

Grooming

COAT

You will need six items to successfully keep your Cavalier's coat in tip-top shape. (1) A fine or medium toothed comb, (2) a flea comb, (3) a flat, natural bristle brush, (4) a slicker brush, (5) scissors, and (6) shampoo and conditioner. Cavaliers do shed, but less than most working breeds who have a tremendous amount of undercoat. To keep tangles and shedding to a minimum, you should brush your Cavalier at least once a week--more often during the spring and fall shedding time. Start with the medium-toothed comb and comb your Cavalier all over. Then do the same with the flea comb--it's very narrow teeth really pull out the extra dead hair. The slicker is good for feathering and the ears. Last I use a bristle brush and go over all the smooth parts of the coat until it shines. This is the part my dogs like best. If you come across a tangle, try to carefully comb it out first, working with your fingers at the same time. If the tangle is too large or too close to the skin, take your scissors and cut the tangle in half--cutting in the direction of the hair. Many times a single cut down the middle of the tangle will be all that is needed and the tangle will comb out easily. Another trick that works is to take the slicker brush and push the pins right through the tangle, then move the slicker in a circular motion for a couple of seconds. Often this will loosen up the tangle enough for it to be worked out. If the tangle is larger and not caused by a burr or hook from the previous meal (those ears get quite long and often end up in the food), it may be a good idea to brush your Cavalier more often. Please note that during shedding season (spring and fall), Cavaliers tend to tangle more. I groom all my Cavaliers once a week, usually the same day every week and very seldom find any tangles at all. If I do I usually look for a cause. If the tangles always end up behind the ears, please have your vet check the ears (see Ear care). If they end up in the chest it may be because your Cavalier drools when anxious or excited and you may need to comb that area more often. If they end up in the abdomen, you may want to trim some of the hair from that area as your Cavalier may be peeing on the hair and tangling it--or it may be licking it to clean it. There is almost always a reason for excessive tangling. For those dogs with a truly fly-away coat that tangles easily--try spraying it once or twice a week with a diluted conditioner. This may be all that is needed to prevent tangles. As far as bathing goes, bath your dog whenever necessary--whenever you feel he/she smells bad or whatever. Bathe as often as you feel necessary. It is hard to dry out the coat if the dog is fed properly. If your Cavalier's coat is dry, you may need to change foods or add a little oil to its food (or keep him/her from sleeping on or in front of the heat register!). As for fleas, you may follow any routine your vet advises, but please remember "less is best". Use the simplest flea preventative possible that does the trick. Remember that heartworm preventative, flea preventatives, tick control, worm medicine--even though deemed safe--are still poisons! If your Cavalier truly needs something that controls all of these, go ahead and use it. But if your Cavalier doesn't---please don't. I feel certain your Cavalier will be healthier for it--however tiny the difference.

FEET/NAILS

You should trim your puppy's nails about twice a month until 1 year of age and about once a month thereafter with a nail cutter. Cavaliers are a very easy breed to trim nails on. They stand quite

still without fear as compared to most other breeds. On the white nails, you can see the pink "quick" that you need to avoid. Just cut the nail back to slightly before the pick quick begins. On black nails, look at the underside of the tip of the nail, you can usually see where the quick starts as the nail doesn't go completely around the quick at the tip unless you have waited much too long. Again cut to slightly above where the quick starts. If for any reason your Cavalier does not want to let you cut its nails; try cutting their nails in an area where you can smear a bit of peanut butter nearby. This should keep your Cavalier busy while you are doing the deed. Although hair on your Cavalier's paws is supposed to be left untrimmed, you are supposed to trim the hair between the pads on the bottom of the feet. Twice a year is probably plenty. If you are not going to show your Cavalier, go ahead and keep the rest of the hair on the foot quite short also. When kept long they have a tendency to "collect" snow balls, burrs, mud, etc.!

EARS

Breeds with long, floppy ears do have a tendency to develop ear infections. Will your Cavalier be prone? It is hard to say for sure. Few puppies have problems--usually because the ear "leather" (the actual cartilage of the ear) tends to be thinner, and because the feathering/hair is short and thin. As the puppy matures, its hair gets longer, and the actual ear cartilage thickens somewhat. Some adults still have fairly thin leathers, carry their ears high, and do not have profuse feathering. These Cavaliers rarely have ear problems no matter how little attention you pay to their ears. Others seem to carry their ears lower, have profuse feathering, and very thick ear cartilage--these are the ones you have to be careful with. Every time you groom your Cavalier look carefully inside the ears. If you see some dirt/ear wax, clean the ear lightly with the cleaner I tell you about below. If the ears always appear clean--do NOT clean them! I have several dogs whose ears have never been cleaned--not even once! Sometimes cleaning them will leave a bit of moisture in them setting them up for production of yeast so it is best to leave them alone unless they get dirty.

The best ear medicine/cleaner I have seen to date follows. In 26 years I've found nothing--not even the best medicine from my vet--that works nearly as well. It is easy and inexpensive to make enough of this solution to last a lifetime. Buy the following items:

One (1) sixteen ounce bottle of isopropyl alcohol
One (1) small bottle of Boric Acid Powder
One (1) small bottle of Genetian Violet Solution 1% which can be ordered at almost any pharmacy for only \$3 or \$4

Put 4 tablespoons of the Boric Acid Powder directly into the bottle of Alcohol. Put 16 drops of the Gention Violet Solution 1% also into the bottle.

Shake VERY well before every single use because the Boric Acid tends to settle.

If your Cavalier develops an ear infection squirt a small amount of this solution into each ear and massage it well for 10 seconds, then leave it. Do this twice a day for 2 days. After that do it once a day

and clean the ears before putting the solution in, then leave it in. Do this for 5 more days--the infection should be gone.

TEETH

Toy breeds in general, seem to be prone to excess buildup of plaque which leads to tooth decay. I suggest teaching your puppy to tolerate a tooth brush and at about 1 year of age begin brushing once a month or more (look at the teeth and judge for yourself how often). As the dog ages you are likely to need to brush more often, eventually doing it every day if necessary. Keeping the teeth clean is very important to prevent gum disease and eventual loss of teeth. Letting your dog chew on raw marrow bones daily will help a lot as well.

ANAL SACS

Leave them alone; don't let your vet touch them in a puppy less than one year of age--unless they are truly uncomfortable. Nearly ALL anal sac problems are caused by vets expressing them too often starting at a young age. Once they start, they can never stop. Dogs in the wild do not need their anal sacs expressed, why should yours? Your puppy may scoot occasionally. It could be because of filled anal sacs, but it could also be because they have an itch or are trying to put their scent on the floor (after all that is what they are for!). Anal sacs can also develop problems whenever a dog has loose stools, so try to avoid this. If your puppy has loose stools/diarrhea, look for a cause. The wrong food is often the culprit--so try changing foods. Look at the ingredients--if the food has chicken, try one with lamb. See if a different food will cause the stool to harden up. Check for worms--they can cause occasional diarrhea as well. Unfortunately vaccinations often cause loose stools as well which is why so many puppies end up having their anal sacs expressed so often and end up with a problem. I suggest attempting to leave them alone while they are getting their vaccinations unless the puppy gets truly uncomfortable. If you can make it through the first 6 months without the vet expressing the anal sacs, you will be well on your way to having a dog that may only rarely or never need them expressed. Dogs fed a whole foods diet have VERY tiny, hard poops that naturally express the dog's anal sacs. I have only done one or two of my dogs ever--always after a bout of diarrhea. The rest of them have never been done--not even once.