

Grooming Articles

Nancy's Grooming Page
Nancy Bryson

Grooming a K-9 Senior

As dogs mature into their twilight years our grooming methods and expectations need to change to accommodate their aches and pains. Here are some pointers to keep in mind and try the next time you groom one.

1. Because most K-9 seniors have arthritis and joint pain try to break up their labor time with rest periods through out the process. Rushing them through non-stop is like asking an 80-yr.+ person to stand and cooperate for an hour or more. It's too hard on their body and stresses out their tolerance levels. If you don't break it up they'll remember it the next time and stress out more. Make it relaxed and they are much happier.
2. Place a bath mat covered with a towel to cushion their sore joints from the hard cold crate pan.
3. Using grooming saddles or cable haunch supports aid dogs with eye and joint problems, by stabilizing them so they don't suddenly step off the table causing injury, making your job quicker and safer for the dog.
4. Dogs with vision problems are quicker to fear bite so try to talk calmly and move slowly at all times. This will ensure that they don't move suddenly into the scissors or equipment causing injury.
5. Ask the owners to agree to an easier-to-care-for comfort cut instead of a full-coated style. They can't tolerate all that brushing, bathing and scissoring that goes into that lovely full styled cut they've always had. Try using clip-on combs to reduce length to keep some style while reducing the grooming time.
6. Some dogs coat's thin with age. What was plush and thick with a 5 blade is now clipped with a #2 clip on comb (a #3 andis or #3-3/4 oster blade) or they would look bald.
7. Use F blades instead of skip tooth blades as older dogs skin can become loose and thin, have warts and bumps (land mines) that are unseen and easily nicked with a skip tooth blade.
8. Try clipping groin and feet first, doing nails and brushing out with the dog on it's side. This helps reduce standing time.
9. Always make water available during rest periods and give frequent pee breaks as many seniors have medical problems that cause frequent drinking and thus urination. If you don't have a relief area then use Cider Mill's 'Way to go!' pads in the crate, as they'll keep the dog clean and dry. Frequent pee breaks relieve a lot of comfortable stress especially if before the bath. It's the sound of rubbing water that'll increase their need making it an uncomfortable bathing experience.
10. Be sure to have mild, medicated and oatmeal shampoos and conditioners to handle any skin problems the dog may have until they can get medical attention.
11. Put cotton in the ears to block the canal when force drying to reduce the noise and air flow irritation thus reducing the dog's stress.
12. Only use a muzzle when absolutely necessary and for short periods of time only. Keep an eye on the colour of the tongue as they are prone to be short of breath from congestive heart problems. If they are turning purple, blow hard at their nose and they'll take a breath.

Trying some, or all of these suggestion should make grooming the K-9 senior a more pleasurable experience for both groomer and dog. Once the owners see how much happier their pet is they'll be praising your abilities to all.

Nancy Bryson
15964 Airport Rd, Caledon East, ON, L0N 1E0

Tel: (905) 584-9908

Fax: (905) 584-1684

Email: brysonacademy@sympatico.ca