

Pet Care



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Dog Grooming Tips

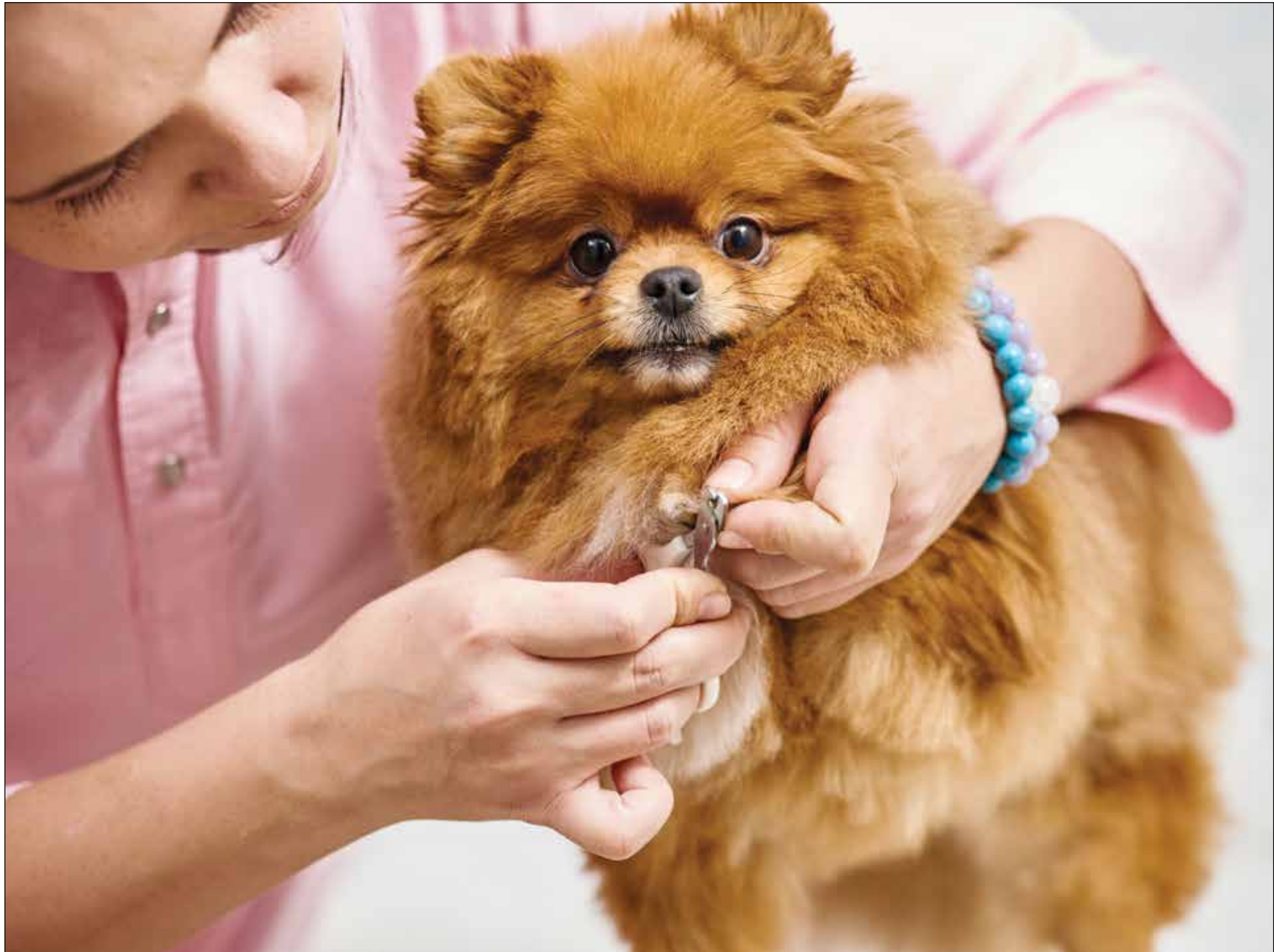
Regular pet grooming can help your feathered and furred friends feel and look their best.

Pet owners may not realize that grooming isn't just a matter of looks but of health. A schedule of thorough grooming can keep skin conditions, parasites and other conditions at bay.

DOG COATS

First, you need to understand your dog's coat. Some dogs have a single coat, where the fur all over the dog is essentially the same, be it long or short, curly or straight. Other dog breeds have a double coat, where the outer layer is thicker and the undercoat is made of thinner, more lightweight hair. Think of it like the down that keeps a bird extra warm. Coats can also be long, medium or short. Short-coated dogs are generally smooth, medium-coated dogs are more fluffy and long-coated dogs can have some seriously dramatic hair.

Once you know what kind of coat you're dealing with, you can set up a regular schedule of brushing. Medium- and long-coated dogs need regular brushing to avoid matting. Double-coated dogs usually blow their coat — or shed the whole thing — a couple of times a year. They'll need special attention and extra brushing during this time.



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BATHING

It's tempting to use human shampoos on our dogs. But don't. The needs of dog skin and fur and human skin and hair are very different. You don't want to harm the natural oils that keep your dog healthy and, in some breeds, waterproof. Choose a dog shampoo that's best for your breed — turn to

the experts at your local pet store if you need to — and consider using a conditioner, too, if your pup is prone to dry skin.

NAIL AND PAW CARE

Dogs also need their nails and paws cared for. This means regular nail trimming using clippers or grinders and caring for their pads. Don't allow your

dog to walk on exceedingly hot or cold surfaces. Touch it with your hand and, if it hurts you, remember that it'll also hurt them. You can use protective waxes or boots if your pup regularly has to walk to hot or cold surfaces.

DENTAL HYGIENE

Lastly, don't forget your pup's

chompers. Dental hygiene is often overlooked in pups, but it's critical to keep them healthy.

Regularly brush your dog's teeth and take them to the vet for regular professional cleaning. February is National Pet Dental Health Month and many vets will offer specials on cleaning at this time.



Freshwater Aquarium Setup

Aquariums can be great and relaxing additions to your home and family. Fishy friends are great for watching an entire ecosystem at work. Keep reading to learn how to set up the perfect environment for your aquatic critters.

FINDING EQUIPMENT

You need a solid, quality tank of an appropriate size to the animals you want to keep. Larger aquariums are actually easier to keep than smaller tanks, the experts at Tetra say, because it's easier to keep the balance in your environment with more water. The aquarium company recommends starting with at least a 20-gallon tank. You'll also need a filter appropriate to the size of your tank, an air pump for extra boosts of oxygen, a heater, a thermometer, lighting, gravel and tank decorations.

SETTING UP YOUR TANK

Pick a location in your home that's away from direct sunlight, windows, air vents and high traffic areas. Once you've got everything home, rinse it well in warm water (no soap or cleaners, they're toxic to fish) and let it air dry. Add the washed gravel to your tank in a layer, then add the water.

Fill your tank with water about a third of the way full with room temperature

water and not just any water. If you use tap water, make sure to add a water conditioner to it to make it safe for your fish. Connect the tubing from the air pump to air outlets inside your tank, such as air stones or decorations. Make sure your air pump has an aquarium check valve so you can locate it under your aquarium. That way, water won't run out in case of a power failure.

Add your plants and other decorations. If you're using live plants, make sure the water is warm enough and plant the roots gently below the surface of the gravel, leaving the crown exposed. Live plants should be kept moist until it's time to plant them. Fill the tank up to the bottom of the top frame.

Next, set up your filter. For outside filters, fill them with the filter materials or cartridge and position according to the instructions. Prime it with water and turn it on. For hanging filters, extend the tube as close to the bottom of the tank as possible without being in the gravel. You can trim the tube as needed and reattach

the intake cage. Ope the filter lid and prime the pump by filling it with water before turning it on.

Cycle the filters or add a starting solution to make the environment just right for your new aquatic friends.

Place your heater as near to the water flow as possible and then place the thermometer as far from the heater as you can. Make sure you can read the thermometer easily and don't turn on the heater if it's not fully submerged in water. It will take the heater about 24 hours to stabilize the temperature in your tank.

ADDING FISH

Don't add your fish or other aquatic creatures until the tank has been up and running for a day or two. This will help conditions stabilize and allow you to make sure all of your equipment is running correctly. Before adding fish, purchase a test kit and make sure the pH and hardness of your water is good for your future fish.

Cat Grooming Tips

Everyone has seen a cat give itself a bath, but our feline friends still need some help from us in keeping clean and healthy.

Not all cats will go quietly into a bath, however, and fighting with your kitty can result in injury for you or your cat. In that case, schedule an appointment for professional grooming.

BRUSHING YOUR CAT

Regular brushing removes dirt, grease and dead hair from your cat. It also stimulates blood circulation and improves the condition of your cat's skin. Try to set up one or two brushing sessions per week to keep her looking and feeling her best. You may want to step up and adding a grooming or two as your cat ages and is unable to clean herself as well as she once could.

If you notice your cat itching or chewing her skin more than usual or see bald patches while you brush, it's time to set a vet visit.

EAR CARE

Check your cat's ears once a week for wax, debris and signs of infection. On the outer ear, look for a smooth, solid covering of hair with no discharge, redness or swelling. Any of those signs warrants a vet visit. The inner ear should be pale pink with no



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debris or odor. If you smell anything funny or see cakes of wax, go to the vet.

To clean your cat's ears, place a little bit of liquid ear cleaner onto a clean cotton ball or piece of gauze. Gently wipe away debris or earwax from the inside of the ear by lifting it away rather than rubbing it farther into the ear. Don't try to clean the delicate ear canal; this can cause trau-

ma or infection.

NAILS AND PAWS

Your cat's paws should be kept clean at all times. Keeping your floors and other surfaces clean and free of chemicals to help with that, and also regularly wipe the cat's paws to keep them clean. Check the paws for cuts, sores and swelling. Clean small cuts and remove

any splinters or other debris carefully with tweezers. If your long-haired kitty has hair growing between her paws, keep them trimmed so it doesn't bother her.

To trim your cat's nails, choose a quiet room and put your cat comfortably on your lap. Gently take a paw and massage and a little press so that the nail pops out. Release the paw and give her

a treat to reward good behavior. Get her comfortable with both the clippers and the sound they make by giving her treats for interest in the clippers and using them to snip dry spaghetti.

Once she's used to it, trim the white part of her nail — avoid the pink part, which contains blood vessels. Trim her nails every 10 days to two weeks.

Keeping Reptiles

Reptiles are fascinating creatures and, with the right care, can make great pets. Before you welcome any new creature to your home, it's best to do some research about their care and what kinds of behavior and maintenance to expect.

Some reptiles need special diet or heating requirements and some have very long lives. It's best to know what you're getting into before your scaly friend comes home.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Reptiles need some special equipment to live full, happy lives. This includes UVB/UVA bulbs that will increase natural behaviors, improve eating and increase immune system strength. UVB is essential to reptile health. Without enough of the light, reptiles can become paralyzed, deformed or die prematurely. You'll need to change these bulbs every 12 months, even if they're still giving off light.

You'll also need well-made cages. Reptiles are escape artists. So look for enclosures made just for reptiles and add locking screen clips as an added safety measure. Their enclosure should be kept away



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from windows and direct sunlight in favor of the light and heat fixtures in their environment. The sun can make the tank much hotter than it should be. Their cage should also be kept clean as reptiles are susceptible to skin infections and their feces can contain salmonella, which is harmful to their people.

Reptiles, in addition to their own diet, should also receive

calcium and other vitamins so that they stay healthy. Plan to feed it fresh food that's appropriate to its dietary needs.

HANDLING YOUR REPTILE

Always make sure your hands are clean before handling your reptile. If you smell like food, they may strike thinking it's time for a meal. Clean hands also prevent the

spread of bacteria and other contaminants to your pet and its enclosure.

When you are confident when handling your reptile, they will, in turn, be more comfortable with you. Always let your pet know when there will be no food involved in an interaction by gently poking its nose with an inanimate object or removing it from its enclosure with a hook. This

lets it know it won't be fed and will prevent accidental bites.

Never touch or grab your reptile by the tail. That stresses the animal out and makes it feel unsupported. That can cause them to become defensive and can hurt you and the animal. Also don't handle your pet while it's digesting its food. This can cause regurgitation, which can be harmful to the animal.

Bird Grooming Tips

Like their cartoon arch nemesis, cats, birds do a good job of keeping themselves clean. But even the best of our feathered friends occasionally need a hand from their pet parents to keep healthy and looking their best.

BIRD BATHS

Birds do a great job of cleaning and straightening their feathers with their beaks. But, from time to time, every bird enjoys a good bath. Start by pouring 1/2-inch to 1 inch of water in a small dish. The smaller the bird, the less water is needed. Put the water dish in your bird's cage or somewhere else where he can enjoy a bath. Wherever it is, don't leave your bird unattended with his bath. Depending on your bird's health, he may enjoy a conditioning spray added to the water. Talk to your vet or the experts at your local pet store.

DUST BATHS

Some species of birds, like chickens and quail, also like to take dust baths. Dust baths keep the birds' skin and feathers healthy and free of parasites. Make a dust bath out of a shallow basin and fine, dry dirt. You can also add ask, charcoal dust or food-grade diatomaceous earth to make



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the dirt a suitable texture for a good bath. Also give your birds a perch nearby to let them preen after their dust bath.

TASKS BEST LEFT TO THE PROS

Wing trimming, beak trimming and nail trims are all

essential bird grooming tasks. But they're best done by those who have the proper training to carry them out safely. An improper trim of wings, beaks or talons can cause serious injury or even death. Trimming a bird's primary flight feathers can keep them from flying any

distance, making it more safe for a bird to live in your home.

Your bird's nails can be naturally worn down by using perches that help grind them down, but from time to time, they may need to be trimmed to prevent scratches and to keep your bird comfortable.

Beaks are usually kept short by birds playing and chewing. Help them keep their beak healthy by providing them with plenty of toys and opportunities to chew. If you notice anything strange about their beak, contact your vet immediately.



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High-Tech Pet Gear

It seems like everything's getting a dose of technology lately, and the pet gear market is no exception. Here's a roundup of some of the coolest high-tech pet gear coming out this year.

TRACTIVE LTE GPS DOG TRACKER, \$49.99

Tractive is a waterproof GPS tracker that hooks on to your dog's collar. It allows you to view your dog's location from your smart phone and in real time without any distance limit. You will need a subscription plan and the Tractive GPS app.

PETSAFE HEALTHY PET SIMPLY FEED AUTOMATIC FOOD DISPENSER FOR CATS AND DOGS, \$99.95

This feeder holds up to 24 cups of dry or semi-

moist food and will dispense from 1/8 of a cup to four cups up to 12 times per day. It's four D-cell batteries can last up to nine months. You can purchase a two-meal splitter to feed two pets at once.

CHEERBLE WICKED BALL, \$49.99

The Wicked Ball is an automatic, self-moving toy that will help keep your pets mentally and physically active when you're away from home. It features an automatic play and rest mode. It has eight hours of battery life.

When your cat or dog hits the Wicked Ball, it will shake or jump in response, then, when she interacts with it, it kicks off an interactive play followed by 30 minutes of rest.

PETSAFE SIMPLY CLEAN SELF-CLEANING CAT LITTER BOX, \$99.95

This rotating cat box scoops your cat's poop so you don't have to. You just fill it with clumping clay

litter. Cat waste moves it up the conveyor belt and to the covered waste bin. Then, you dump the bin as needed.

SNUGGLE PUPPY NEW PUPPY STARTER KIT, \$59.99

The Snuggle Puppy is a stuffy with a comforting heartbeat sound to calm down anxious dogs of all ages. It's pulsing heartbeat can be set for eight hours or 24-hour continuous use. You can also add a heat pack to the Snuggly Puppy for soothing heat.

MIGHTY PAW SMART BELL 2.0, \$37.99

Leave scratching, barking and whining behind with this doorbell your dog or cat can ring to let you know he needs to go outside. The bell attaches with 3M adhesive to prevent damage to doors or walls.

The Mighty Paw bell features 38 ring tones and requires just 0.75 pounds of pressure to activate.

Caring for Rabbits

Fluffy bunnies are on a lot of Easter wish lists. But just like any other pet, rabbits are a years-long commitment that require specialized care.

Research what you'll need and what the rabbit needs before deciding to add Petter Cottontail to your family for the next decade or so.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Set up safe housing. Rabbits can live in indoors in a safely bunny-proofed room or house or even in a pen. They should have a space large enough to hop around and they should be let out of the pen for exercise at least a few hours per day. Rabbits are social creatures and shouldn't be isolated from you and your family.

If your bunny is going to be a house rabbit, you'll need to do some bunny proofing. This includes covering baseboards with plastic guards or furring strips. Block off other dares where rabbits might chew, including cords, the under-sides of beds, items on bookshelves and house plants.

Rabbits can be litter trained, so you'll need to set up a litter box near their water, food and any feeder. Use a rabbit-safe litter such as recycled newspaper pellets (clay or clumping cat litter



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and wood shavings aren't safe for rabbits). Rabbits like to use their litter and eat hay at the same time, so keeping the hay in reach of the box encourages good litter habits.

DIET

Speaking of hay, let's talk about what rabbits eat. Baby

rabbits should be given alfalfa while adult rabbits should get Timothy hay, grass hay or oat hay. You can also supplement hay with fresh veggies, Ferber-fish pellets and fresh water. You can give lettuce, bok choy, carrots, dandelions, basil, oregano, mint and parsley.

GROOMING

Rabbits are good at cleaning themselves, but you can help with regular brushings, especially during their shedding cycles. You should also clip their nails regularly as long nails can get snagged on things and also grow so long they curl into your rabbit's

paws, causing problems.

Generally speaking, your rabbit won't need a bath, but you should keep your rabbit's cage clean so that it can keep itself clean. Your rabbit should rest on soft flooring, even in its pen, as wires can cut into their paws and cause sore hocks.