

Rolling and maintaining a Hand strip coat

By Scott Wasserman

What is rolling? Rolling a coat is basically building 3 layers of coat so that you can keep the dog's coat in an ideal state and the optimum length.

Remember the three stages of coat growth from my previous blog? Well here's where it comes into play. The 3 stages of Anagen, when the hair is growing, Catagen, when the hair begins to pull away from the root in the follicle and Telogen, when it's ready to be shed. That is what we are trying to achieve in rolling a coat. The first layer is the base coat which is young hair that has just broke through the skin. The second is the intercoat which is hair that is almost at the ideal length. The outer coat is the longer coat that is trimmed to present the ideal breed profile.

After staging the coat, there is only one layer of coat and we now need to begin rolling. To do this you need to EVENLY remove approximately one third of the coat. That will start a layer of the Anagen stage. About a week or so later, you will do this again. Now we should have the beginning of our 3 layers.

To touch back on technique, hair grows out of the skin at an angle, not straight out of the skin. It's important to pull the hair in the direction you wish it to grow. The ideal body coat should be flat and straight. Breeds like the Airedale, Wire Fox, Welsh terrier etc., you want leg hair to stand out so you will pull straight out from the leg. The same goes for heads like the Westie, Cairn and Australian Terrier. You will pull the head hair in the direction you want it to grow. Make sure you pull the hair straight out without twisting or bending your wrist, you could cut or break the hair.

If you have a lump in the coat instead of it being flat, which is very common in Airedales and Wires, you do not want to strip in the middle of the lump. This will cause a hole in the coat. Use your free hand to press down on the lump. This will lift the ends of the hair that comprises the lump. Pull a few hairs at a time and check to see if the lump is going away. (See Gallery photos)

Before you start trimming, you will want to card out a majority of the undercoat in allow the harsh coat to lay flat. If you have an area that needs fill coat like a dip in the topline or a low tailset, only card out a little bit. The undercoat in these areas will help fill those areas. When bathing and drying the legs or heads on wire coated dogs, do not use a force dryer. They will blow out the undercoat that you need for fullness. Use a hand dryer along with a palm pad or a pin brush. After carding the back coat, you will want to pull a few hairs at a time, not a large clump of hair. If you remove clumps of hair, it will grow back in clumps. To help you get a grip on the hair, you can use a little chalk or ear powder. I tend to use ear powder when I need to take a dog down from a completely blown coat. It had resin

in it which helps you get a grip. If I'm just trimming, I will use a little chalk.

STARTING TO HAND STRIP PUPPIES

As the puppies grow, their coats will start to grow a long wispy outer coat and a thicker base layer. This is when I start the stripping process. I just remove the longer wispy coat a little at a time and try to keep it as positive for the puppy as possible. After pulling, I will card a little once a week just to get the puppy used to being groomed.