



# Grooming The English Cocker Spaniel



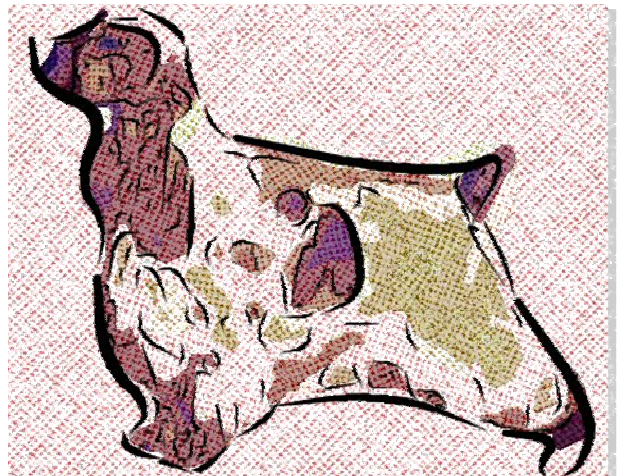
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## **Grooming The English Cocker Spaniel**

**Grooming the English cocker is based on health, cleanliness, history and purpose of the breed. This is a sporting dog; excess hair is a nuisance in the field. Cleaning off the feet, head, and around the tail is basic to maintenance of the silky coat and cleanliness in general. The rest is convenience and beauty (always in the eye of the beholder!)**

### **THE PET ENGLISH COCKER**

**Show or Pet: Always clean ears and teeth, cut nails, comb out mats and bathe. Using some form of conditioner helps.**

### **THE CLIPPER IS AN ARTIST'S TOOL NOT A WEAPON! USE IT GENTLY!**

**You can use the Mars Coat King instead of the clippers on t he back..**

### **Blades to use to shave**

**The head is done with #10. A few people use a #15. the back is done with a #4, #5 or #7. Try the #5 instead of the #7. It is a great blade for the cocker.**

**If shaving legs and belly, a #4 is preferred. Shave WITH the grain (head to tail)**

### **THE HEAD**

**Shave WITH the hair on muzzle, under chin down to adam's apple, and to the sides where there is a seam. Shave cheeks /side up to a line with the ear and eye. The ear is shaved with the grain and in a circle around the base. And be sure to shave out inner ear tightly. About 1/3 on inner and outer ear.**

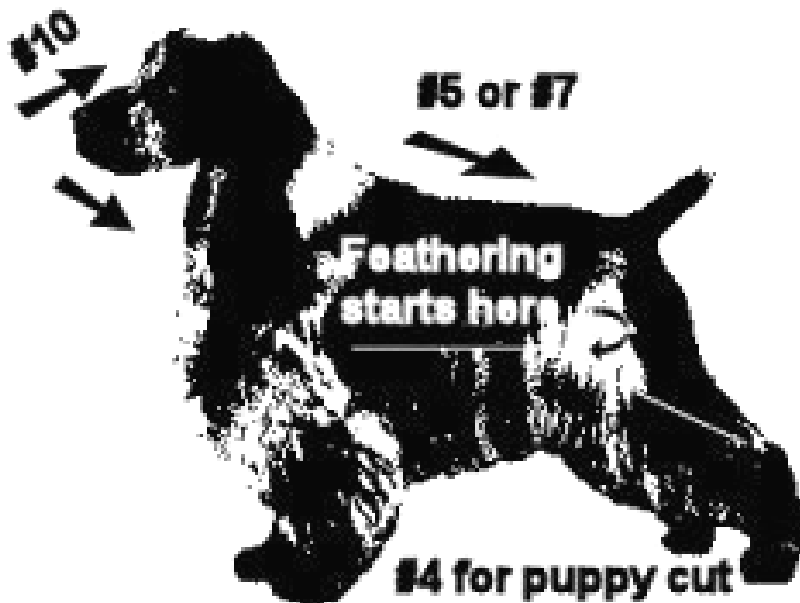
**FEET**

The feet can be shaved in a modified poodle trim-doesn't need to be as tight, but shaving bottom and between feathers leaves a nice clean foot. Trim any left over hair from around foot.

**OR:** follow show directions below. Pets don't need as much hair; backcombing toe feathers and scissoring downward neatens them a bit.

**Different lengths of leg and belly hair and how to achieve the look**

1. shave with a #4 ( puppy cut)
2. cut hair tightly behind hocks, shaping maybe one inch of hair on legs and belly. cut back chest hair to match; round out the look in the front.
3. trim as you would for a show dog. When you clipper, do the sides down to the widest point and lift off gently to blend into feathering. Same on front and back legs.



## **THE SHOW ENGLISH COCKER**

### **The role of nutrition, bathing, exercise, and regular grooming.**

**A dog must be in peak condition to compete. Regular bathing and brushing is imperative. Exercise can be; walking or jogging, catching a ball, using a jogger 15-20 minutes a day, or other routines.**

**Most show animals, besides a high quality dry dog food, need a vitamin preparation. Kzyme \*, Missing Link, Dr. Kruegers, etc are all good. All of them provide some digestion aids. Yogurt can be fed instead. Many prefer some “dog soup” or high quality canned. It can make up the difference for not eating well at shows. Vit B complex and Vit C seem helpful in attitude, skin repair, etc.**

**Good bait for shows-old fashioned baked liver ( cook at 200 degrees, turning over once, until rather dry) or the roll foods such as Red Barn.\***

**Keeping up with current styles is important; when showing, your dog should not look out of place in the lineup.**

### **Fleas worms and other nasties-signs.**

**Signs; Dark eye goop-tapeworm. Ring around eyes-hair loss-hookworm. General loss of thriftiness-whip, tape, hook and round..**

**Regular worming with Panacur\* or Strongid, and a good program of flea control, are your best options. Ivermectin preparations also kill heartworm. Droncit, for tapeworm, is now available without a prescription.**

### **Bathing**

**Just to complete the instructions, dogs should be bathed with lots of water, both to hydrate the skin and assure all excess shampoo is removed. Use a massaging motion-scrubbing at the dog will tangle the coat. Better to bathe and rinse twice than to be in a hurry and cause more problems. Thick shampoos are better off being cut with water before use.**

\* these preparations all have copyright and trademark protection. They are mentioned as examples of products available.

### **Grooming**

**This preparation for show should be almost meditative. Enjoyable for you and the dog. Daily 1 hr sessions are far easier on both of you than a marathon session the night before a show. The scissors and clippers are artist's tools-not weapons.**

#### **ALWAYS TRY NEW TECHNIQUES WEEKS BEFORE SHOWING.**

**Like anything else, it isn't practice makes perfect; perfect practice makes perfect. Bathe, condition, towel, and then blow out as you would before a show.**

**Show or Pet: Always clean ears and teeth, cut nails, comb out mats and bathe. Using some form of conditioner helps. Brush each section from bottom to top; just "brushing over" will not get tangles. The comb is used to check your work.**

#### **USING A GROOMING SPRAY WHILE COMBING OUT- OR EVEN WATER- WILL CAUSE LESS COAT DAMAGE.**

**WASH ,THEN TOWEL THE DOG SOAKING WET. This helps the maximum lay down of coat. You may have to comb into place. Remember to leave enough folded towel up front to fold back into a collar; and make sure no towel end is pinned to the dog ( over the back) as this will leave a line. Big males-use a 3<sup>rd</sup> pin under the tail. Or they get a lovely ridge on top of tail.**

### **THE HEAD**

**Shave WITH the grain on muzzle, under chin down to adam's apple, making a nice upside down V (a little lower on sides to neck than the front middle) and to the sides where there is a seam. Shave cheeks /side up to a line with the ear and eye. The ear is shaved with the grain and in a circle around the base. Make sure to shave the lips rightly, stretching the skin to get at hair in folds.**



Ear shaved complete with circle around entire base.

**Be sure to shave out inner ear tightly. The point is to make it narrow and fine by the head; below jawline you want those pretty feathers.**

**Shave ears with a ten; back shaving comes AFTER shaving with the hair with the grain. 15 is often used. I find shaving with the grain, and then back shaving, to give the smoothest result.**

**You shave to about where the ear turns, or 1/3. Straight across works for most dogs. If the hair or ear is very heavy, use a more bowed or curved line (a smile.) You want the ear close to the head. Shaving to where ear matches jaw is about right. Big ears look good trimmed rounder on the bottom-small silky ears straight. Inside of ear should match.**

**Red or orange dogs-hair color change. Shave weekly while being shown. If a ten is still too much change, use a #7. White hair will often show pink skin if cut too tightly just before a show. Regular upkeep will keep this to a minimum.**



**This girl is hand stripped on skull, and ears shaved once a week to limit color change.**

**Thinning shear or stone the top of the head. Take wide heads pretty tight on the sides. Make sure the planes look even (nose and top of head) before you take off more! Back of skull is usually very tight. Some people just strip off the whole skull area. It's up to you. Careful on back of neck and blending in-it should flow into the shawl and does not have to be too short.**

**Use thinning shears or blade if you are brave, make a slight upside down V notch at top of nose-halfway between eyes. This accentuates the stop. go WITH the grain with a blade. Gently here. Sometimes just using the stone from nose to halfway between eyes is enough. Check slope of nose and back shave anything out of line. For upturned noses, taking off the front can help. For roman noses, back shave the bumpy part. You can leave an American cocker "fan" over eyes-a curve from eye, around head back to eye. Brush back, and thinning shear to get the look you like. This leaves a soft look. Cut off excess or stray eyelashes and whiskers.**

## THE JACKET OR TOPCOAT

### 1. hand stripping

I've seen it done with one hand, rolling the fingers through and pulling any stray hair. I do not have the hand strength! I hold a small area of hair up with my left hand, and use right thumb and forefinger, pulling out a few hairs at a time. Try the top of the head first.

### 2. using the Mars Coat King correctly

Make long sweeping strokes over the back. Short ones leave a choppier coat. Sweep down the sides and "lift off" before you reach the belly or leg coat. I use a #20 but an even finer coat king is available.



### 3. using the stripping knife

2 methods, draw it over the topcoat like a comb, applying only enough pressure to pull hair (dig in too much and you can abrade the skin), or use it as an actual knife-thumb against it, twisting hand slightly to pull out and shorten hair.



#### **4.using the stone**

**Pick up hair and stone from underneath, starting at tail and going towards the head. Be gentle-let the stone do the work. I clean the edges of the stone every few strokes on the edge of the grooming table. Pull each section until no more loose hair comes out. Continue on each side and then usually one more line from loin to bottom of shoulder, on each side. Never stone the coat that is below the widest point of rib; that will be your line for the feathering. Do take off smoothly so that the feathers hang straight down and have a nice line from elbow to loin. It is important to rinse and condition the topcoat after stoning work.**



**Lift each section and stone until flat and tight.**

#### **Where to shave**

**It is possible to shave; under the tail area to the “circles” on the butt, bottom of tail, neck/ shoulder line at seam.**

### **LEAVE THE SHAWL: TOO MUCH THINNING SHEAR OR STONING CAN RUIN THE LINE AT TOP OF SHOULDERS**



Include the back of neck; carefully blend this area in to the rest.

Make sure you continue the length of hair on the jacket down the front of the front legs and on top of the back feet. If not, instead of nice round thick feet, you get “poufs.” Legs and top of feet often respond to the stone; if not use thinning shears.

### **BLENDING INTO THE FEATHERS**

**Note**-before you cut the feathers, use any product you will use before a show; and **BLOW DRY**. Hair moves around; you must try to have the setup as close to show set up as possible. Never use a new product at a show! Always practice at home!

**HINT!** Cut conditioners much more than product directions. Rinse out. If not, you can have greasy ears/feathers that will not blow dry properly. The time for conditioner in the coat is **BETWEEN** shows. Oil or reconditioner, etc.

Thinning shears-always use with the grain-standing at the front of the dog. If you cut from underneath (as is usually done), this allows short hair to grow up through the topcoat.

Wide ribbed dogs-from the loin to shoulder line, you may have to lower the belly feather line just a bit, or thinning shear, from above, to get the belly hair to lay flat on the sides.

It should be pointed out, the more the jacket/belly hair line can be blended, the better the look. Silky coats often just need enough shaping to graduate one into the other. Thicker coats-just be careful, no “poufs” on the side.

Another area that should be taken down smoothly is the leg to belly junction. Hair can overlap; or your thigh coat not taken down closely enough. Thinning shears can ease this area.

### **BLADEWORK**

You can shave under the dog's tail. To the "circles" on the butt.

Now is a good time to use the thinning shears on the tail. Take off all long hairs-graduate by trimming from end to body, to allow for the natural shape of the tail.

### **BLENDING THE NECK**

Thinning shears! Use your comb and pick up the hair, horizontally, so that you can layer-short by the neck seam, longer up the neck. Continue the line down the shoulder and top of leg. Check neck area-make sure you have not left tufts of hair around top of chest. You can stone after this, yes, over the topcoat this time, to get rid of wisps and blend.

A very wide fronted dog does not need the chest hair to stick out sideways. The shoulder line on such a dog is actually almost on the front instead of the side.

### **THE REAR**

Jacket over hips and thighs should be tight-show off the muscles!. Make a triangle down to feathering. Leave more hair on top to tail until you can check in the mirror to see if you need to "graduate" it so as not to make a low tail set.

### **The Butterfly**

**The circles are the antenna-the upper wings are the thighs. Where they curve in for the lower wings, is where you thin the dog's hair enough to lay straight. Curving it in here gives the leg a better "Line." Notice also that the hair falls in a straight curtain down from the hair change-achieved with thinning shears.**



**TRIM LINE OF BACK LEGS DEPENDING ON PATTERN YOU WILL USE.**

**Leave the hocks for now. You just cannot match up inner leg hair without a line.**

**PULL THE INNER THIGH HAIR STRAIGHT ACROSS CUT EVENLY.**

**Let the hair fall, look from all directions from under the dog and behind. Trim with scissors so it matches up with the outer leg.**

## **FRONT LEG**

**Pick up leg and run hand down over foot. Cut off any hair that sticks out along the bottom. This is ALL we will do at bottom of leg until feet are trimmed-you may need more or less hair around foot.**

**Pick up whole leg. As you cut towards top of leg, it forms a long narrow triangle. Place leg back in normal position.**

**If using this style, you only need to scissor downwards to get rid of stray hair. If using straight leg style (about the width of the leg), which helps the dog look more up on the front, cut downwards, giving a nice clean line. We'll clean up the foot line later. With nice long belly hair, you can angle the front leg back until it meets the belly-which will be a complimentary angle to the back leg. Not for a dog who "rocks back" or "posts" but very pretty.**

## **INNER FRONT LEG.**

**You will cut a triangle again, but it will be shorter than the outer leg. Shake out and brush-take a look. Recut-downwards, to give a straight look and proper width to the front ( more hair for wide chest, less for narrow. If dog is not straight in the front, make sure you cut the line straight, not following the leg.) To distinguish chest from leg hair, take the comb and comb all chest hair away from the leg. See it now?**

## MATCH IT UP

**Belly hair. Either in a straight line, or curved towards belly a bit and curving down into back feathers. Long backed dogs can use the curve but never one with a soft topline. A crisp set of straight lines helps the “picture”. Short dogs-leave some air under the belly! They need leg!**

**Pick up one front leg and continue the belly line under the front legs. This will be the point for cutting the chest feathers.**

**Curving leg and belly lines**



**Straight leg and belly lines**

## FEET

**Hold one foot in air and work on the other foot. Make a box. Make it perfectly straight forward with the legs. Ignore toeing in or toeing out at this point.**



Thinning shear around the foot.

**Bottom of scissors on table - the three sides not the back. Continue until you see a shape emerging.**

**Scissor off the same hair. Once again with bottom of scissors on table so you are straight up and down. You are building a round, thick look.**

**Turn foot over, pull the hair between the toes. Cut around and anything that sticks out. Yes, pads may be shaved.**

**Check foot. Cut off excess hair. Right back to toenails please.**

**NOW look at foot/leg, cutting a line that makes the foot same size as leg and lines up. Looking from the back of the leg, brush leg feathers, and angle for about an inch, the shorter hair at back of foot. This blends leg hair into foot. It's not really a forty five degree angle, but close. Check sides of feet into leg and adjust. Toeing out-tight outside longer inside, etc.**

**Cut back feet the same way. Make sure to trim off the excess hair from back of foot by pulling down and trimming off as with front legs.**

## **HOCKS**

Can be close to foot, angled, or in between. Long legs often mean you need a straight line; leave a good angle if dog is fairly straight in back. **CUT DOWNWARDS.** This is your line. Pick up any leg feathering at top of hock and make sure it is cut to match.

Inner hock-decide if you need straight or angled (never angled much if dog turns hock in) Using the back hair as you guide, cut downwards.

Pick up all hair on outside of hock. Matching inner and back hair, cut again. This layers the leg feathers into the hock feathers.

Continue around, trimming off hair so that the entire hock is a column. Granted, it's a wider at the top column !

Brush all hock hair upwards. Shake it-let the dog stand. Now recut your lines. Downwards. Angle inner feathers upwards if they stick up too much. A cow hocked dog needs the line straighter on the inside. You may have to recut outside if the look is unbalanced.

### **Hocks With Little Hair**

Brush and blow dry upwards. Make nice neat lines usually straight. **NOW** cut inner and outer hock; leaving more leg hair to give more roundness to the hock. The leg hair tends to layer over this kind of hock hair.

## **CHEST HAIR**

you can cut an upwards angle from bottom and leave the upper part long, or cut the whole chest round, from the bottom up. Check the front-make a nice line across the bottom, and angle each side upwards towards the legs, if needed. ( this angle helps to separate chest and leg hair and helps heavy chest coat hang straight.)

Go let the dog run; really check on how he looks moving. A light finishing spray with hold can make him neater at the show-but really decide if you have the dog looking good from all angles.



**Now (you'll hate me) rinse the dog in lots of water, and put your conditioner on the coat. Stoning and blow drying damage coat. Some products can make them itch.**






### **THE HURRY UP**

**I have seen dogs shaved with a #4, #5 or even #7, then finished with the stone over several weeks. I hate it. You will pay anytime you leave short hair to grow up through the topcoat. The top of shoulder and back of neck will never grow out right again, that I guarantee.**

**BUT your shoulder line can be set using a blade. I find a #5 to be good. The other blade of choice is a plucking blade, a #9. Stone in after shaving.**

**CHOOSING YOUR PATTERN: BALANCE**

**THIS PICTURE HAS BEEN DIGITALLY ALTERED TO SHOW THE SAME DOG IN DIFFERENT PATTERNS. WHICH PICTURE DO YOU FIND BALANCED? WHICH PATTERN FITS THE DOG YOU ARE GROOMING?**

		
Fairly “natural” grooming	Curve under belly into legs	Fuller straighter leg
		
Angled chest		Straighter smaller leg

**Curved lines break up and shorten the outline. A smaller straight line leg puts emphasis on the front, while a full belly and straight leg looks balanced on this square, short dog.**

## **DAY OF SHOW-emergency!**

About to go to ring and hair is sticking out?

Cut it off with scissors. Yup you will pay for it later, maybe. Oh well. Neat and trim counts.

## **PRODUCTS**

### **Shampoo**

Most are great. Use no human product with silicone or wax in it. Biogroom\*, #1 all systems, The Coat handler, Cindra, Pearl ,etc-all good. Having a no-rinse shampoo around to touch up is also important.

### **Conditioner**

Most need to be “cut” much more than the directions say.

### **Grooming spray**

Crown Royale\* seems to be the favorite. I use the Bodifier, as it gives a touch more hold.

### **Chalk**

Can be used dry to whiten or damp to build in some body just like cornstarch, make sure dog is allowed into ex pen to shake off excess and rebrushed.

### **Cornstarch**

Is brushed into a damp coat or sprinkled over the dog’s belly and legs. Wait a few minutes and brush out. This is also soothing to the dog’s skin. The cornstarch swells making the feathers a bit thicker. (use water or no rinse shampoo to prepare the coat if necessary)

\* All products mentioned have copyright and trademark protection. They are mentioned as examples of products available.

**Holding spray ( uh, that's hairspray for dogs)**

**Biogroom\* has a nice foam which does hold. More control is gained with the sprays that work more like hairspray.**

**You can also finish a dog with a touch of mink oil or THE STUFF\*, etc, to put more shine in the coat.**

### **THE COTTON COATED DOG**

**Keep dog in heavy conditioner. (try; Queen Helene, Jojoba oil from the human aisle, reconstructor, oil treatments.) Trim as well as you can but you may have to use the thinning shears if the topcoat just won't budge. Towel before groomings; and for a day before show, even if not re-washing. Let the towel do the work. Do remove daily to ensure the towel has not matted the belly hair!**

### **THE SILKY COATED DOG**

**Count yourself lucky!. A little coat king, thinning shears on neck and rear, and you are ready to go. Try lighter conditioners so that the coat is not weighed down or greasy.**

### **PUPPIES**

**The less, the better. Trim and use a coat king; but if you shave or thinning shear that soft coat, it does not allow the adult coat to come in properly. Hand stripping is best; do a little every week until the adult coat is in.**

### **THIN HAIR**

**Basic rule-blunt cut. That is, cut the hair back evenly and it will look thicker. It also gives more control and less to get pulled out by daily living.**

**THIS IS JUST A START.**

**Good techniques can be found in many places; check out grooming guides for American cockers, English Springers, Irish setters and English setters. If you like a particular grooming style, ask the groomer how they approach grooming.**

**I would like to thank Denise Stewart of Sunspan kennels, Candy Carswell of DI'car kennels, and Ann Eldredge-Mateer of Maidavale kennels for their time and support in learning to groom. And, what must be mentioned is Bonnie Threlfall's fine demonstration in *The Complete English Cocker*, circa 1990, now out of print. You can get her grooming video through the ECSCA, as well as other materials. The website is:**

**<http://www.ecsca.org/ecsinfo.html>**