

Hairy Maclary

We all love our pets dearly, but the same can't be said for the hair they leave behind on the sofa. The first step in this seemingly never-ending battle is to reduce the amount of hair circulating around your home by bathing and brushing your pets regularly. Keep a lint brush handy to pick up any loose hairs on the sofa. If that doesn't work, there are a few things you can try to remove stubborn, hard-to-lift hair.

Run the upholstery attachment on your vacuum cleaner over the affected area; don a pair of dampened rubber gloves and run your hands over the fabric (obviously this wouldn't be suitable for delicate upholstery fabrics such as silks); or use the age-old favourite of wrapping masking tape around your hands, sticky side out, to dab and collect hair.

Damp dog smell is another bugbear for many pet owners. There are some great tips for keeping smells at a minimum, and getting rid of lingering odours in the home. First and foremost you need to make sure you are washing your dog using appropriate products and that you haven't made the common error of over-washing. Dog and human skin has a different pH level so it's important to always use shampoo and conditioners that have been formulated specifically for use on dogs. Washing should be no more frequent than a weekly affair, except in the case of unfortunate accidents. Dogs with sensitive skin may improve if you push washing out to fortnightly with spot cleans and plenty of brushing in between. Keeping hair around the back legs and tail clipped short should help prevent smelly spots around the trouser area. There are also supplements that can have a positive effect on controlling odour issues; have a look at the new range from Rufus & Coco at www.rufusandcoco.com.au

Longhaired dogs need a little more pampering than a shorthaired pooch. Set up a mini salon before you start with small scissors for snarls and knots, a detangling comb (most good pet shops sell bladed versions) and a hair dryer. Drying after washing will go a long way to getting rid of the damp dog smell that can pervade a house.

Dental hygiene is also important. Dogs should have their teeth checked and cleaned by the vet every six months to a year. In between it's a good idea to keep an eye out for any signs of gum disease. Look for any swelling, irregularities, colour change or discharge from the gums or in the oral cavity.

Consider investing in a dog toothbrush, a small toothbrush that fits over the end of your finger, and use it regularly. Chewing is an important part of keeping plaque levels low. Provide plenty of hard dog biscuits, fresh bones, chew ropes and dog chews to help prevent plaque building up. There are some good dental chews available in the pet aisle of most supermarkets or at vets and pet stores.