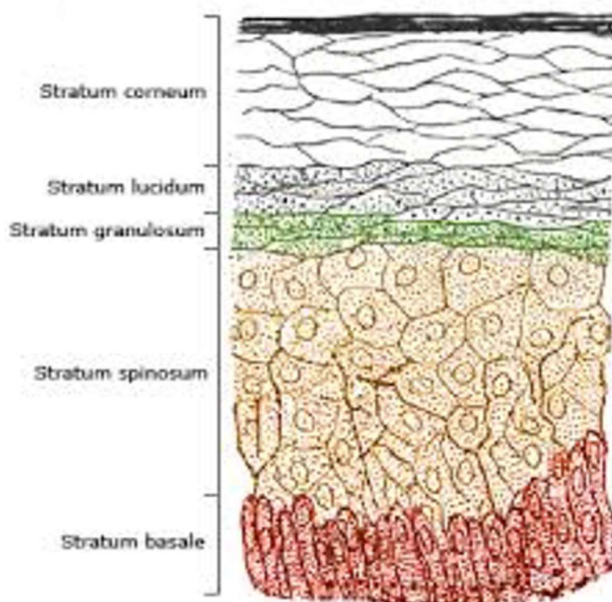


THE DREADED DESHED

One of the most common questions that pops up on Facebook as well as seminars is “what is the secret or magic bullet in doing desheds?” How do we minimize the work that needs to be done, speed up the process, and how do we properly charge for the amount of time we spend on them? One of the elements that often gets lost in the discussion is the wear and tear on the groomer’s and the pet’s bodies that goes with it.

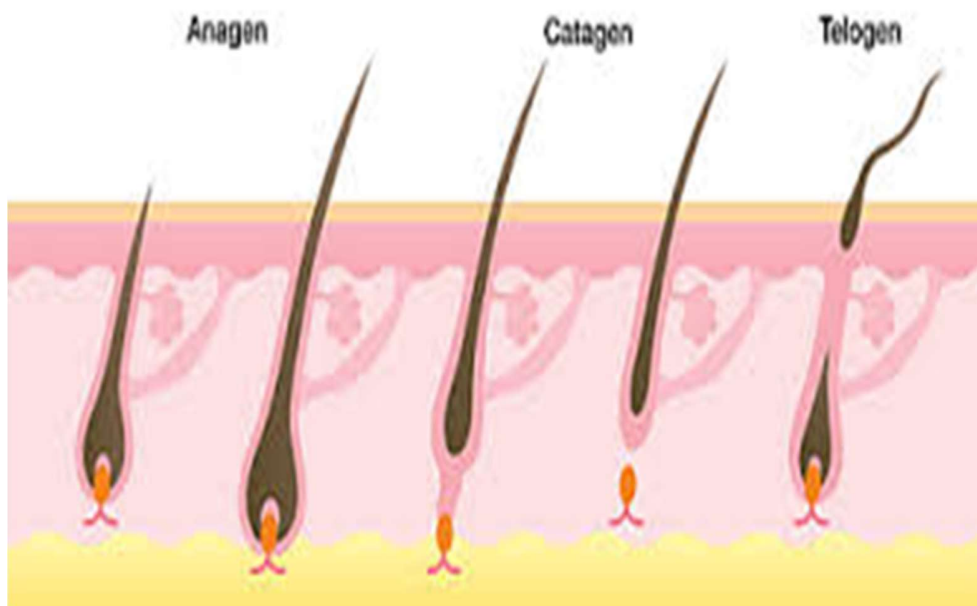
First, we need to realize that desheds are about a process not a product. If there was one magic product that solved all the issues, we would all use it and that would be the end of the discussion. With any skin or hair issue we need to understand how we got there to properly understand and resolve it.

The hair and skin both grow through cycles. The skin, specifically the epidermis goes through a keratinization cycle where we go from immature cells in the basement layer of the skin, to adult cells, to dead and dying cells on the surface of the skin. This cycle occurs every 21 days. So, every 21 days we literally have dead and dying cells on the surface of the skin that need to be removed with the bathing process.



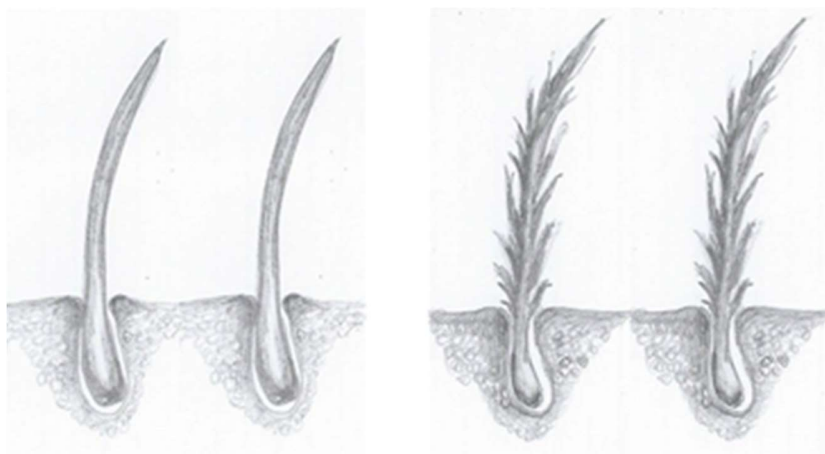
The hair cycle (short and medium coated dogs) is more variable, but it goes through stages from when the hair starts, develops to full length, sheds, and then starts all over again. This is greatly influenced by the seasons and the breed of dog. In fall/winter months, most of these dogs will put on more secondary hairs

to create adequate insulation and then shed them in the spring/ summer.



This shed cycle is what creates the need for desheds. If a coat is groomed and conditioned correctly, then this is not a big deal. With correct conditioning, the hair does not mat as severely and with frequent bathing the amount of skin debris and extra hair should be minimum (relative). The larger issue occurs if these things are not being done. So, the first part of the process is education.

Understanding correct conditioning is where the groomer needs to be well versed. Over the years, we have strayed away from or have been using the wrong type of conditioners. This has played a significant role in contributing to problematic shedding and matting, especially in the growing Doodle population. Failure to condition the coat correctly leaves the plaques of the hair shaft open which acts like Velcro with the hairs around it.



Dramatization of a hair with closed plaques to one poorly conditioned and open plaques.

Educating the client to have their pets groomed every 3-4 weeks is very important because of the normal cycle of the skin. The longer they go without a groom, the greater the issue becomes. Eventually many of these dogs must be shaved down. Often, groomers will say that clients just don't listen when they try to explain the issue, BUT then the groomer reinforces the bad behavior. How? Not charging correctly for your time! If a normal groom is \$65 and the client only comes in once every 6 months with a dog that requires you to spend 3-4 hours completing and you only charge \$20 extra, you have just reinforced their bad behavior. Most groomers that charge by the hour charge \$60-90 an hour. Charging correctly means that this particular groom should be a minimum of \$180-360 if it takes that long, otherwise there are no consequences for their bad behavior. Charging appropriately needs to come with a full explanation of how the customer could have come in monthly for \$390 (6 X \$65) and had a beautiful, pleasant smelling dog once a month versus twice a year. If they do it the second time (because they didn't take heed of your education), the price should go up or send them packing. That is not fair to the dog at that point! If you are not respected by the client, is that a relationship you want to continue with? Everyone has to make that decision for themselves. The question is, "Am I part of the solution or part of the problem?". There are plenty of great pet owners looking for groomers right now!

As to working through a deshed. There are several issues that cause the problem:

- 1) Hair plaques open and keep the hairs from releasing from each other.
- 2) Dirt, dead cells, and dry sebum is holding the hair tight at the skin level
- 3) The hair follicle is often crammed full of hair that is held in by dried sebum.

With these in mind you can choose to work hard at this point or work smart. Often you see groomers on Facebook covering the walls with hair and skin debris, as they blow the pets out after the bath. Are they charging for the cleanup time also? Not to mention the dog and groomer are breathing in dead cells, bacteria, fungus, and small hairs (groomer's lung is real!!!)

Here are some of my recommendations to work smarter:

- 1) As soon as the dog walks in the door, spray them down with a hydration spray to start the hydration process. If there are mats you can even use a straight hydrating conditioner to start "plumping up" the hairs.
- 2) When ready to start the groom, condition first (close-open-close) and let sit for 10-20 minutes depending on the severity of the problem. This will start softening (oils dissolve oils) and hydrating the old dry sebum to stimulate the release of the hairs from the follicles as well as hydrating the hair which will start breaking down the tangles and matting. Then rinse.
- 3) Mix a little oil (a couple of drops) like avocado oil in with your shampoo and apply to the coat. Leave on for 5 minutes. Then rinse but I recommend using a Save your Fur or similar nozzle. Done correctly you should be able to drop almost all the dead coat in the tub. It is much better to deal with all the hair "gunk" in a wet form here instead of breathing it in later.
- 4) Condition well using a hydrating conditioner to avoid problems the next go around.

At this point there should be minimum hair left to be brushed or blown out. The pet will love and appreciate you and as you get older, your lungs will thank you for choosing to work in a healthier environment!