

Grooming Guidelines: Welfare Grooming

What is welfare grooming?

Welfare grooming refers to grooming that is required by some domestic pets due to their coat or condition. Welfare grooming differs from grooming that is done for cosmetic purposes.

Welfare grooming is a necessity for some breeds of dog. Failure to groom these dogs can result in serious welfare problems such as severe and painful matting, skin issues, ear infections, body-temperature regulation and other health problems.

Welfare grooming must be performed regularly to prevent these problems occurring. Therefore, some pets are at risk if they do not see a professional groomer on a regular basis.

Welfare grooming as described in the guidelines below, can be assessed by an animal groomer and does not require a separate veterinary assessment or referral letter prior to grooming.

What pets require welfare grooming?

There are four categories of pet that require welfare grooming:

1. Specific dog breeds with double coats.
2. Dogs that require welfare grooming due to their current condition.
3. Cats with long coats who require regular grooming.
4. Cats that require welfare grooming due to their current condition.

Which dogs need welfare grooming based on breed?

Specific dog breeds require regular grooming for welfare reasons due to their coat. It is considered best practice that these pets would see a groomer at four-eight week intervals (dependent on coat type and management at home). This is considered preventative care to avoid the potential problems listed below, and it would be recommended that these intervals are maintained to keep the animals healthy and happy before their coat is causing physical pain.

If the following breeds have not been groomed in the past eight weeks animal welfare issues will develop, therefore it is recommended that the following breeds are eligible for welfare grooming.

- Curly coat breeds
 - This category includes breeds such as Poodles, Bedlington Terriers and Kerry Blue Terriers. These breeds don't shed hair but their fur mats easily and they require regular welfare grooming for this reason.
- Combination coat breeds.
 - This category includes breeds with long and silky coats, such as Maltese Terriers, Lhasa Apsos, Shih Tzus, Silky Terriers, Golden Retrievers, Border Collies, King Charles Cavaliers etc. They don't grow an undercoat but their long, silky coats require regular grooming for welfare reasons.
- Long and double coated breeds (heavy coat)

- Examples of breeds with long, coarse coats include Samoyeds, Bernese Mountain Dogs, Chow Chows, long-hair Shepherds, Shetland Sheepdogs, Rough Collies. They have a thin, light undercoat and require regular grooming for welfare reasons.
- Short double coat breeds (double coat)
 - This category includes breeds with a dense undercoat and short outer coat. Consider German Shepherds, Huskies, Corgis, and Shiba Inus. Their dense undercoat means clipping is not beneficial to them, but they must have the undercoat removed for welfare reasons.

If the dog is a cross, or mix, of any of these breeds (and any other breed), who meets the coat descriptions listed above, they will meet the requirements for a welfare groom.

Which dogs need welfare grooming based on current condition?

Some dogs - regardless of breed - require welfare grooming due to their current condition. These include:

- Where the dog is presently living with significant matting that limits their mobility due to matts pulling on the skin.
- Where a dog has excess matting around the sanitary areas that may cause the animal to be unable to properly toilet - these matts must be removed as they pose a risk of infection in this area.
- Where a dog has matting around the ears, eyes and paws that can cause infections due to dirt build up - such matting can also hide more serious issues such as a grass seed imbedded in the skin or fungal infections.
- Where a dog has overgrown nails - this may mean the nails push back into the nail bed and makes walking extremely uncomfortable. Nails tend to curl around and then push back into the skin, creating open wounds. This is common for dew claws, and is not only painful to correct, but can put the pet at risk of infection, and wounds requiring further treatment from a veterinarian. Nails must be clipped regularly to avoid these complications.

Which cats need welfare grooming?

While less common than dogs, there are situations where a cat would require professional grooming services on a regular basis. Cats with medium-long, dense coats prone to matting may not be able to groom themselves for several reasons:

- Due to their age or physical health, they cannot reach all areas to groom themselves.
- Their coat is too dense and thick for them to sufficiently groom themselves.
- They have health issues preventing them from grooming themselves.
- They have skin and coat issues requiring regular attention from a grooming professional.
- Where the fur has matted around the eyes, ears, and sanitary areas.

When is grooming *not* a welfare concern?

Welfare grooming only applies to the breeds and scenarios outlined above. Generally, grooming is not required for welfare reasons for:

- Short and smooth coated dogs that require significantly less grooming and can usually be done in the home.** Examples of these breeds include Labradors, Pugs, French Bulldogs,

Basenjis, Doberman Pinschers and Greyhounds. While these breeds do require bathing and brushing, during lockdown restrictions this can usually be done in the home by the owner. For these pets, we would offer nail-clipping only.

- **Grooming for aesthetic reasons.** Grooming in the pet sector is largely completed for the comfort of the pet, however, there are always examples of grooming for aesthetic reasons. Many clients have mixed breed, or “scruffy” breeds such as Wire-Haired Jack Russell Terriers, Border Terriers or Wolfhounds whom they have clipped off regularly to maintain their coats. These pets would not be considered candidates for welfare grooming, as their scruffy coats can be managed by combing and brushing in the home. To put it simply, “scruffy” is not “matted”.
- **Short haired cats** who can be bathed and cared for in the home.

Pet owners presenting with animals who do not meet the guidelines for welfare grooming will not be able to access the service.

What will grooming salons need to comply with, in order to operate?

As registered businesses providing a welfare and husbandry service for animals, grooming salons must operate within the current Victorian Government guidelines, including wearing a fitted face mask, having a COVID-Safe plan in place and QR code check-ins available. The full government guidelines can be found [here](#).

Animal groomers should only facilitate welfare grooming based on the guidelines above, while adhering to a strict COVID-Safe plan, including contactless drop off & collection, and staying within 5km of your home.

Tips for contactless drop off and collection for grooming:

Animal groomers should create a safe space designated for drop off and collection of animals where social distancing can be maintained and cleaning can be facilitated between each client. These spaces can be:

- An air-lock between doors in the salon meaning the animal is safely placed in the space, the owner leaves through one door and the groomer collects the animal through another door, taking them through to the salon.
- A large crate inside the entry of the salon. Again, clients can place their pet into the crate, move a safe distance away, and the groomer can retrieve the animal for their groom.
- A tether point at the reception desk. The groomer remains behind the desk while the owner attaches their dog to the tether point, the owner is able to move 1.5m away, and the groomer can move around the desk to take the dog through to the salon.

By using this method, social distancing is maintained and regular cleaning of high-traffic areas is maintained.

Adhering to the 5km rule:

As part of the booking process, salon workers should be asking clients to ensure they are not travelling outside of their 5km, and if they are, to first check there is not another grooming salon within their 5km. Per government guidelines, they must go to the salon closest to their primary place of residence.



Evidential Requirements:

Records for each groom should be kept on file with the grooming salon that reflect the need for the welfare groom that day. This should include:

- Dog or cat breed(s)
- Type of groom (i.e. all over clip, sanitary clip, nails only)
- Approximate date of last groom.
- Photos of the dog before and after the groom (where possible).