

A question of trimming and grooming the brushed show Puli was asked this month of our grooming panel, Ann Bowley, Susan Maass and Nancy McGarvey. Please send future questions to PN Editor. Anonymity guaranteed.

*Now that most Pulis are shown corded, it's difficult to obtain any information on shaping, trimming and grooming a brushed Puli. Knowing what's involved may sway my decision whether to show corded or brushed.*

AB: First off, a brushed out Puli must be groomed every week as the natural tendency of the coat is to matt. Never let it get ahead of you as you'll encounter a mountain of mats which won't brush out as easily as it'll rip out. And never trim a dirty Puli.

Brushing out a Puli can be approached much in the same way as a Poodle or an OES. Lay the dog on his side on a grooming table and create sections to work on. Brush in layers in each section and brush away from the dog. When each layer is done, spray the coat with water or conditioner diluted with water in a spray bottle. This is particularly important with Pulis with wiry coats. Spraying with conditioner also helps to prevent coat breakage.

The main goal in shaping a Puli is to create the outline of a corded Puli. The dog must have a square look. Trim him standing in a natural stance and leave as much coat length as possible. Brush the head coat forward and slightly off to the side and create a rounded shape. Leave length to the bottom jaw and blend it into the chest. If ear coat is very long, shape it and blend into head. It's important to show the length of neck, otherwise your Puli may look more like a chow. Thinning the coat with thinning shears may be necessary, particularly at the tail base and neck. Give length to the legs and give them a "tubular" look; trim the coat to the toenails but don't allow the

nails to show. Don't trim the feet too "tight."

In the rear, trim around the anus area and trim the rear area with thinning shears so it'll blend in with the tail. Thin the area above the hock joint with thinning shears to show off the stifle and trim the rear feet to shorten the hock joint.

I used to create a part down the back of the dog so that the coat would lay on both sides, but not like a Lhasa Apso. Then I would toss a few loose hairs over the part and when the tail came over the back it created a squarer, more Puli like look. I sprayed the coat with water or a diluted conditioner. The judge wants to see that the coat has the ability to cord and he'll see that in the "crimpy" texture of the coat near the skin.

SM: Two factors enter into how you are going to trim this brushed Puli: how old is her and do you plan on keeping him in a brushed coat or do you plan on letting him cord after he gets through his puppy coat stage (around 18 months)?

Let's start with the young puppy that you intend on brushing forever (until you can't see the light of day for all the wool he's going to have). In most respects you would trim in very similar to a corded coat in that you want the feet trimmed round right up to his toenails, all the way around the foot, so that hair is not dragging off the back of his front feet. On the hocks, you would scissor for a nice perpendicular line to the ground, rear view and side view. I would snip off the frizzies from toes to the nose, just as I would a corded Puli, along with giving the head a rounded "chrysanthemum" look. Some people have shown brushed Pulis with a part down the back so they have an outline, but I think they look a bit Lhasa-like and with the young brushed Puli, you will not be able to maintain a parted coat. One shake from puppy and there goes the

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part. Instead, try brushing the coat forward from the tail, not as extreme as you would for a poodle, but enough so that your brushed fuzz-ball looks as square as possible. You can also trim the coat around the base of the tail, towards the ribs, ever so slightly, so that as the dog moves, some of that coat will stay where you want it to. Years ago we used to use thinning scissors around the neck and behind the ears to control the coat around the neck. I wouldn't recommend doing that if you plan to cord later. Also remember that any thinning you do will make the coat look as though it is not cordable, something the judges are going to be looking for.

If you have, in fact, succeeded in keeping your Puli brushed and he is, say, three years old now, remember that he will never have coat that reaches the ground like a corded Puli, and heaven forbid that it would. Yorkies, Maltese and Lhasas can grow coat to the ground, but they have entirely different coat textures than what is proper for a Puli. Remember, the great Harvey Wallbanger, shown brushed through his entire career, would have corded in a minute, but his beautiful coat never touched the floor. The reason I mention this is that you will need to do some trimming for this huge coat that does not touch the floor. The coat will be extremely dense on the elbows. Thin that, so as he moves he won't

look out at the elbows. You will need to trim the front legs from the back of the foot up to the coat that reaches from the chest, so that he does not look "down on pasterns." And do not forget that "less is more;" tidy up any loose fluffy ends and you will make the coat look more dense. A brushed Puli will end up having long silky coat n the ends of his ears. Thin it and shorten it or his head will look silly.

If you have chosen to show your Puli brushed, you have three strikes against you and the Puli, and I say this not because judges are prejudicial but because it is very difficult to make a brushed Puli look "typey." The cords give a Puli a very distinct appearance and a very distinct outline. When you brush, you are requiring of the judge to imagine or "picture" what your brushed Puli would look like corded. It can be done but it is a lot of work! Good luck.

NM: We will go on the assumption that the coat has not been allowed to clump and cord and that someone has changed their mind and decided to show the Puli brushed and proceeded to strip the neck out of the coat in the de-matting process and is now left with one sore, moth-eaten Puli. With this scenario, it is better to cut down and start afresh. The Puli we are going to talk about has had it's coat brushed and bathed and maintained this way, knowing that this Puli was to be shown brushed.

The initial brushing of a young Puli is easy, it is when they start to change coat that you really wonder if "brus-

hed" was a good idea. Hang in there; once the coat changes, a bath and brush every ten days will maintain the coat nicely. Except show days and coat changing time, I try never to brush a coat that isn't freshly washed. Always use a lot of water when brushing the dry coat.

Now to trimming: by 10 months the untrimmed Puli is beginning to look like a bush baby. They have no shape or outline. The Puli is an outline breed. So with the brushed dog you have got to give them an outline. Use single edge 44 teeth thinning shears and/or a sharp straight edge. I start by taking off as much hair front and rear. I rarely have more than an inch of hair wither place. I use a straight edge scissor but most people will be more comfortable with the thinning shears. They are really interchangeable, straight being faster but less forgiving. Now blend the front into shoulders and sides. The shoulders and sides should carry more hair. The tummy should be kept short approximately 1-2 inches to give the Puli legs. As you come up the neck, you want to blend the head into the neck. On the head with the brushed dog, you want the hair as long as possible before it starts to part. This length will vary with the different coats. You will be able to tell. Blend the ears into the head coat. DO NOT cut cross hair on ears. Cut length wise to blend. The topline can be parted or brushed full (like a Bichon). I prefer the second as I find it easier to blend the complete dog in. The parted coat is hard to keep that way while showing but it can serve to

accentuate the good topline if the part can be maintained.

Now down to the legs. Think round columns. Trim both outside and inside to give that round look. Let the Puli stand naturally and trim the legs the way they should look, not as he stands. Hopefully this will almost be the same. This will visually trim out your Puli's faults and accent his virtues. When you have done your best, stand back and look to see if anything is sticking out; or is out of place. If there is, trim it. Go slowly and take your time. Try doing the off side (non-show side) first, then put Puli on the ground and let him run and romp. Things sticking out? Trim it. Try not to get the scissored look of a Poodle or Bichon but strive for a look that appears to grow that way. The old brushed coats are gone. For the most part, they would have never been pretty corded coats. We have stabilized our coats and there are very few real "open" coats any more, so you have to adjust your trimming accordingly. A good cordable Puli coat is very like a poodle coat that can also cord. Keep that in mind.

If you are going to brush, do it right; that means no mats. I am very glad that this country still gives us the choice in how we want to present the Puli. There are pro and cons to consider to both types of coats.