

# Is It OK to Shave Your Dog's Coat in Summer?

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By

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## Key Points

Shaving a double-coated dog can actually make it harder for them to cool off.

Coats shouldn't be cut to less than one inch to protect from sunburn and bug bites.

Regular brushing improves air circulation and cooling.

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Temperatures are soaring, your dog is panting, and there's dog hair all over the house. You might be thinking that a good, close shave could help [cool your dog off](#) while eliminating some of that furry mess.

Well, think again. Many dogs should not be shaved at all, depending on their coat type. Shaving can actually have the opposite effect of what you intend and make your dog even hotter. Here are some insights on shaving your dog, and some steps you can take instead to keep your dog healthy in hot weather.

## Double-Coated Dogs

Double-coated dogs have a soft, inner coat of hair close to their skin that serves as an insulating layer,

helping keep them warm in cold weather and cool in hot weather. In summer, a [dog will shed](#) a good bit of this under-layer, but what remains will help capture air between the two coat layers, allowing the dog to keep the heat at bay and regulate their body temperature. The [outer coat](#) (or guard hair) consists of longer hair that gives a dog their color. Dogs do not shed the outer coat as much.

Examples of double-coated dogs are [Golden Retrievers](#), [Border Collies](#), [German Shepherd Dogs](#), [Labrador Retrievers](#), [Siberian Huskies](#), and [English Springer Spaniels](#). As they shed their undercoats in warm weather, the outer coat remains to protect them from sunburn and insect bites.

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“Your dog’s coat actually acts as an insulator,” explains Dr. Jerry Klein, Chief Veterinary Officer for the AKC. “Shaving that coat to reduce shedding or supposedly to keep the dog cool also eliminates that insulating layer of fur, makes the dog susceptible to [heat stroke](#), and can result in improper hair growth and the possibility of follicle damage. A dog’s fur coat protects him from [sunburn](#) and decreases his risk of developing [skin cancer](#).”

Shaving a double coat can also do long-term damage. When it is shaved down to the skin, the undercoat hair will grow back faster, and sometimes will crowd out the slower-growing guard hairs. This can change the texture and color of a dog’s coat and make it appear patchy and unattractive.

## Single-Coated Dogs

Single-coated dogs include dogs such as [Greyhounds](#), [Boxers](#), [Dalmatians](#), [Poodles](#), [Maltese](#), and [Afghan Hounds](#). They can have very short hair or long hair, and it can be wiry, smooth, or curly – but all breeds have even-looking hairs with no soft undercoat.

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Certain types of single-coated dogs may benefit from having a [professional groomer](#) clip their coats occasionally to prevent matting and to keep them cooler. However, the coats should not be shaved down to the skin. It is best to leave at least one inch of hair to protect them from sunburn, skin cancer, and bug bites. These dogs don’t have the added insulation of an undercoat, so they need to keep at least one inch of hair for warmth and protection.

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## How to Safely Cool Down Your Dog

Dogs cool down a lot differently than we do, and shaving really has no big impact on cooling them down. Dogs rely on [panting](#) to control most of their temperature regulation. They also rely on vasodilation (blood vessel expansion) to help them cool off, especially on their ears and face. When the blood vessels expand, they bring the hot blood closer to the surface of the skin.

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Dogs also have merocrine [sweat glands](#) that function similarly to human sweat glands. However, these are they are located only in a [dog's paw pads](#), and they activate when the dog is hot to cool them down.

Rather than shaving your dog, use these [hot-weather grooming tips](#) to keep your pet comfortable.

[Brush your dog's fur](#) regularly. This eliminates dead hair, prevents matting, and allows for better air circulation in their coat.

Give your dog regular cool [baths](#) to keep them clean and free of pests.

Since your dog's cooling sweat glands are located on their feet, [keeping their paws trimmed](#) of excess fur can help the sweat evaporate and cool them off.

Groomers suggest it is also a good idea to keep a dog's legs and stomach trimmed of very long hair to enhance cooling.

Make sure your dog always has access to cool water and shade, takes walks and exercises only during the coolest parts of the day, and is [never left unattended in a vehicle](#), even for just a few minutes.

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[Related article: How to Groom a Dog at Home](#)

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### The All-Purpose Grooming Tool kit

Do you have everything you need to keep your dog in tip top shape? Not sure where to start? This e-book will outline how to put together the perfect grooming kit for your dog.

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