

GROOMING THE AMERICAN WATER SPANIEL

A certain amount of grooming will be necessary for the health and well-being of your dog, not to mention his or her look. See below for a brief guide on basic grooming using limited equipment.

Basic Tips

- Start your puppy off on a basic grooming using a soft bristle brush and clipping nails with a basic nail clipper.
- When your puppy reaches about 5 months of age you should purchase a firmer brush and a metal comb.
- Prior to grooming, bathe using dog shampoo and towel off your dog, removing most of the moisture. Let him air dry.
- Flyaway hairs will stand out and can be clipped to make a tidy outline.
- Dogs typically enjoy daily brushing.
- Keep grooming sessions short at first. Maintain a positive attitude! You're the boss!
- If your dog doesn't like grooming sessions, don't call him to you for grooming. Go to your dog to begin the grooming. After grooming is completed reward him for his patience.

Field tips

- There are topical products to help ease burr removal. Products include Mane and Tail, Show Sheen, and if not available, a light coating of cooking spray such as PAM may be used. Check with your vet for other product recommendations. Too much oil attracts and holds dirt.
- When you return from the field, take a few minutes to groom your dog and remove any debris or burrs.

What do you need to groom your AWS?



Slicker Brush: Removes dead hair from the undercoat of your AWS, especially after winter months

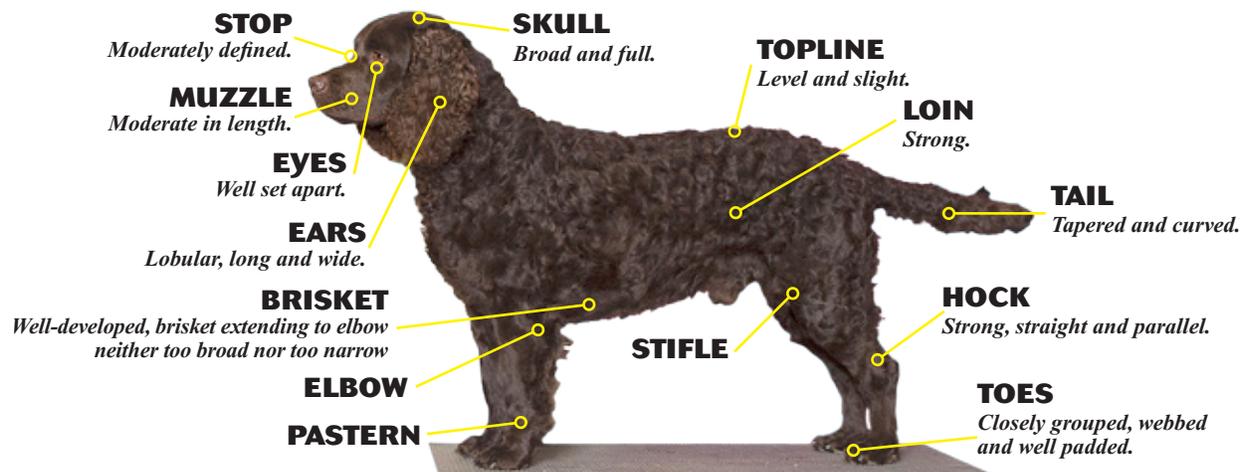
Rubber Tipped Pin Brush: Great for sparser coated dogs and the summer months

Metal Comb (rounded teeth): Helps loosen snarls

Dematting Comb (with blades): A dematting comb can be used to remove more difficult types of burrs

Scissors and/or thinning (blending) shears: Make sure they're sharp and keep them that way by not grooming dirty dogs

Sharp nail clippers or a dremel tool: May be used for clipping or grinding toe nails.



Head and Ears

- Use a thinning shears to smooth out the top of the head and blend into the top of the neck.
- Trim around the ear, under the ear and near the ear canal avoiding any loose hairs falling into the canal. This allows air to circulate and helps avoid infections and collection of debris within the ear.
- Trim the hair on the bottom of the ears with scissors or thinning shears (either straight across or in a lobular shape) to neaten them up.
- Routine monthly ear cleaning, especially after swimming in the water, will help avoid ear infections. Place a small amount of ear cleaning solution into each ear, massage for about a minute and then allow the dog to shake the ears. Next gently clean out the outer ear canal with a large cotton ball.
- Dogs that spend time in the water may need more frequent cleaning of the ear.

Feet, Legs and Body

- Pull the hair up between toes and brush the hair up on the front and rear feet. Then cut the scraggly hair that comes up from between the toes using the scissors or thinning shears.
- On the front feet, scissor the pasterns from the communal pad (large foot pad) to the stopper pad (the knob above the pastern). The hair between the pads on the bottoms of the feet can be trimmed even with the pad.
- Anything you trim off will mean less dirt and debris that will accumulate and track into the house. Do the same with the hind feet.
- On the rear legs, brush the hair on the hock up and out. Remove the excess hair by scissoring or using the thinning shears from the top of the hock to the heel pad.
- Feathering on the front and rear legs can be trimmed to even out the wispy hair or shortened to attract fewer burrs.
- You may want to even out the chest hair by trimming slightly to avoid the chest hair picking up brush in the field.
- The hips, elbows and neck can also get quite thick so use your scissors or thinning shears to even the hair with the rest of the body. Give definition to the neck by thinning excess hair on top and sides.
- Trimming (with scissors or thinning shears) the body can make your dog look neat and clean.
- The tail can be trimmed shorter near the rump. Tidy up the rectal area. Trim the feathering and underneath the tail to a rocker shape. Trim the tip of the tail to blend into the shape of the tail.
- When hair is exposed to a lot of sun, it can appear bleached or “lighter”. You can use a conditioner with sun screen to help prevent this bleaching which can be sprayed on the coat and brushed through with a pin brush.

Toenails

Trimming toenails can be a real challenge. Long, hooked or jagged toenails can be a health hazard for your dog affecting their gait and can cause splayed feet. It is very important to keep your dog's toenails trimmed frequently, approximately twice a month. Closely grouped toes give a dog more spring to his walk and endurance for a day in the field. There is a mental advantage in grooming on a raised surface such as a grooming table, table, tailgate or other raised surfaces. Place the dog on a rubber mat or carpet square to help it maintain footing.

- Start trimming toenails by taking a small tip off each nail.
- If the dog has dewclaws trim them to decrease chance of an injury in the field.
- Avoid cutting into the quick (the living part of the nail that bleeds). If the quick is cut inadvertently, use styptic pencils or powder such as Kwik-stop to stop the bleeding.

Grooming with a Clipper

If you choose to use a clipper on your dog, it is important to remember the higher the number on the blade, the shorter the cut will be. Below is a general guide for basic clipping:

Head

Using a 7 blade, clip from behind the eye sockets to the base of the skull to where it meets the top of the neck. Now continue to groom to the base (top) of the ear, slightly above eye level. Comb the ear feathering out well and trim in a lobular fashion or straight across with scissors or thinning shears.

Neck and Body

Use a 3 blade from the base of the skull around the neck to blend in with the rest of the body; then use a 4 blade on the entire body. This leaves the dog enough hair for upland work. The coat should be left longer for cold water work. Anything lower than a 4 blade is not recommended for the entire body because it could damage the coat.

Legs, Hocks and Feet

Use the instructions above within general grooming tools for the legs, hocks and feet or you can use a clipper blade on the legs and the hocks, if preferred.

Before
Clipper Cut



After
Clipper Cut

