

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST

By Peg Stiff, PCA Historian

This is the second installment of some of the more pertinent points of the book entitled ABOUT THE HAIR CARE OF OUR CORDED BREEDS by Walter Langerbein, as translated by Stewart Wells.

At the end of the first installment, we had arrived at that happy occasion when the separating was advanced to the place where skin was visible around each clump of hair. Mr. L. goes on to state that because the coat continues to grow, we must continually tear it apart down to the skin. This becomes much easier as the dog grows older, partly because his hair grows lighter. The Puzsta coat can generally be said to be finished developing when the puli is 3 to 4 years old. To care for the skin under this coat, he advocates massaging the skin with the finger tips and lifting the cords, accompanying this process with "pleasant talking" so that it is a happy experience for the dog.

However, despite the coat's being "finished," the undercoat re-mats with even light pressure and/or a degree of moisture. This is particularly noted around and under the ears, muzzle, eye corners, tail and under parts of the legs. The ears constitute a particular problem because mats cut off air circulation and make the puli susceptible to ear problems, as many of us know about first hand. Mr. L. suggests pulling out the little hairs inside the ear

with one's fingers (I worry about infection). In addition, one must work continuously to keep the outside of the ear flaps from becoming a solid plate mat, causing the ear to hang heavily and cut off air. The mats on the inside of the ear flaps are less of a problem but must be attended to also. Ear mat separation must be accomplished very carefully as the ears are supersensitive and bleed easily. The ear flaps must be "light" so they will "fly" when the dog moves - thus enabling air to circulate. The hair under the ear flaps mats very readily and must be constantly worked on so it is not so thick that air cannot get into the ears.

Mr. L. then talks of the "intensive care" necessary around the muzzle and under the eyes. Food often gets into the muzzle cords and matter is formed by the tear glands. He states that one should use a narrow comb as long as possible in these places. If they are neglected, so that separation is difficult, one must scissor a little slit into the matting, always in the direction of the hair or cord ends, so that one can put one's fingers in the slit and tear it to the tip ends. This technique also applies to other stubborn matting areas.

Now for the tail. It is surrounded by hair and felted coat so that it looks like a "found staff" with "insufficient" cords and with hair clumps "hanging off" "here and there." The matting here is very "obstinate" (that's the word, all right) and "many times (can be) barely torn (apart) satisfactorily." One must patiently pick around all sides and use great care, as tails are especially sensitive. He does not think that it is a good idea to use the scissors to slit the mats on the tail. He states that the goal is to make the tail "Hairy."

As regards the pads on the feet, Mr. L. recommends cutting the hair between the pads so that the dog does not have felt pads eventually that he has to walk on. Then he shortens the

hair around the pads themselves and also shortens the hair that hangs over the soles of the feet. He does not cut the hair higher up on the foot, or at most, shortens it, thus preserving the desired shape of the legs and paws. In the winter time, he lubricates the pads with Vaseline to keep the pads supple.

And finally when the finished cords start dragging on the ground, one should set the dog up on a table and shorten the cords with scissors. One cuts the cords to the same length being careful not to have any holes in the hanging parts. If this shortening is done prior to a show, it should be done 6 weeks ahead so that the blunt ends can grow "pleasing" again.

The next installment will deal with bathing and then with the different kinds of cords and the implications of these in breeding.

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