



The Truth About Shavedowns and Shedding Less

Some people think that shaving their dogs down will make their dog more comfortable in the summer. In most breeds, however, this is not the case.

A well-maintained coat will do more to protect your dog, acting as insulation from the sun's rays and heat, protecting from bug bites, and more. Your dog will lie there, panting as much or more, without that coat. It will be more vulnerable to heat stroke. This is especially true for double-coated breeds such as Golden Retrievers, Collies, and Huskies. Going into the summer months, getting **excess undercoat** removed will do more to increase your dog's comfort than a shavedown.

Consider this. A dog's hair follicle contains numerous hairs, anywhere from 7 to 25 hairs at one time. (Compared to human hair, one hair per follicle!) Is it any wonder he sheds so much? Each canine hair follicle contains 1 to 3 slow-growing "guard hairs" -- the beautiful, colorful outer coat. The balance of the hairs in the follicle are undercoat hairs, often in a perpetual cycle of shedding out. Some breeds especially "blow coat" twice a year. As the seasons change and daylight hours change, the follicles "clean house" and start a new growth cycle.

When we do a "ShedLess Treatment" we apply more water, shampoo, conditioner, scrubbing, brushing, and air volume to remove those extra undercoat hairs. This works best done on a 4-5 week schedule. Most of the excess hairs can be made to come out in the tub and drying room, giving your couch and carpet a break.

Stop and think a minute. If your groomer shaves this dog instead of flushing out the excess undercoat, will your dog still shed? YES!!! It will shed smaller pieces of hair, but it will still be shedding—and the small pieces of hair will be sharper and pricklier and harder to get out of your clothes and carpet.

You should also know that some dogs never grow back their original coats. This can be due to genetics and diet, too close of a shave, thyroid conditions, and other unknown reasons. Groomers and vets only started realizing this in the last several years, but it makes sense. You have 25 hairs growing out of that follicle. You shave it off at the skin. How are the hairs going to get cycled out, when they were depending on friction, brushing, and other external factors to get out? Some may manage to shed out but often the follicles become blocked. The slower-growing guard hairs get stuck in the jam between the profuse undercoat hairs trying to get out.

This is why you often see a thinning of the guard hairs and frizzy, fuzzy coats taking over on dogs that were once beautiful. And often, once a dog has been shaved, the undercoat will always be difficult to control even if the outer hair does grow back. It is almost as if it grows into a solid mat straight out of the hair follicles, forcing you to spend more time grooming, pay for more dematting, or keep shaving it off. It can be a real heartbreak! This is also why you often see sebaceous cysts, bumps and skin problems on Cocker and Schnauzers. These breeds are commonly shaved very close, although they were originally "hand-stripped and carded." Even if your pet is clipped, carding can improve the skin and coat. It is a technique that draws out the loose hairs from the follicles, and should be done before bathing for best results.