

Grooming the Rough Collie by Suzie Nealon

A general guide to caring, maintaining and preparing your Rough Collie for the show ring.

The Coat

The Rough Collie has a beautiful double coat. It tends to be very dense, with the outer coat being straight and harsh to the touch and the undercoat soft, furry and quite thick that tends to almost hide the skin when you part the hair. As they are a double coated breed, they do shed all year around. They do tend to blow their coats with bitches blowing their coat shortly after they have a heat cycle or after having a litter of pups.

This breed is not to be trimmed. As a groomer I get asked many times when I get a rough collie in for grooming, can you trim him back? The answer to this is no. The double coat acts as insulation in the winter months keeping them warm and cool in the summer months. So, whether it be that the dog is for showing or in a pet home, the only parts that should be trimmed are the paws, hocks and ear area.

Although the Rough Collie does have a big coat, it can be maintained when it is brushed regularly. As they are a pastoral breed, they do enjoy being quite active and if your collies are anything like my collies here, they do love a run through muck! By brushing them once a week and removing any dirt, that keeps the coat more manageable until they get a full groom. Over brushing or not using the right brushes could damage or break the coat.

Start introducing puppies to grooming at a young age. This helps them get used to the process, the different sounds and helps builds confidence and friendship.

Bathing the Collie

Rough Collie's don't require many baths throughout the year. For a show collie we want them to look their best for the judges in the ring, but outside of competition it should be avoided until necessary.

Getting started - I would always use a shampoo which helps enhance the natural colour of the coat. For example, on a sable and white collie, I would advise using whitening shampoo on the white areas usually the chest, neck and paws. A copper toned shampoo would then be used on the sable areas. Facial tear free scrubs can be used on the face. If you are new to owning a Rough Collie or any dog for that matter, be sure to use an appropriate dog shampoo because a dog's skin is more sensitive than humans. Using the wrong shampoo or not diluting the dog shampoo adequately could

disturb the acid mantle, which protects the top layer of the skin. This could strip away some of the natural oils from the coat and skin. All are factors in protecting the dog from parasites and dry flakey skin, which could then lead to scratching. Remember that a dog's skin does have a different Ph level to humans.

My advice is to start with the whitening shampoo to really bring up the white or remove any staining or urine staining on the paws. One of my favorites is the "Double K Alpha White Shampoo". Leave that in while you scrub the other shampoo and then wash it all out thoroughly. Repeat this step again. Failing to rinse it all out could lead to irritation.

I mainly use conditioner on any area's that feel dry, are matted, or starting to matt. It's a good way for putting moisture back into the coat and to repair it if needed.

For showing, I usually would wash my dogs 2-3 days prior to the show. Sometimes I find after grooming, that the coat might be a little softer and flyaway. Giving it these few days, gives the coat time to settle again.

Drying the coat

Microfiber towels are very useful for drying the dog. They help to cut back on the drying time. A blaster is a must have for a collie owner, it has many advantages. Besides the obvious reason of faster drying, it's great for collies blowing their coat as it easily blasts out the loose undercoat. It is also useful for separating the coat and can help you see where you're working on. Make sure to have a long-haired pin brush, a slicker brush, a steel comb and a comb with rotating teeth.

For pups and dogs who aren't confident, always start at the lower back as opposed to the head/face until the dog gets used to the noise and sensation. Blast the coat, and using the slicker go through the coat section by section. This will help you see areas clearly that may need more attention. I would recommend having a good de-matting spray on hand for any area's needing it. The "Chris Christensen ice on ice detangling spray", is great for de-matting and as a finishing spray and doesn't leave a greasy residue. After going around the neck with the slicker use the pin brush and blaster and brush/blast against the direction of the hair. This will give the chest and neck hair some volume ensuring you are grooming right to the skin. Be sure to pay attention to areas such as under the forelegs and behind the ears as these areas are more prone to matting.



The night before the show I would recommend a once over again. I'd mist their coat and give them a quick blast. The coat will retain its natural texture and should be easy to work with. Having a block of chalk or chalk powder is useful to highlight the white more if you feel it's needed. Be sure to have any brushed off the next day before going into the ring as the judges don't want to see white chalk on their hands. The same goes for any products used to give volume such as spray. Make sure it's well brushed out.

Clipping the nails

It's important to check your dogs' nails regularly. Frequent walking on concrete or rough surfaces can wear the nails down naturally. If the nails are needed to be clipped, be careful not to clip the wick as then they can bleed. Keep an eye on the dew claw as it is obviously more likely to grow quicker. Nails are easier to clip after a bath as they soften with the water.

The Hocks and Paws

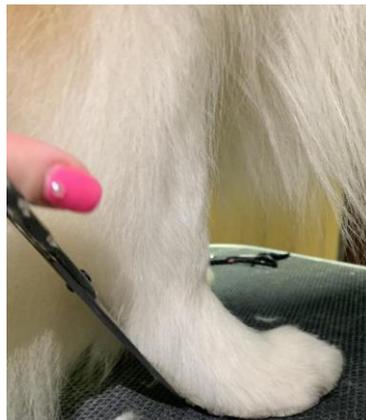
When trimming the collie's hocks make sure to have the dog on a table so you can see clearly what you're doing. I would recommend using at least a 7" straight scissors or curved scissors for trimming the hocks. Personally, I think it gives a more even cut.

For beginners or for anyone not confident or struggling to get the hocks even and straight I would advise using a thinning scissors, as they are more forgiving if you were to go wrong.

Brush out the hock hair with the steel comb. How much you leave on the hock is a personal decision and depends on the dog. Look at the hocks, maybe the dog is short in the hocks or maybe a bit finer in bone. For example, the dog with a finer bone, I would be sure to leave enough on it to give the illusion of a fuller boned dog. If it was a dog with short hocks, I would take it in slightly more to give it a more elongated appearance.



The front paws are trimmed in and up as far as the carpal pad. Using a thinning scissors to trim the hair between the toes can leave a more natural effect. The paw pad is to cleanly trimmed underneath so the pad can be clearly seen. The paw is then to be rounded to give a neat and tidy appearance





The Ears

Check the dog's ears regularly to make sure there is no brown discharge or odour. If the ears show any sign of these or if they are red and irritated it's time to seek veterinary help as this could be an ear infection or ear mites. Wipe the ear with ear cleaning wipes or some cotton wool and ear cleaner.

Before trimming the ear area, make sure it's completely knot-free. The skin behind the dog's ears can be very thin so be careful when removing any knots. Use the comb with the rotating teeth to ease the knots out and then use the normal comb to brush through. When trimming the dog's ears, find the natural bend in the dog's ear and trim any of the longer stray hairs away. To define the ears, hold up the ear and thin along the outer side, again trimming away any of the longer hairs. To remove some of the hair in front of the ear, lightly thin out the hair and blend into the length of the head to give it a neat effect as in photos attached. Personally, I think it showcase's the dogs ear carriage and positioning more clearly.





The Teeth

Dogs teeth need to be checked and cleaned if necessary. Not all dogs are prone to tartar, but if so, it can be easily removed. Using a dental scraper, gently remove the build- up. A toothbrush can be bought in most pet shops, or hard treats are great in preventing build up. In some cases, a trip to the vet may be necessary for them to clean the teeth.

The general appearance that is required of the collie in the show ring is to display its beauty with dignity, elegance, and with a coat fit for purpose.

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