

# PET HINTS

2011

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## Grooming your cat

Although cats are relatively easy care companions, some breeds and coat types require regular care and unless owners are willing to devote the time to grooming a long coated cat, they are advised to choose a cat with a shorter and easier care coat.

A cat's coat is comprised of three types of hair: the long, stiff "guard" hairs which form the outermost layer of the coat and keep the cat warm and dry, "awn" hairs which have stiff pointed tips, and, "down" hairs which are shorter and softer.

Shorthaired cats such as the Siamese, Oriental, Korat and Burmese have single coats and require a minimum of grooming. The Russian Blue, Abyssinian, British Shorthair and Domestic Shorthair (moggie) are among those which have a "double" coat and are best given a weekly brush to remove shedding hair. The Rex breeds, Cornish and Devon, have no guard hairs and a very short and curly or wavy coat which means minimal shedding but require the cats to be protected from the elements by leading an indoor life.

Longhaired cats come in a variety of coat lengths. The most profuse coat belongs to Persian and Chinchilla cats which require daily grooming. Other longhairs, such as the Birman, Somali and Ragdoll have less profuse coats and a weekly grooming will keep them in good condition.

Longhaired cats which do not receive sufficient grooming can quickly become matted. Unless the shedding hairs are removed by regular grooming, they become trapped in the guard hairs and form solid matts. In the worst cases of coat neglect, the cat may become one solid matt and the only way to fix this is to have a professional groomer shave the coat. Owners should never attempt to remove matts with scissors as it is very easy to cut the skin.

All coat types will shed some hair as they renew dead coat or shed undercoat with the changing seasons. Some cats which are enthusiastic self groomers will ingest a great deal of hair, which lodges in the cat's stomach causing "fur balls". These are very uncomfortable for the cat, cause vomiting, and in some cases may be life threatening so regular brushing is a must.

During warmer weather it will be necessary to take preventative measures for flea control. Spot on treatments are very effective and your local veterinarian or pet store will be able to offer advice on a flea control program.