

International Bergamasco Sheepdog Association

GROOMING AND COAT CARE AFTER 3 YEARS

(Click on the images to enlarge then close the graphic window)

After the adjustment period, the coat requires very little care.

The saddle always needs combing, especially at the end of the Spring moulting period when the abundant Winter undercoat falls out and causes clumps in the goat hair. The maps on the rest of the body need periodic checking to make sure that they do not get too wide (Photo 6 - right). In this case, they should be

divided so that the coat maintains an orderly appearance (Photo 7 - left).



For the sake of clarity, we shall indicate the various body zones where the three hair textures and their different distribution can be noted.

On the saddle and the upper part of the neck, there is only undercoat and goat hair. The coat is smooth here and should be brushed regularly in order to remove dead undercoat hairs and keep the goat hair looking smooth and fresh.

Under the saddle, at shoulder level and below on the underside of the neck and on the chest, the presence of woolly hair is evidenced by the formation of maps, but the woolly hair is not as plentiful as on the rear of the body, but is mixed with the goat hair

which is abundant here. As a result, the maps in these areas are softer and thinner (Photo 8 - right). On the forelegs there are also agglomerations of long, fine and soft hair. These are, however so plentiful that they make the limbs look like solid, hairy columns emerging from the thick coat over the body which mask the joints.

On the rear of the trunk, over the flanks and on the rear limbs, the woolly hair is clearly preponderant so that the maps are thicker and stiffer there due to felting of this hair in contrast to the goat hair (Photo 9 - left). These maps are also



longer and tend to increase in length as the dogs get older. They grow down from the croup over the back legs, both sideways and to the rear, forming a wide "skirt".

Apart from keeping the saddle tidy and dividing the maps which are too wide, in order to keep the coat in top condition, regular brushing is required all over it, even where the maps are present. This should be done with a steel toothed brush with fine, curved teeth, approximately twice a month.

Brushing is necessary in order to tidy the coat and to remove dirt.

This can not disturb the maps. Once these are properly formed, no correct amount of brushing can alter their internal structure.

Frequent baths are detrimental to the Bergamasco's coat. The use of shampoo is not recommended as it dissolves the natural oils secreted by the skin for the purpose of creating a protective film around the hairs to make them waterproof

and protect them from contact with any external agents. Without this protection, the coat would become more dirty and the skin would dry out .



This is a danger to be avoided at all times in the Bergamasco, because drying out of the hairs which hold the mats together could cause them to fall out. In view of the length of time it takes for them to grow again, the dog would not resume its normal aspect for many months.

A good rule for Bergamascos is not to give them a complete bath more than once or maximum twice a year. They should be washed in plenty of water with only a very small dose of detergent. If necessary, one can wash the parts of the body which tend to get dirty easily at more frequent intervals i.e. the extremities, around the mouth to remove food remnants. Again, use plenty of water and very little soap. Another piece of advice is to avoid use of a hairdryer unless absolutely essential. This dries out the hairs with the consequences we have already discussed. Whenever possible, choose a sunny day with a bit of breeze to wash your dog and let it dry naturally. If it is absolutely unavoidable to use a dryer, remember to add a good dose of cosmetic oil to the last rinsing water to limit drying out the hair to a minimum.

From the above, I hope it is now clear that despite its complexity and abundance, the Bergamasco's coat does not require a great deal of attention in difference to the coats of many other breeds which require constant grooming.

The Bergamasco is a simple, uncomplicated dog which has remained close to nature and this is also reflected in its coat which forms and develops spontaneously. All we need to do is check its development, intervening as little as possible and with the utmost precaution when indispensable.

With regard to its coat like for everything else which concerns it, the Bergamasco is capable of fending for itself and finding the simplest and most natural solutions without assistance.

