

Myth Buster – Florence Chong

Welcome back, dear readers! If you have been following my column in Rockaway Time, you know we are all about providing science and the truth about caring for our pets. Today, we're going to arm you with facts from friction and debunking those pesky myths that may spark some engaging conversations.

Complaint – “Pluck all the hair out of the dog’s ear, it is causing my dog’s ear infections.:

Fact – Here is our take on the ear question: To pluck or not to pluck?” While overgrown hair can trap moisture and bacteria, hair in the ear creates a barrier against dirt and debris. A balance approach to the question is to remove enough hair to let the ear breathe and leave some for protection.

Complaint – “I brush my doodle everyday but my groomer still says my dog’s hair is matted.”

Fact – Brushing a lone isn’t enough, especially if you like the fluffy doodle look. Combing after brushing is the secret. A comb helps you check that you are brushing all the way down to the skin. If you can’t comb through the hair, you need to brush the hair closer to the skin but without irritating the skin (brush burns).

Complaint – “My pet hates being groomed; I don’t want to put him through it again so soon.”

Fact – It is a common belief among pet owners that their pets simply detest grooming session. Dogs love routine. Frequent visits help alleviate unknown fears and maximize skin health. Proper and ethical handling leads to a calm and happy pet. If your dog is terrified of going to the groomer, you should find out why. So, what can you do? Start by making grooming a positive experience. Gradually introduce your pet to grooming tools and associate them with treats and praise. Short gentle sessions can help your pet learn to enjoy grooming.

Myth – “My breeder told us that we should only bath my dog once a year.”

Fact – Bathing your dog regularly is crucial for maintaining their overall health and hygiene. Dogs accumulate dirt, allergens, and bacteria on their skin and coat during their daily activities, which can lead to skin irritations, infections, and unpleasant odors if left unaddressed. Regular

baths help remove these harmful elements, keeping their skin clean and their coat shiny. Moreover, bathing allows you to check for any abnormalities, such as rashes or lumps, that might need veterinary attention. The frequency of baths should be tailored to your dog's breed, coat type, and lifestyle, but neglecting this essential aspect of grooming can have long-term repercussions on both their health and comfort.

Complaint – Shave him down. He has dry skin

Fact – Shaving will continue the cycle of dry skin. It takes protection from the skin making it more vulnerable for irritation and infection. We covered skin and coat health and care widely in our prior columns. Removing the skin protective hair, exposing the skin to undesirable exterior elements, drying the skin of its natural oils and making the skin vulnerable to infections.

Complaint – My pet has allergies. He scratches all the time, just shave him.

Fact – Shaving clogs pores and leaves skin exposed to pollutants and toxins in the environment intensifies itching and irritation. As discussed above, your pet's hair is the first line of protection for the skin from pollutants and toxins.

Complaint – I have allergies

Fact – Length of pet hair will not reduce owner allergies. Regular and proper cleansing of the skin will.

Complaint – I can't handle all the shedding, just shave the hair off.

Fact – The dog hair growth is cyclical, the hair cycle from growth to shedding vary significantly from dog's breed, age, health and genetics. Long hair dogs like the Afghan hound may have longer growth phase while the short hair breeds have a shorter one. Shaving means shorter, pin like hairs everywhere as well as the danger of exposing the skin to bacteria and pollutants as well as harmful UV rays. In most cases, shaving makes the problem worse and if the coat is damaged it could create a lifetime issue versus a seasonal one.

Complaint – It's too hot for my dog to have hair.

Fact – This is probably the biggest belief among dog owners. Hair is a sun and wind barrier. The hair will rise to ventilate the dog when overheated. The function of the arrector pili is to raise and lower the hair to create dead space which is how the pet controls its temperature. If you shave the pet now loses the length of the hair which directly affects the pet's ability to adequately control its temperature. It may even affect the pet's ability to regulate its temperature in a stress situation (surgery, hit by car, or severe temperature change) that could cost the animal its life.

Complaint – It grows too fast.

Fact – Shaving will not slow growth, it will only compound skin irritation. It can damage the hair which may cause a permanent coat change.