



Wire Fox Terrier Association Grooming Demonstration Q&A

Hand-stripping - General

What is the difference between hand stripping a show dog and a pet?

The main difference is the frequency of trimming, to time the growth of the coat. A show dog in top order will typically get stripped every 1 to 2 weeks. Each time a show dog is groomed, only a relatively small number of hairs are removed in each session. This is done to stimulate layers into the coat so we can keep out dogs in a correct length coat, with correct wire texture, throughout the whole of their show careers. With a show dog, the whole of the coat will be hand stripped. With a pet, some or all of the dog may be clipped as this is a much quicker process.

To keep a pet dog in a tidy trim then it's usually recommended to have them groomed every 8 to 12 weeks (for a really tidy pet trim every 6 weeks would be even better). Some owners prefer the 'Teddy Bear' look so may opt to have their dogs groomed every 6 months. However, if a WFT coat is left for 6 months between stripping sessions there is a chance there will be no coat growing underneath, hence, they may come down bald.

Do show dogs have a shorter coat?

Not necessarily. Show dogs are regularly groomed to keep the coats at a relatively consistent length. With a pet trim, the coats are allowed to grow for longer periods. A pet that has had a recent trim will likely have a coat as short (if not shorter) than most show dogs.

Can spayed/neutered dogs still be hand stripped?

Yes. It is a myth that spayed/neutered wire coats can no longer be hand stripped.

Does a bitch's season affect their coat?

Yes, around the time of a bitch's season the coat growth seems to be stunted. For most bitches, this is not a significant difference. However, for a show dog it can affect the depth of layers in the coat.

How long does it take to do a full grooming session?

This is highly variable depending on the condition of the dog's coat and the experience of the groomer. As a rough guide doing a full hand strip typically takes around 3-4 hours. A full clip is much faster and can be done in around 1 hour.

Can you hand strip a dog in several sessions?

Yes, people grooming their own dogs will often do them in a number of sessions. If doing a dog in multiple sessions, it is always advisable to ensure whatever is taken from one side of the dog is also taken from the other side. This will prevent the sides from growing different and uneven. A good way of splitting hand trimming into 3 sessions is to do the body coat in one session, flatwork in one and then furnishings in another.

What is flatwork, what is blending?

Flatwork is a term used to describe the areas of the dog we typically trim shortest. These areas include the skull and ears (but not beard), down the dog's neck, the front and sides of the shoulders. This also includes the hair under the tail and the triangle of coat that grows from the underside base of the tail into the triangle of hair that covers the sanitary area.

Blending is the process where the short coat of the flatwork and the longer coat of body coat is merged together to appear as a continuous flowing growth, rather than having the appearance of two separate distinct areas with 'grooming lines' separating them. Blending requires taking a few hairs from the grooming line between the two areas to lessen the look of length as it 'blends' into the flatwork.



Flatwork area



Two different lengths of coat



Furnishings

What are the furnishings?

The furnishings are the areas on a fox terrier we leave longest. This includes the beard, legs and underline.

If your wire has a thick coat, how would you recommend you start grooming it, would you do something to it before using a knife?

The most efficient approach to a coat will be dependent on what condition the coat is in. If the coat has started to matt up into clumps, then we would advise starting by pulling the coat out with a knife without any other preparation beforehand on the coat.

If the coat is not matted into clumps, then we would normally start by brushing and combing the dog all over. Once completely matt free, we would rake/card the body coat with a stripping knife at a 45 angle before pulling the coat. Remembering to hold or support the skin in front of the area being carded or raked.

Can you start stripping after a dog has been clipped and would that be the same for any part of their body i.e. their head?

If a dog has been previously clipped it is possible to return the coat to a hand-trimmed coat. However, to do this it would be recommended to allow the dog's coat to completely grow out, for about 6 months after clipping, into a completely blown coat. Clipping the coat will damage the hair. If attempts are made to strip the coat before a previously clipped coat has blown this will be painful for the dog and so is not recommended. It would also not be recommended to start clipping a coat that has been repeatedly clipped over a number of years.

The hairs on a Wire Fox Terrier are the same all over their body. The only reason they appear different is because of the way we trim different areas to different lengths. Therefore, returning various areas of a clipped coat to hand stripped would be done with the same principles.

If you strip all the coat out what does that mean, and will that encourage a darker coat colour to come through?

Hand stripping is a process where we remove the dead coat, allowing new coat to grow. If dead coat is not removed, then the coat colours typically fade as the roots of the dead hairs become lighter in colour. When a wire coat is clipped, the colour fades because the dead, faded roots of the hairs are all exposed when the hair is cut.

What does 'letting down the shoulders' mean?

I believe this refers to the flatwork area on shoulders being described as 'let down' when trimmed closer than other areas that are trimmed – those being the body coat and furnishings.

Is the white hair different from the black hair to groom?

When hand trimming the process of stripping the coat is the same no matter the colour. When the coat grows back in the different colours do seem to grow in at a very slightly different rate. The black coat is also more forgiving if the coat isn't trimmed as evenly. Uneven areas of white coat seem much more obvious.



At what age would you start to hand strip puppies?

Starting young is always a good idea to get the puppy familiar with the process. This does not have to be a full hand strip. Brushing and combing should be started at 8 to 12 weeks of age. Hand stripping can start at 8 weeks of age, many of our puppies are hand stripped before going to their new owners by 12 weeks of age.

Many people like to leave their puppies looking like cute teddys until about 6 months of age. Just remember, even if you like the teddy bear look, it is still important to get the puppy used to being handled on a table, brushed and combed. So even if hand stripping is left until 6 months of age, this should not be their first grooming experience. It's also a good idea getting puppies used to having their feet handled. Many terriers are very sensitive about having their feet touched. Starting with young puppies just handling their feet and touching their pads and perhaps giving a nice treat as a reward can make a huge difference when the puppy becomes an adult.

Techniques

What is carding and is it different to raking and how do you know if a dog's coat needs carding or stripping?

Raking and carding are different terms for the same process. To rake the coat, a stripping knife is run through the coat (at 45° angle) in the direction the coat grows. This process removes some of the fluffy undercoat and helps the remaining coat to lay flatter to the body giving a smarter appearance. Raking once a week can be very beneficial and seems to promote good skin health as well as a smarter jacket. The coat can be raked until not much undercoat is coming out when running the knife through the coat.

How do you know if you are breaking/cutting the hairs instead of pulling them out from the root?

If you are using a trimming knife, then you can look at the hairs against the knife after pulling a bit of coat. If the hair has been cut, then the hairs on the knife will stop at the level of the blade. If the coat is being pulled from the root, then the base of the hair will extend past the level of the blade. With experience, you can also hear when the coat is being cut as the knife makes an abnormal noise.

What is a blown coat and how do you groom it?

A blown coat is a completely dead coat. When the hairs initially become dead the roots fade, but individual hairs remain separate from adjacent hairs. If a dead coat is left, then the hairs will start to clump together into matts. This clumping, combined with an abundant undercoat, will prevent the skin from being visible even when the matts are separated – this is sometimes referred to as 'coconut matting'.

Is the technique different on trimming from the left-hand side when you are right-handed as it seems more difficult?

As we all tend to have a more dominant hand, trimming one side of the dog can be more challenging than the other. The process is exactly the same, the hairs should still be pulled in the direction they grow.

What angle do you use to card/rake?

45°

Do you always pull in the direction of hair growth?

Yes, this is very important. Pulling against the direction of growth is very uncomfortable for the dog and can cause skin irritation and inflammation.

Do these techniques work for other breeds such as a Sealyham?

Yes, the process of hand stripping to remove dead coat is the same for all wire coated breeds.

Brushing technique for legs and beards?

As shown in our live demonstration, a technique of gently moving the hair from side to side and out with a pin brush is a good way to break apart small matts in the coat without causing discomfort to the dog or stripping out the undercoat from the furnishings.



Products

Do you have to be a member to order knives?

No, anyone can order supplies from our grooming shop.

How do you blunt knives off?

Ideally, sharp trimming knives should not be used. Some brands of knives are particularly sharp. The 'Lonsdale Stripping Knives' sold by the WFTA are much blunter when purchased new than many other brands of stripping knives. This is one of the reasons we stock this brand and recommend these knives. Over time with lots of use knives will blunt. This process can be accelerated by rubbing a trimming knife blade over a piece of hardwood, we would recommend that with any new knife.

Do you ever use a pumice stone to help grip when pulling?

A pumice stone can be used, many people like these. Personally, we only use trimming knives.

What Chalk do you use, why do you use it, and is it good for a greasy coat?

We just use white block chalk sold from dog grooming suppliers. Putting chalk into the coat can be useful to help grip the coat more effectively. Chalk can be rubbed all through a coat and brushed out as a cleaning agent – this is particularly useful for WFTs suffering from greasy coats.

What knives do you use, where from, what for and right or left-handed?

'Lonsdale Stripping Knives' stocked by our WFTA shop. These are available in both right and left-handed designs, with different teeth from extra fine to coarse. We would recommend a medium knife for general pet trims and general maintenance.

Can you use baby powder in this time of pandemic as its more available?

Baby powder could probably be used but it might not be as abrasive at helping to grip the coat as chalk.

What do thinning scissors look like and which other scissors should I have as well?



Pictured is an example of standard straight scissors (*on top*) and thinning scissors (*underneath*). For more information see the Wire Fox Terrier Hand Trimming Grooming – Basic Tools information at the end of this document.

Can I use the same knife to groom/card with and what size do you use for each?

Yes, you can. For general grooming rather than specialist show grooming the medium toothed blade generally will meet all needs. You will find contacting Jaqueline who manages the shop for the WFTA very helpful in advising re knife purchases. She can be contacted through the WFTA web site.



Can you tape a knife?

Yes, taping a knife handle can be helpful for some people if they find them uncomfortable to hold. Sometimes if we are teaching a new person how to use a knife correctly, we will also tape up a section of the blade. Only the top quarter of the blade is really needed to pull out the coat in small areas with a good technique. Therefore, the other teeth can be taped over for a novice to prevent them from getting into a habit of pulling coat with more than just the tip of the knife.

What is your opinion on Miki Red & Blue knives?

These are ok but not great. They are very sharp when new and the teeth don't start at the tip of the blade, so they promote a less than ideal technique.

What type of brush do you use, where do you get them from, and is it the same as a pin pad? What would you use each one for?

We use a basic 'Ancol Ergo Pin Brush'. These can be purchased from many suppliers online and pet stores. A pin pad can be used instead of/in addition to a pin brush. However, the pins on a terrier pad are typically much shorter than a pin brush so a pad might not be so efficient at detangling the hair right to the roots.

What type and size of Muzzle would you recommend?

Plastic basket muzzles or adjustable plastic muzzles are highly recommended as they allow the dog to pant, have some movement and safety without feeling overly restricted or restrained. Different manufacturers and types of those muzzles will have different sizing – it's worth liaising with the supplier/store and asking which size is appropriate from what brand they stock.

Can you use a Furminator or Coat King?

Furminators or coat kings are used by some. We don't use these as they cut the coat. Cutting will damage the wire coat and correct texture will be lost.

Health & Temperament

Is it unhealthy for WFT's skin to clip?

Anecdotally, WFTs seem to maintain better skin health when the coat is hand-stripped rather than clipped. However, that said if the skin is already inflamed prior to grooming then clipping might be recommended as pulling coat in areas of inflamed skin would be very uncomfortable for the dog.

Will it stress dogs by hand-stripping every week?

It shouldn't be a stressful process. Grooming should be enjoyable for both the dog and the groomer. The more frequently your dog is on a table and being checked, brushed and handled the easier and more enjoyable the process should become.

My Dog hates head being hand-stripped – how can I help him enjoy it more?

Try to be really careful with your technique and be sure to only pull a very small number of hairs at a time, using just the very tip of the trimming knife. Also rewarding good behaviour with really nice treats might help when an area has been completed.

My dog doesn't like abdominal area or ear edges being stripped can you advise as everything else is ok?

Both of these areas can be particularly sensitive. Again, the best tip is to pull a very small number of hairs at a time with the very tip of the trimming knife or finger and thumb.

My dog tries to bite after initially being good especially when doing the legs?

If you have trimmed the rest of the dog and only have legs left to complete, it may be an idea to break this behaviour by leaving the legs to another day when both of you are rested. Alternatively, before getting to the legs, give the dog a break for toileting and relaxation (again ending prior trim on a good note) give a reward and then return to the table to complete legs. If the behaviour continues, you need to use a muzzle to protect yourself. Be calm, patient and continue with the process until the legs are completed. You will find a consistent approach and minimising your response to the behaviour will get the job done.



What do you do if your dog gets aggressive on the table?

Generally, remain calm and continue to ensure the dog cannot hurt itself throwing itself about so will support holding it by the rear usually. Ensure that a muzzle is safely secured and continue with the process of grooming. Sometimes working on an area previously groomed or an area adjacent to one that appears to be sensitive will often help reduce the aggression and stress. Aggression is usually fear, stress, anxiety or just stubborn mindedness. You need a good understanding of your dog and the situation at the time to understand what is driving the behaviour, but a calm steady approach needs to be maintained.

If your dog tries to lick your hand or the comb is that a sign, they are uncomfortable?

Lip licking can be a sign of anxiety. However, licking isn't necessarily a sign of discomfort or anxiety and the behaviour needs to be taken in context with the other signs the dog is giving. In our demonstration, we were using a very young, playful dog who was most likely licking the comb in more of a playful manner. Wires are also inquisitive and curious, and they go through life asking 'what happens if? Or what is this?' so it is not unusual for wires to see and investigate what is happening.

Under what circumstances would you not hand strip?

Hand stripping is a very time-consuming procedure. Some dogs, particularly older dogs, will struggle to stand without discomfort for the required time to hand strip. Therefore, we tend to hand strip our dogs when they are young and fit, but as they get older, we often clip them to prevent them from being on the table for prolonged periods.

Do dogs get more sensitive to having coat pulled as they get older?

I don't think dogs get more sensitive to the process stripping the coat. A good technique should not be painful or uncomfortable for the dog. They may struggle standing on a table as long as they get older as many with start to get joint and muscle pains with age.

Why pull inside the ears if it hurts. Will pulling dogs ears help stop ear infections?

Wire coats are naturally designed to be pulled, it is the fundamental basis of a wire coat – they grow and are meant to be pulled out for coat to regenerate. Cutting the coat means cutting dead coat. The coat then loses the texture, is more prone to matting and ear clogging. The end result is an area at greater risk of being infected. Pulling hair around the inside edges of the ear and within the greater ear canal needs to be done with patience and consideration. It is best done by finger and thumb taking a very few hairs at a time. This should minimise the sensation of the hair being pulled.

Best way to trim nails?

There's no right or wrong answer to this really. You can use a nail file, a horse file (although big and cumbersome), nail cutters. We don't particularly like the guillotine style nail cutters as when becoming blunt can pull on nails rather than cut cleanly. Don't cut too much off to prevent cutting the kwik. Cutting the kwik will make them bleed and is painful – doing so will increase anxiety in the future and make a dog less tolerant of the procedure. On the right is a useful diagram on nail trimming.

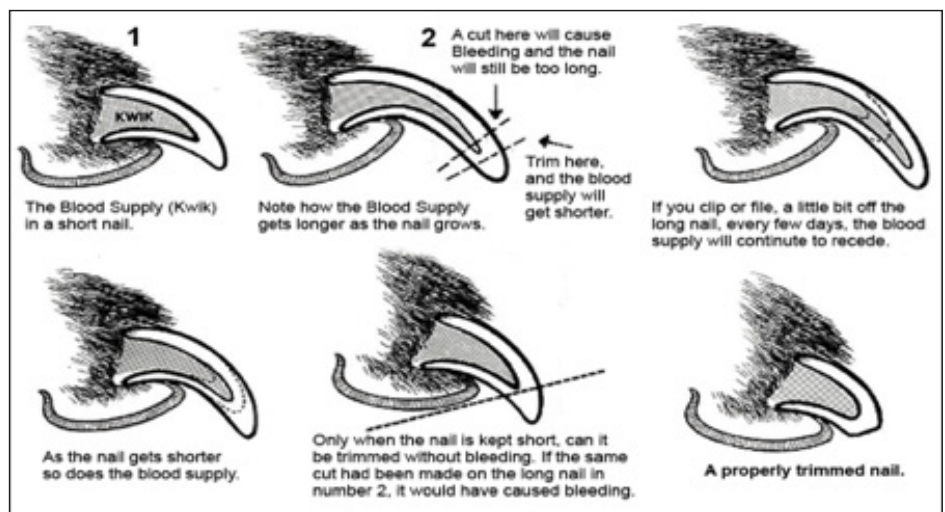


Image source: <https://www.vetbabble.com/dogs/grooming-dogs/trimming-dogs-nails/>



Bathing

How often should I bath a WFT?

There is no one correct answer to this. Some will never bath their WFTs. We don't tend to bath body coats unless the dog is particularly dirty and needs bathing to clean the coat. Bathing the coat can result in a slight loss to the wiry texture of the coat. For dogs we are showing, we will tend to bath and condition the furnishings weekly/ This is done to help prevent the leg hair becoming brittle as it can be very difficult to grow to the length we aim for without doing this. If the coat is bathed, then it is very important to ensure the coat is thoroughly dried after. Failure to adequately dry the coat can result in skin problems.

Do you have to bath after a groom to remove the chalk?

No, we have never known a WFT to react to chalk. Excess can be brushed out, but it is not essential to wash the coat.

Shall I bath them beforehand stripping or after?

If you want to bath the body coat, then we would do this after stripping. The furnishings we tend to bath and dry prior to trimming.

What shampoo is best to use?

There are many shampoos available and this is down to personal preference. We like the 'Plush Puppy Whitening Shampoo' or their wheat germ shampoo. However, any good oatmeal, tea tree or coconut dog shampoos seem to suit WFTs well.

Ears

Is it better to leave heavier hair on puppy's ears once the puppy fluff has been pulled off on a 14-week-old puppy?

This will depend somewhat on the size, set and thickness of leathers of the puppy's ears. It's best to speak with the breeder or an experienced breed person for advice on specific puppy's ears.

What happens to puppies ears when they are teething?

When puppies are teething, this can cause ear carriage to change. The ears have a very close connection to the inside of the mouth where the teeth are.

What are your thoughts on gluing ears, when, for how long for and what do you use?

Ear gluing is ok if it is done by an experienced person. Incorrect ear gluing can promote infections in the ear. Gluing ears while puppies are teething can help to retain good ear placement. 'Tear mender' has been known to be a suitable glue. Gluing of ears should not be undertaken unless there is good knowledge and understanding of why it is done, how to glue ears, and how to monitor the ears.

Legs & Beards

Should you card the leg hair?

No, this would take density out of the leg hair so we would not recommend doing this.

How can you even out the beard hair density?

Pulling the hair evenly will result in the hair growing in evenly. Try taking a few hairs off all over the beard each week until you get the desired look.

What are guard hairs?

They are also known as main strong whisker hairs and the term often encompasses the main hairs that can protrude from 'beauty spots' on side of cheeks



What about shaping the furnishings. Still stripping or do you scissor at all?

Furnishings can be hand stripped and this is how show dog furnishings are trimmed. For dogs that are not being shown, some people will scissor the legs. We prefer to hand trim the legs even on a dog we are not showing as hand-trimmed furnishings seem to be far less prone to matting. Additionally, dirt and debris are more easily removed, the texture is more in keeping with the look and body coat of the wire fox terrier as a whole.

[Any other questions](#)

How can I watch this again and where will it be available?

Yes, the live-streamed video should still be available on Facebook. We have also added the video to our Wire Fox Terrier Association Website and a WFTA YouTube Channel has been created and all our videos and live streams will also be uploaded there.

How can I join the WFTA and how do you pay your subscription renewal?

You are welcome to join us! We are a very inclusive club whether you show your dog or not. We strive to include all owners with a much loved WFT companion. We also welcome members who may not own a WFT but have an interest in the breed.

For WFTA membership information see the website: <https://www.wirefoxterrierassociation.co.uk/>

On the website, you will find contact points for various committee members and specific roles – health, welfare & rehoming, puppies etc. Everyone is approachable and will help if they can.

Do you have a welfare scheme I can donate to?

Yes! We have a welfare and rehoming scheme that is accessible through our website.



Wire Fox Terrier Hand Trimming Grooming - Basic Tools



Stripping Knives

Good quality stripping knives are difficult to find. Ideally a trimming knife for a WFT coat should be blunt and not cut the coat. The Wire Fox Terrier Association shop sell our own 'Lonsdale Stripping Knives'. These knives have been specifically designed for a WFT coat and are exclusively available through the WFTA. See our website for details.

<https://www.wirefoxterrierassociation.co.uk/shop-1>.



Grooming Table

It is strongly recommended to groom your dog on a non-slip table top surface. Grooming your dog on the floor should be actively discouraged for health and safety. Many grooming tables fold up/down so they can be stored away while not in use.



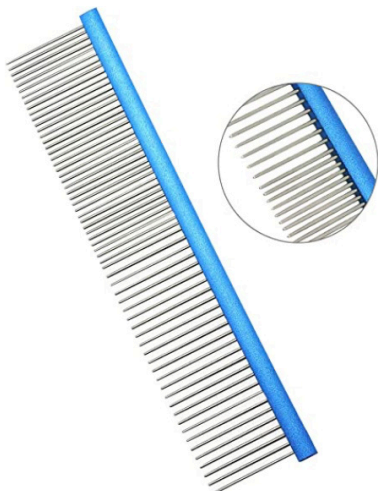
Grooming Arm & Noose

For health & safety it is recommended to safely secure your dog on the table with a grooming arm and noose. The example shown is adjustable. Though not essential to have an adjustable arm it is useful as the arm can be moved closer to the dog's height so the noose can be kept relatively short. Keeping a short noose strap helps restrict the ability for the dog to excessively move around on the table giving better control. Dogs should NEVER be left on a grooming table unattended, especially with a grooming noose on as this is a serious choke hazard.



Pin Brush

Used to brush the dog all over. We recommend a pin brush without the ball tips. During our grooming demonstration we used an 'Ancol Ergo Pin Brush'. The brush we used is a relatively cheap but robust brush.



Stainless Steel Comb (7.5 inches)

Used to comb dog all over after brushing with pin brush. Many dog grooming combs will have both a wide and narrow spaced set of pins. The wide spaced edge of the comb is what is generally most used on a WFT coat. Plastic combs are not suitable for WFT coats.



White Chalk Block

Not essential but very useful to help grip the coat during the process of hand trimming. Can also be used as a cleaning agent when rubbed all through the coat and then brushed out again – particularly useful for WFTs suffering with greasy coats.



Nail Cutters

Used to trim nails. There are a variety of different nail cutters available. The type shown here are a plier design and are very suitable for WFTs nails. The guillotine design is probably best avoided as when they become blunt, they have a tendency to bend nails which is very uncomfortable for your dog. Some people like to use a dog grooming Dremel to grind the nails down which some dogs may tolerate better.



Kwik Stop Powder

If nails are cut back to the kwik by accident they will bleed. Kwik Stop powder is very useful to help stop the bleeding quickly if the nails bleed. Just apply a small amount with a cotton bud to the bleeding nail.



Straight Scissors

Although not strictly required for a hand trimmed WFT, many like to use scissors for some areas (such as in between toe and pads of the feet). It's difficult to recommend specific scissors as this really comes down to personal preference. Generally full-length stainless-steel scissors are more suitable (such as the example shown) rather than buying the cheaper plastic handled scissors.

Thinning Scissors

Again not strictly required for hand trimmed WFT. Can be useful for trimming faces, legs and underlines. Easier to use than normal scissors as they don't tend to leave harsh lines in the coat.



Grooming Spray

Again, not essential but very useful. Helps to keep coats well-conditioned (particularly the face and leg hair). Spray on legs and face prior to brushing to help prevent hair damage. Also helps prevent coat matting.