

## Chapter 8

### GROOMING YOUR GREAT DANE

This is going to be one of the shortest chapters because one of the most appealing traits of the Great Dane is the lack of need for much grooming! There is, of course, a minimum requirement for health and wellbeing. There is also a certain amount of grooming necessary for showing.

It's very important to start these procedures while the puppy is still a youngster, especially toenails and teeth. This will save you much grief (and perhaps money since you won't need the vet or a groomer to help you here) when your dog is an adult.

#### Toe Nails

For pet Danes, nails should be kept short enough so they do not click on the floor when the dog is walking. In the case of show dogs, you want the nail to be very short. About  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{8}$ <sup>ths</sup> of an inch is about right. To keep nails on show dogs this short means beginning while their tiny puppies, still in the whelping box. I clip nails for the first time when the pups are about 2 days old. This continues weekly for life. If you do this, you'll never have to worry about clipping the nails back hard if they get too long.

Keep the nail short with either a nail clipper or a nail grinder, or dremel. Be careful not to cut into the quick of the nail and make it bleed. This is why I prefer a grinder as it will cauterize the nail if it does cut too deep and quicks the dog. If you use cutters, take only small cuts at a time until you see the quick. (Have your vet show this to you as it's difficult to describe in print). Have 'Quik Stop' or something similar on hand for those occasions when you DO quick the dog.

#### Dental Care

Whether or not your puppy will ever have to allow a judge to examine his bite and teeth, he still may have to allow the vet to do this. Again, you must start while the puppy is very young. Get your puppy used to having things in his mouth by gently rubbing his gums and playing with his tongue. Don't allow him to mouth *you* however! After they get used to it, most dogs enjoy having their gums rubbed. You can purchase doggie tooth paste and doggie tooth brushes at the pet store. These are very helpful in preventing the build up of plaque. You should also invest in Nylabone's Hercules dental device. It *really works great* on keeping the teeth plaque free. Unlike the original 'Nylabone', the dogs really *love* these things. Also, raw beef femur bones are wonderful chew toys for youngsters and adults. Just make sure your puppy keeps these outdoors until the worst of the grease and fat are eaten!

It's easy to scale your Dane's teeth should it become necessary. If you keep it up, he'll probably never have to have this done by the vet where they put them under anesthetic.

You can buy a scaler at the pet store or through some of the pet supply catalogs. Or do like old cheapo here does and ask your dentist for his old ones!

I'm most comfortable scaling teeth by having the dog lay down on its side while I lay on my stomach, and scale away at the teeth. All you need to do at first is just lift the lips away from the teeth and scrape away the tartar. Getting to the tartar inside is more difficult and you might need a helper for this. However if you've been consistent with your scaling and giving the dog the dental devices and bones, there should be almost no tartar build up inside the mouth.

## Coat Care

This is one of the best aspects of Great Danes! No long hair to become tangled and matted! Most Danes will shed twice yearly. During this time, the hair will continue to fall for several weeks. You can speed this along by using a rubber curry comb or mitt or a shedding blade. This pulls out all the loose hairs and the dogs *love* it!

It never seems to fail that your Dane's coat will look like it's been attacked by a fleet of moths just prior to a dog show weekend! However, if you can easily pull the hair out in a clump with your fingers, there's a way to get the entire coat out quickly. Be sure you choose a warm day because the dog will be wearing his 'oil' bath for several hours.

Buy some Alpha Keri bath oil and some bubble bath that contains coconut oil. (It's a good idea to do a small patch test on the skin under the belly first to make sure your dog isn't allergic to the ingredients). Attach a hose to a faucet where you can control the temperature, and adjust it to warm. (Danes HATE cold water). (Where I live now I'm lucky enough to have a walk in 'dog shower'. But where I lived before, I outfitted the service porch sink with a faucet that had threads at the end. I could bring a hose in and have it go out through the back door so we had warm water).

Mix the Alpha Keri 1 part Alpha Keri to 2 parts *very warm* water. Wet the dog thoroughly with the warm water from the hose and then 'squeegee' most of the water out of the coat with your hand. You can also buy a sweat scraper made for horses for this task. Then completely saturate the coat with the Alpha Keri mix. Do not dry or squeegee. Leave the dog outside with this on his coat for about 5 or 6 hours.

Mix the bubble bath about 50/50 with water. Sponge generously over the coat and work into a lather. Rinse thoroughly with water from the hose as warm as the dog can stand it. Towel dry (or blow dry if desired. Once the coat is completely dry, take a rubber curry comb and brush out the loose hair. You won't *believe* how much hair comes out. The dog is now 'greaseless' and can be allowed in the house.

Repeat this every day for about 3 days. Most of the old coat should be gone and the new coming in. It really works!

## **Regular Bathing**

I bathe my dogs just prior to a show. If the dog lives in an area where he'll stay clean a couple days, then it's best to bathe 2 days prior to the show. This is because a bath tends to loosen any hair about to shed and it takes a couple days to get all that hair out. In my case I bathe the day before because there are lots of fun holes to dig and dirt to play in here.

If possible, bathe the dog outdoors with warm water using the hose you've attached indoors. An adjustable spray nozzle, that turns the hose on and off is helpful. Wet the coat down thoroughly, then lather with a shampoo. (No need to spend big bucks on the dog shampoos. I usually buy baby shampoo. Dogs appreciate no tears too. Rinse very well making sure you leave no soap residue on the coat. You can either dry the dog with a towel and hand held dryer, or you can just 'let 'em rip' through the back lawn! (Why *do* dogs get so silly when they're wet?) If the weather is bad, of course you'll have to bathe indoors. A bathtub can be a real hassle. I suggest you wait for the return of good weather!

If you aren't showing, it's unlikely you'll need to bathe your Dane more than once every couple months. Danes are very clean. Too frequent bathing can strip the coat of needed oils.

## **Ears**

Cropped or uncropped, ears will need a certain amount of attention. I've always found a small amount of hydrogen peroxide on cotton balls and Q-Tips to be perfect for this task. But you can also buy ear cleaning solution at the pet stores. Dampen (do not saturate) a couple cotton balls with peroxide or ear cleaner and gently swab the entire inside of the ear, reaching into the canal as far as your finger will reach. Then use the Q-Tips dampened with solution to get into the smaller areas on the outer ear that are difficult to reach with the cotton. *DO NOT* poke the Q-Tip into the ear canal itself! If you go too deep, or the dog suddenly moves his head you could do a lot of damage. Leave this task to your vet should it be needed.

## **Grooming for Show**

Other than a bath prior to the show, the bulk of show grooming a Dane concerns the ears and face whiskers. If at all possible, have the breeder, a handler or some other experienced person show you how to do this the first time. Also, please don't wait until the puppy is 6 months old and about to attend his first show to get him used to the sound and feel of having clippers against his face. A 6 month old puppy is a lot harder to restrain than an 8 week old!

First a word about 'whiskers'. The long hairs, or whiskers that extend out from the dogs' muzzle, above the nose, under the jaw, above the eyes and at the moles on the side of the

face are actually sense organs called vibrissae. These sensors help the dog to ‘see’ in the dark and prevent him from hitting his eyes or other tender areas against something. It is also thought that it helps canines to sense their prey when hunting. Because they *are* useful to the dog, some people don’t want to cut them off, even for show. I’m telling you all this so you know you have a choice. There is no AKC rule, nor Great Dane Club of America rule, that requires you do this. The main reason for clipping the whiskers is to clean up the face and give it a more ‘groomed’ look.

Although I love the look of the whiskers, I also love the look of the head without them. I compromise by clipping just prior to shows and allowing them to grow out between shows.

If you do decide to clip, here’s how. Use electric animal clippers with a 40 blade. I use the Oster A5. You must be very careful when you start clipping the whiskers as you don’t want to gouge into the surrounding body hair. Just skim the surface of the body hair as you clean each whisker off. On the lips it helps to stretch them downward while clipping. When working on the under jaw, hold the lips up so you can see what you’re doing. When clipping the feelers above the eye, gently place your other hand over the eye so it’s shut. The dog is not as likely to jump or shy away when it can’t see the clippers so close to it’s eye.

The insides (*INSIDES ONLY*) of cropped ears usually need to be clipped. I clip against the hair from the tip of the ear down toward the base. Carefully clip all the long hairs inside the base of the ear. If the hair is a little longish along the ear edges, clip this too while holding the ear stretched upward with your other hand. Be *very careful* that you don’t cut into the edge of the ear. This is the place where that’s most likely to happen.

Some exhibitors and handlers use clippers to trim any long hair on the flank skin between the body and the stifle. I always seem to do a poor job of this so I leave it alone. With hair shears you might wish to carefully clip any longer hairs that adorn the back of the thigh. I usually don’t do this unless the hair really long.

A quick nail trim, ear cleaning and bath and you’re Dane is ready for the shows.