

## Grooming a Field Spaniel

Unlike many other spaniel breeds, the Field Spaniel carries a moderate coat. The coat is well-suited to the owner-handler who wants to show his dog, yet easy to maintain for the hunter or pet owner. We often refer to Field Spaniels as a “wash’n wear” breed as even for show, we do not spend hours upon hours in grooming the dogs here at Calico.

Regular brushing and bathing, along with an investment in basic grooming equipment will save countless dollars spent on visits to the grooming parlor. Only a minimal amount of trimming of the ears and feet is required for everyday wear. For show purposes, a bit more trimming on the head and throat will be necessary.

### Basic Grooming Equipment Needs

For all Field Spaniels	Add these things if you will show your dog
Metal dog comb, medium/coarse style	All-purpose stripping knife (blade)
Bristle brush	Coat Conditioner (for use after bathing)
Slicker brush	Daily coat conditioner spray with sunscreen additive
Thinning shears (blending shears)	Electric clipper with #10F blade & #7F blade
Straight shears	Spray bottle with misting device; fill with distilled water
Nail Clipper & Styptic powder or solution	Tackle box or container to store grooming equipment
Cotton Balls (large size preferred)	(Option) Dremel for doing toenails
Ear cleaning solution	
Dental Care brush and toothpaste made for canines	
Shampoo (for dark coats or all-purpose shampoo)	

**Routine Brushing:** Brush the coat with the lay of the coat, starting at the head and working gradually to the rear. Comb feathers gently, taking care to avoid pulling the feathering if you find a snarl. Misting the coat lightly with a spray bottle filled with distilled water avoids coat breakage during routine brushing and combing. If there is an old, sturdy table available, placing a non-slip rug on top of the table and lifting the dog to the table top will make routine grooming chores easier to do. The rug will provide an adequate surface so that the dog does not slip. Frequency? If you can do this daily, that’s great. If not, try for at least once a week.

**Clipping Toenails:** Field Spaniels generally have tough black toenails and the “quick” (vascular nail bed) is nearly impossible to see. Nails must be kept up on a weekly basis as nails, which are too long, may result in improper placement of the foot as the nail hits the floor. A nail clipper is used to nip the end of the nail off, followed by using the nail file to smooth rough edges. Styptic powder is a necessity since with the difficulty of seeing where the nail bed lays; it is all too easy to cut a bit too close. As an alternative, a nail grinder may be utilized to shorten the nail and provide the same smoothing of the file at the same time. Many dogs dislike nail cutting intensely. This may be avoided by routinely handling the feet at times other than for nail cutting. Here is an excellent site for learning how to use a dremel to do your dog’s nails: [www.DoberDawn.com](http://www.DoberDawn.com) and then scroll down and click on the “How to Dremel Dog Nails” link.

**Ears:** Ears should be cleaned weekly using cotton balls and a powder or liquid cleansing agent as recommended by your veterinarian or breeder. Do not be tempted to use a cotton swab since you can probe too deeply and cause harm! Shorten the hair at the opening of the ear canal by plucking or **careful** use of a thinning shears.

**Teeth:** There are many types of brushing products available for routine dental care. Although you will need to train your dog to accept brushing/cleaning of the teeth, it is time well spent. A tooth scaler is also a useful device that is relatively easy to learn to use to remove tartar. Your veterinarian should be able to show you how to use a tooth scaler appropriately.

**Bathing:** Fields who are shown are bathed far more frequently than those whose primary occupation is companion. On the average, a home companion will require bathing no more frequently than once a month especially if routine coat care via a thorough brushing is done.

**Trimming:** Neatening up the hair coat is helpful to maintain typical Field Spaniel appearance, whether the dog is a household companion or show dog. Trimming even for the show ring should only enhance the natural appearance of the dog. The choice of tools to use for trimming the hair coat has considerable variation.

Thinning shears are used to blend the hair and remove fullness. The tooth density controls how much hair is removed in one cut. Our all around favorite at Calico is called a “44-20” shears.

Straight shears come in a variety of sizes.

Short-blade, snub nosed shears are useful for trimming the foot pad and beneath the tail. This is an absolute necessity so that the dog is not walking on hair, thereby losing the natural traction supplied by the pad.

Long, curved shank shears are useful for trimming hocks and other areas where the trimming angle is difficult.

Long, straight shank shears are useful for furnishings.

**Stripping knife:** It is safe to say that the stripping knife is utilized world-wide to remove dead coat as well as to blend coat or remove excessive length.

**Grooming stone:** A grooming stone is used to smooth and blend, and remove fuzzy coat. It is easy to use and does a great job of simple neatening of the coat.

**General trimming:** In general, the hair on the upper one-third of the outer ear is shortened to enhance the appearance of the set of the ear, allowing the ear to gracefully frame the face. This may be accomplished by use of the stripping knife, used to blend the hair to lay flat thereby creating a gradual transition from skull to ear to neck. Hair from the lower jaw an area about two finger breadths above the prosternum of the chest may also be shortened with a stripping knife to enhance the neckline of the dog. Again, the key is to remove just enough hair to neat the appearance and blend well into the longer body coat. Excessive facial hair may be carefully stripped by use of a small stripping knife for that purpose.

For general trimming, a quality electric clipper with easily detached blade is used by most fanciers in the United States, though rarely in Europe. With investment in a quality clipper and routine maintenance, electric clippers last for years. Clipper blades (or comb attachments) of various size control the amount of coat removed. The larger the number of the blade, the shorter the haircoat. We have found #7F and #10 blades are used most often here at Calico, with the #7F being the one we prefer. A #5F and #15 are helpful, though used infrequently. Blade wash should be available for disinfecting and lubricating the clipper blades. It will also prevent rust and helps keep your blades sharp and clean.