the eye, this can produce lacerations on the eyeball. A trip to a veterinarian specializing in ophthalmology will have to be made.

3. Fresh food and water.

Water at all times!!!! Good dry kibble. The best diet you can give your dog is a good dry kibble food!!! No human food!!! No changes from brand to brand!!! Any change in food with a sheepdog usually means instant diarrhea!!!!

Reason: Your dog deserves it. Diarrhea will dehydrate your dog and can decrease its immunity to fight off colds, and diseases. Meanwhile, who needs to clean up the mess, especially when you've come home from a hard day at the office!

Weekly

Complete de-matting of the entire dog.

This can be done, within a reasonable time, by doing the following:

- a. Comb (with the grain), using a mat splitting comb, until you have broken up all the mats. Pay particular attention to behind the ears, the chest, under the stomach, and the rear.
- b. Then use a medium or small Universal or small Warners slicker to remove the broken up mats. If the hair is 4 inches or less, you can brush with the grain. If the hair is longer than 4 inches, you must brush against the grain. You must be able to see the skin!
- c. After "a" and "b", you should be able to pass a medium tooth comb through the hair; if not, start over.

Reason: If anything gets underneath the mat (flea, tick, parasite, etc.), the density of the coat, does not allow the dog to be able to get it. In most cases, the dog will try to remove it, but will only inflict damage to it's own skin. This can cause "hotspots", and must be treated by a veterinarian. Hotspots that are not treated promptly can attract flies looking for a warm moist place to lay eggs - hence maggots which can be fatal.

Monthly

Heartworm prevention pill.

Reason: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Quarterly

Note: You may wish to have all of the items below done by a groomer. They are listed here so that you will know what must be done, and can pass this information on to your groomer. Do not assume that all groomers know how to groom an Old English Sheepdog!

Ears:

* **Pluck the hair from inside the ears.** This can be done with ear powder, and your fingers; a hairmostat might be needed in some cases. Most dogs do not enjoy this, but there is no pain! * Clean the ears with an ear cleaning liquid. Hold the dogs head firmly, and tilt to one side. Then pour solution in ear, massage, and wipe clean with cotton balls and cotton swabs. Do not go too deep with cotton swabs!

Reason: If the hair is not removed. The hair within the ear will mat. The mat will prevent the hair from growing out. If the ear is not cleaned, the ear becomes a breeding ground for parasites, and yeast infections. Here comes another trip to the veterinarian.

Feet:

1. **Trim hair between pads of feet.** This can be done with a blunt nose scissors. Groomers will usually do this with a special trimmer blade.

Reason: If the hair between the pads is not removed, it will also mat. The mat will retain moisture, providing a breeding area for bacteria, and the inevitable ulcer of the skin. That is actually the least of the problem. If the hair continues to mat and grow, it can become very painful.

2. **Trim all nails.** A standard dog nail trimmer can be used. Care must be taken not to trim into the quick (the pink). This will cause bleeding, and must be stopped by use of a styptic powder. Some sheepdogs have "due claws". These must be trimmed! Do not attempt to trim nails without "quick-stop" or a similar product within reach!

Reason: Most sheepdogs like to bat you with their paw to get attention. Once you have been clawed by a sheepdog with long nails, you will understand why. If the due claw is not trimmed, along with hair mats, the due claw will have no other place to grow except into the skin!!! Does this mean another trip to the veterinarian?? You're catching on!

3. **Trim hair around feet.** The hair around the feet should be trimmed flush with the ground. The easiest way to perform this task, is to have your dog standing on a grooming table. Hold his head up with a leash suspended from the ceiling or grooming pole. Tell him to "stay". At this point, you are "in control". Now comes the easy part. Hold one of the paws in the air, and trim the others. By holding one foot up, you can usually trim the others with a minimum of effort.

Reason: If the hair is not trimmed around the feet, the dog will slide on slippery floors, track additional junk into the house, and in general not look too sharp.

4. **"Private" areas:**

* Males: Trim the hair at the penis, as well as in front of. The urine must have a clear shot to leave the body, without being absorbed by the hair!

* Females: Trim the hair at the vulva. Give the urine a place to go!

Reason: When the hair absorbs the urine, two things happen. Neither of them any good. First, the odor will knock your socks off!! Second, we are once again providing an excellent breeding ground for bacteria, and parasites. I'm getting tired of going to the veterinarian!

5. **Trim rear:**

* Trimming the rear is very easy. The hard part is to describe how it is done. To start with, the dog must be completely dematted, and combed out. From this starting point, comb the hair to the

rear and over the rump. After you have the hair laying across the rear, find the "vent" and raise the hair with one hand while placing your other flat against the rear. This will give you an idea, as to where you want to cut. Cut all the hair hanging over the "vent" so that only one inch hangs below it. If you have a clipper; clip all the hair around the "vent". Always clip away from the "vent", never towards it. Give the feces a place to go!

Reason: The obvious one; that your dog is going to smell like a barn! There is also a health reason. If the feces gets caught in the hair, you can bet that soon there will be fleas, flies, and maggots! Oh, yes I almost forgot, another trip to the vet.

6. **Bathe and dry:**

The most important part of the bath is the preparation. The worst thing you can possibly do is to bathe the dog before you de-mat and comb it! If you bathe it before de-matting; please accept the fact that you will probably have to shave the dog! The mats will harden and tighten as if they are concrete!

- a. De-mat and comb out the dog.
- b. Place large rubber mat in tub.
- c. Have plenty of towels ready on floor.
- d. Have good dog shampoo ready.
- e. Have good tearless dog shampoo ready.
- f. Have largest nylon choker collar with double spring hook ready.
- g. Have 2 cotton balls ready.
- h. Have a hand held shower set up.
- i. Place dog in tub, and secure with choker strung through soap dish and hooked with double spring hook. This should keep dog's head in center of tub. Note: Some owners simply take the dog into the shower with them.
- j. With hand held shower, soak dog completely, except for the head.
- k. Douse with shampoo, and scrub all over with your fingers or a sponge.
- l. Place a cotton ball in each ear.
- m. Wet head with hand held shower.
- n. Apply tearless shampoo to head, and scrub head.
- o. Rinse with hand held shower until the drain runs clear!
- p. Rinse again!!!!!!! Do not leave one speck of shampoo on dog!
- q. After dog is rinsed, squeeze out as much water from the coat as you can. Remove cotton from ears, then dry with the towels as much as you can. After this, if you have a dog dryer, you can dry the dog with the dryer. Otherwise, you will have to wait for "mother nature" to finish the drying. Do not leave the dog in a cold draft during this drying time.
- r. When the dog is dry, a final touch up with a pin brush or a slicker will put the finishing touches on the dog.

Reason: Pride - pride - pride! The pride you will have in your beautifully groomed, clean sheepdog is all the reason necessary! Make sure you tell your sheepdog how gorgeous he/she looks!

Semi-annually

Shave/Strip:

1. If desired, shave with a number 4 blade all over. This can be done in the spring, and fall of the year. Or,

2. Puppy cut by hand to 1 1/2 or 2 inches.

Reason: Maintenance will be much easier! Possible skin problems or growths can be seen, and treated. On certain Old English Sheepdogs this can be done more often because of skin problems or ease of maintenance.

Note: Some diehards prefer to keep the hair long all year. These people don't have to work or they have no time for any social life at all!

Annually

Veterinarian visit: (You finally get to go - again!)

- a. General physical.
- b. Heartworm check (occult).
- c. Internal parasite check (bring stool sample).
- c. Distemper-hepatitis-leptos pirosis-parainfluenza-parvo virus- vaccination.
- d. Bordetella inoculation.
- e. Rabies vaccination.
- f. One year supply of heartworm pills.

Reason: Most health problems that are caught in the early stages are easily treatable. Many kennels will not accept a dog unless it has had the bordatella immunization 2 weeks before boarding! (Also, giving heartworm year round may also appear to be excessive, but if you have to go to Florida with your dog in the middle of January, do you really want to worry about heartworm?) Below is a list of some area mail order pet supply stores. You may wish to call for their catalogue.

<http://www.petedge.com/>

<http://www.petsmart.com/>

As you can see, owning an Old English Sheepdog is very time consuming, costly, or both. If you have neither the time nor the finances to maintain this dog, the consequences described above are what you can expect to happen. First, the dog will become matted. Followed by feces stuck to the rear end. Followed by smelling like a barn. Followed by removal from your house. Followed by being tied outside. Followed by your feeling guilty that it is not fair to the dog. Followed by your giving the dog up to someone or someplace. Followed by your children crying and not understanding why doggie must go.

**PLEASE THINK TWICE
BEFORE GETTING AN OLD ENGLISH SHEEPDOG!!!**