

Scottie Terriers 08/15

To clean or not to clean ... is that the question?

Sometimes it can get frustrating showing our Scotties. One of the most difficult things we have in our sport is the fact that amateurs compete with professionals on an equal basis. How does the owner handler with a single dog compete with someone who does this for their living who probably attends 130 + shows a year and has multiple animals to work on to fine tune their skills? Well sometimes maybe they can't however they can make sure they bring a well presented specimen into the ring that is trained and clean.

Yes I said clean (in case you think this is just for show dogs... look again it actually can apply to our wonderful house pets as well - remember in theory the only difference between a show dog and a pet is simply one goes to shows). Are you surprised I said clean? Let me tell you as an owner, breeder, former professional handler and now judge one of the most offensive things I see is a dirty smelly dog. There just is no reason for it. I don't care what you have been told about not washing a terrier it just simply isn't true. Clean healthy hair will always grow better than dirty, greasy hair. What does it take, not much and the simple attention to presenting an animal in the ring or even to house guests that is clean and smells good so that you don't mind touching them or letting them sit in your lap is huge.

Most judges are offended when they go to examine a dog and teeth are dirty, hair feels greasy and when they take their hands away they smell. It is not just expected from people who are professionals but it is the least that an owner can make sure to do. Even if you cannot groom at a high level you can present a clean and well cared for dog. You will always get brownie points for that. Does it mean you will win? Well that depends on the quality of the dog but it certainly is much easier to overlook lack of grooming expertise if you at least see that the exhibitor cared enough to make sure their dog is clean.

Start with the mouth and teeth. Get your vet to show you how to use a tooth scaler. It's not hard and when used correctly is very good for your dog's long term health. Use a brush with a little baking soda and peroxide mix once done, it will help whiten the teeth and make the mouth smell better.

Use a good cleansing shampoo. There are many out there find one that you like. You don't need to wash the full body every time. However every couple of months, depending on how dirty your dog gets or how much the coat is exposed to products, is not a bad idea. Much can build up in the hair even from just playing in the yard. A bath done correctly will not affect the coat. Do you do that the night before the show? NO do it at the beginning of the week so the coat can settle back down. Use a hand drier on low heat and high power with a pin brush to set the coat back down in the direction it is intended to lay. As for the legs, belly, beard and eyebrows they can be washed up to once a week for sure. Give them a good scrubbing and again blow out in the direction you wish the hair to lay. At this point I do recommend a light conditioner that is rinsed out if you are dealing very delicate or brittle furnishings. I am against applying grease such as cholesterol or other oils to clean hair. All it does is attract dirt and then acts like sandpaper breaking the furnishing we work so hard to develop and preserve. This goes for pets as well. Why not have clean tangle free furnishings? Why risk having them shaved off by your groomer because they got to snarly.

One last thing, be restrained in your application of product at the show. No one likes to have their hand stick to hair when they are examining a dog. Beards and eyebrows should never crunch. Judges don't like to have to wash their hands because they got dirty from simply examining a dog. Ultimately it is bad for the dogs coat and will contribute to breakage and poor condition.

So whether at the show or at home, your Scotties should be able to jump in someone's lap and not have the person want remove them because of fear of staining their clothes or making them smell so bad they want to go and wash. The judges will definitely thank you, I can assure you of that.