

Chapter 8

GROOMING THE LÖWCHEN



Primitive mannerism painting with a Löwchen. Note the trim is similar to the Löwchen in Festive Meal.

The Löwchen clip has been described as being the same as the Poodle clip. What is popularly described to be the Poodle clip is actually a very old style dog clip, which we will refer to as the lion clip. The earliest evidence of the lion clip dates to Grecian and Roman times. Should you ever be so lucky to visit Pompeii, look for the pet dog in a wall frieze, which can be found in the House of Epigrams. You will see a small dog with standup ears sporting the same lion clip we practice today. Many breeds through the centuries, including the Bichon Frise and Maltese, have used the lion clip. This is the reason assumptions cannot be made that all the dogs in the lion clip are Löwchen when viewing ancient works of art.

The Löwchen clip differs from country to country. In Germany, the area around the eyes and under the chin is clipped. The Scandinavians and Finnish fanciers generally do not clip the feet. The Americans do the lion trim and leave the rest untouched, since to trim any of the long coat is asking to be disqualified from the show ring. The Löwchen clip has evolved and changed through the centuries. In the early



Dog with lion clip in wall frieze in the House of Epigrams at Pompeii. Photo Anna Creticos

days of the breed, the dogs were often cut starting behind the shoulders and not at the last rib as they are today.

Many people ask why dogs are clipped in the lion trim. Poodle fanciers answer this by claiming the lion trim was developed for ease of swimming as needed by the early hunting Poodles. In the case of the Löwchen, the more likely explanation is that the clip evolved for purposes of hygiene. All the areas that are clipped usually matt first, especially under and around the tail. Clipping the genital area eliminates urine odor and discourages feces from being caught in the coat. The lion cut probably evolved from people clipping around the genitals to keep the area clean. Eventually, the clip became stylized and evolved into the lion clip, graduating from the purpose of hygiene to beauty.

There is a story that the ladies of medieval courts, who used the clipped dogs as hot water bottles, developed the lion clip.



Note that the legs are trimmed higher than we are used to today. Painting Balachustin Kennel



The trim of the Löwchen progressed from the styles pictured previously in this chapter to this style. The foot is trimmed up further than would be normal by today's standards. Additionally the

(Photo caption continued) face is trimmed. The hair around the eyes is cleaned away. A small amount of coat is removed from under the chin. The moustache is trimmed noticeably. Photograph Felizitas Dylla



This is the old fashioned clip that the early breeders used. The clip line was situated higher up on the shoulder. This create an illusion of length. In this case at first glance the dog appears long-bodied. In actuality, he is of correct proportions. This dog is Y-Moorchen von Livland. Photo Felizitas Dylla

While this is a charming and it is possible the Löwchen were used in this way, evidence points to this cut being over one thousand years old. It can be surmised that in those early times, dogs were clipped with the same type razor used by men.

There are many ways Löwchen can be groomed. How you clip your Löwchen is dictated by your personal needs and preferences. The two categories we will discuss are the show clip and the pet clip. We will deal first with the show clip.

Show Trim

While the basic trim is centuries old, there have been stylistic changes through the years, but essentially the clip is the same as it was in the 15th century. The lion trim is the only trim allowed in the show ring. The desired result of this trim is a lionlike appearance.

At one time in the United States there were two allowed show trims. This style is essentially the same as the clip found in the show ring today with the exception that the coat in the clipped areas is approximately an inch in length, not short



A Löwchen in the accepted modern trim. Ch. Bumir Boule de Neige. Photo Ewa Högberg.

and almost to the skin as is prescribed today. This old-style clip is best seen in the Barrs Buffon illustration of the Lion Dog. One of the early Little Lion Dog Club of America breed standards described this trim as acceptable. Even so, it was seldom used in the show ring.

To clip a Löwchen into the show trim, you will need the following:

- 1) Clippers. There are many choices. The preferred clipper is one that has a latch allowing blades to be quickly and efficiently changed.
- 2) Blades. Blade numbers vary according to manufacturer. The numbers denote what length hair the blade will leave after clipping. With most blades, the smaller the number, the longer the hair left on the dog.
- 3) Lubricating/Cooling aerosol spray. Used to keep blades running cool and lubricated.
- 4) Conditioning Spray. This is used to prevent coat breakage during the brush out. Many conditioning sprays can be used as de-tanglers.
- 5) Pin Brush.
- 6) Slicker brush for matts.
- 7) Combination comb 1 1/2 inch length of teeth.
- 8) Ear cleaner.
- 9) Cotton swabs.
- 10) Kelly clamps for plucking ears.
- 11) Ear powder.
- 12) Nail clipper.
- 13) QuikStop or styptic pencil.
- 14) Small rubber bands.

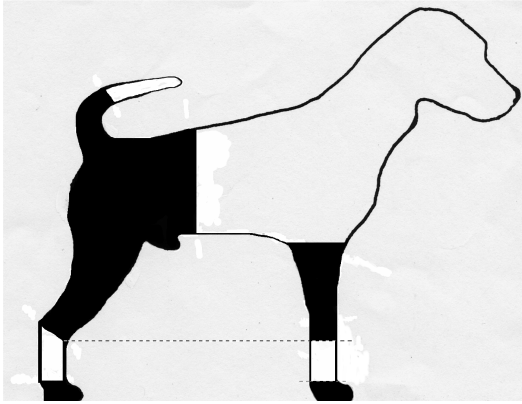
There are some prerequisites to putting your Löwchen into good show condition. You should regularly maintain the coat, keeping it healthy and in shiny condition. To do this, you need to keep your dog on a regular grooming schedule.

Brushing

Weekly brush-outs are especially important once the coat is long. The proper technique is as follows: spray the coat completely with a good quality conditioning spray. Do not brush your Löwchen if it has a wet coat since dog hair is like hemp rope. When damp, any tangles in the coat will tighten as the coat dries. Also the coat is temporarily weakened when wet.

With your hand, push back on the coat, in opposite direction to growth. You are lifting the coat up in preparation to brushing. Using the pin brush, start at the bottom of the length of the coat. Hold the brush gently. Do not force it through the snags since doing so will break coat. With gentle downward strokes, work up the length of hair. Once you reach the top, take another strand with the corner of your brush from the hair being held back with your hand. And begin again. The key words here are LIFT and SEPARATE.

When you think you are done, run the comb through the coat. Pressing the comb's teeth against the skin, you will be able to determine if there are any tangles or matts. Should the comb snag, you have found one or the other. Hold the comb where it snagged and expose the offending knot to determine how you will handle it. Spray it thoroughly with conditioning spray and pull it apart with your fingers. Using the corner of the slicker brush, brush upwards until you are through the separated strands. Once completed, run the comb through again to determine that the coat is detangled.



This is the typical clip pattern that Löwchen fanciers worldwide use. There can be some variation from country to country, but usually they are slight changes. In Scandinavia, for example, many exhibitors do not clip the feet. The areas highlighted in black are clipped short. The front ankle bracelets are cut level with the lower point of the top cut line of the rear ankle bracelets. Drawing Gini Denninger

Clipping The Löwchen

Once the Löwchen is completely brushed out, the pattern needs to be set. The placement of cut depends on several factors. There is variation of clip style from country to country. In the United States absolutely no trimming is allowed, even around the eyes, whereas, in Germany there is extensive trimming around the eyes as well as a little notch of hair taken off the chin directly under the mouth. In some of the Scandinavian countries the feet are not clipped. Löwchen exhibitors are the best source to explain to you which clip is necessary.

Placement of the cutting lines can also vary according to each dog, depending on their conformation. If a dog is very long or short in the torso, you will need to experiment with the starting line of the clip until you find one that hides the flaw. The cutting line on the average proportioned dog starts with the last rib

When to clip a Löwchen before a show depends on the blade used. If the coat is cut very short, practically to the skin, then the clipping should be done approximately one week before the show.

To begin clipping, hold the clipper in the direction of coat growth, starting at the rib cage. Do not clip against the grain. Clip

across the loins and rump and down the tail. You will clip approximately three-quarters of the tail, leaving a tuft at the end. Clip down the hind legs to the ankle. Angle the cut line down from the back of the hock to the front of the hock. Blend the cut line into the anklets. Lift a hind leg and with a blade that clips closely, clip against the grain to the genitals. Go carefully so as to avoid clipper burn. Lift the dog to a standing position on his hind legs, and clip the underside of the rib cage down to the genital area. Clean off the genital area. To clip the forearm, clip downward with the growth of the foreleg coat, to the anklets. The anklets should start at the same point as the high point of the anklets on the rear hocks.

- 15) The feet should be clipped with a blade that clips as close as possible, but not as short as a surgical clipper blade would leave it. To begin, take the foot in hand and feel for bony protrusion at the topsides of the foot, under the ankle joint. Clean the foot off up to the protrusions. Clip from the nail upwards to the imaginary line between the two knobs. Clean carefully around the nail with slow, clean and even strokes into the insides

of each toe. Take care to not cut the inner corner of the toes. Once the top of the foot is clean, turn the dog so it is facing away from you. Lift the foot and clean the underside. When you are finished clipping, it is important that you again completely brush the dog out. If you do not, loose hairs will matt into the coat during the bath.

Next, cut the nails. Should you miscalculate and cut into the quick, apply styptic powder or pencil to stop the bleeding. If you are not sure how to cut the nails, ask your breeder or veterinarian to show you how to do this, since it is better that you see it being done and explained at the same time. It is important to regularly cut the dog's nails since the feet can eventually break down and become deformed if the nails are too long. In



This dog is in the Löwchen trim but it is scissored. Littlecourt Günter. Photo Alice Bixler.

the United States there is a strongly ingrained idea that the dewclaws should be removed shortly after birth. This procedure is not necessary, and is generally only practiced there. If the dewclaw is not removed, the person cutting the nails must remember to cut it.

Now clean out the ears. You will need to pluck them if the hair is so thick that air cannot circulate in the ear. To pluck ears, apply ear powder liberally onto the hair in the ears. Using your fingers or Kelly clamps, pluck the ear clean. Then rinse the ear with a commercial ear cleaner. The dog is now ready to be bathed. After the bath it is wise to apply ear powder again to dry any lingering dampness. If there is only a small amount of hair in the ears, it is not really necessary to pluck it.

Trimming The Löwchen

There is some debate in the United States over whether a small amount of trimming in the corner of the eye is allowable. Some breeders do trim a little and feel that this should not be so greatly penalized. The American standard calls for penalization of all trimming. What kind of trimming should be allowed is a sticky question, since some dogs have such profuse



This dog is trimmed. In some parts of the world, this trimming was common. It seems to be becoming less so. Ch. Eastvalanna Salonique. Photo Pat Jones

coat that it grows up over the eye, and would need to be glued into place by a sculpting gel, in order for the dog to be able to see. In Europe, breeders for the most part, do small amounts of trimming on the face. In Germany there is a prescribed trim that calls for removal of the foremost part of the beard and trimming in front of the eye. The reason there are no strictures against trimming in Europe is that there are fewer tendencies by exhibitors to begin sculpting the rest of the body. In the United States, over grooming of breeds is common. Many exhibitors and handlers would think if trimming is allowable on the face, why not elsewhere? A little trimming here or there to clean up the outline of the dog. Eventually the Löwchen could become another very sculpted breed. The general consensus of most European exhibitors is that it is unnecessary to trim Löwchen, even undesirable. Trimming around the eye is accepted and performed in Europe with the desired effect being that the dog is able to see where it is going. There is also less reliance on professional handlers by European exhibitors; most dogs are owner-handled. Because of this there is less of a grooming and shaping frenzy on the part of the exhibitor.



A Löwchen with a clipped face and topknot. Lowe-Ray's Moriah. Photo Gini Denninger

The Bath

Never bathe your dog unless it is completely dematted. Dog hair is like hemp rope. Mats tighten after they are wet. Using water, warm/hot to the touch, rinse the dog, wetting it down completely. Dilute your shampoo to facilitate its saturation of the coat. Pour it onto the coat, working it in. It is important that you do not scrub the coat. Knead the shampoo through as you would with a fine wool sweater. To do otherwise will matt and damage the coat. Rinse the dog, paying special attention to the ear, neck and genital areas. You do not need to reshampoo the dog unless it is very dirty. Using a conditioner is optional unless the hair is damaged.

To keep the correct wave in the coat texture, let the coat dry naturally or with a dryer attached to the cage. Do not blow dry the coat with brush and dryer, since that will straighten the coat out, eliminating the correct wave. Once the coat is dry you may use a forced air dryer to thoroughly brush through it. This will not straighten the coat out too much since the wave is set. When brushing, use your pin brush. Another problem with brushing the coat out when wet is that as it dries, it cannot only become too straight, it can become too fluffy. Fluffy is not correct. Another cause of too fluffy a coat is back brushing when the coat is either dry or wet.

You may decide to re-clip the main portions of the body after the bath, clipping the uneven spots.

If trimming around the eyes is allowed, this is fairly easy to do. If you hold

the head in your hand, brush the hair away from the face. Angle your thinning shears at an angle across the nose (PICTURE HERE OF HEAD AND EYE TRIM LINE) and cut the hair directly in front of the eye in the tear duct drain line. If your dog has teary eyes you will simply cut out the stained areas.

Some exhibitors regularly bind the topknot up daily. The only time the hair is not in a topknot is before going into the show ring. Binding the hair up allows the dog to see better. If you chose to do so, take care to use hair binders that do not break hair. Buy bands designed to hold up topknots. Especially gentle to coats are the terry cloth type hair binders. Another trick to save the hair is to use rolling papers where the rubber band will rest. Cut the rubber band prior to removing it. Instead of using rubber bands to hold the topknot you could also use plastic barrettes.

Brush the hair away from the face, especially on the top, just before going into the show ring. Brush the coat in direction of coat growth. Let the coat fall into a natural part across the back. Never artificially part the coat. . The final product of all this grooming is a lion-like appearance.

The Pet Clip

You have many options for this clip. You may choose to keep your Löwchen closely clipped or fluffy. Whatever you choose, you should keep the dog fairly clean. Plan to bathe it at least once a month. You will need the same equipment as for doing the show clip. Additionally you may want to buy some blade attachments, long or short and a straight edged scissors.

The Puppy Cut And Utility Cut

The puppy cut is suitable for dogs that live in cool climates. This cut is not the easiest to maintain since it requires regular brushing, bathing and clipping. The easiest to maintain is a complete clip down. That is known as the Utility clip. You need to clip the dog every three to four months to maintain. There is no problem achieving this clip, even if the dog is matted. Cut with the grain with the blade of your choice. Blend into the ears



A wonderful pet clip.

and tail. You can keep the ears and tail long if you desire. Creating the puppy cut requires a dog that is totally de-matted. If it is not, the blade attachment will not go through the coat. Using a close cutting blade combined with a blade attachment, clip the entire dog with the grain. Use a close cutting blade to clean genital area and under the tail. Scissor the feet around the pads.

Options

You have several options to choose from to personalize your dog's haircut to your taste. Many pet owners clip their own dogs. There are some advantages to doing so. After the initial investment in equipment, which is expensive, there is little else to pay for aside from occasional blade sharpening and shampoos. Another advantage is that when

pet owners chose to clip their own dogs, they generally groom them more often than if they go to a groomer. Another advantage of doing home grooming is that the owners are able to monitor their dogs health by noting changes they might not otherwise notice, making it more likely that they would find potential health problems. Many owners achieve professional quality cuts on their dogs after some practice. Grooming a pet can be very satisfying and allow for closer bonding.

- 1) Clean face. To get this effect using a close cutting blade start at the inner corner of the ear, clip against the grain toward the nose. You can also choose that your dog have a beard or mustache.
- 2) Bangs or visor over the eyes. If you want this option, do not start cutting the head directly above the eyes. Leave a small tuft of coat that you will trim with scissors after the bath. This is not an option if you are giving your dog the puppy coat trim.
- 3) Poodle feet. If you decide to clip Poodle feet see the directions in the Show Clip section.
- 4) Lion tail. Instead of a full fluffy tail, you could clip up the tail three quarters of length, leaving a tuft.

After the completed haircut, you should bathe your dog to wash away any tiny hairs that can irritate the skin. After drying the dog with a dryer, you may choose to re-clip to even out the cut. After clipping the hair, quickly brush through the coat to avoid the loose hairs matting in the coat.

Teeth.

The owner, to prevent tarter from building up on the teeth, must regularly clean the teeth. There are many products on the market today that make this job easy. You can buy dog toothpaste and use either a new or used toothbrush. One of the benefits of teaching tooth care at an early age is that the dog is used to it and will not fight having

teeth cleaned. Regular cleaning of teeth will also mean that the dog will not need to get a professional teeth cleaning as often. And, if your veterinarian is willing, it may be that he will be able to clean the dogs' teeth without anesthetizing the dog.

To get started, the puppy should allow the owner to look into its mouth. The puppy must learn to stand still. To start, the puppy will fight this; keep trying, always for a short time. When the puppy stands still, even for only a little bit, stop and lavishly praise it. Stop and come back at a later time to try again. It is best that you do not yell at the puppy, since this will cause the puppy to associate your probing its mouth with the unpleasantness of your displeasure. Eventually the puppy will stand.

Once the puppy stands for inspection, you can put a little paste on its teeth, and lightly brush them. Start out with short periods of brushing and eventually you will be able to lengthen the amount of time spent.

Grooming your own Löwchen can be a satisfying way to spend time with your dog. If you have more than one, grooming your dogs will save you much money through the years. Use the proper equipment and learn the easiest techniques from your breeder if at all possible. You will find that grooming the Löwchen is not hard and you will be proud of your well-presented dog when people ohh and ahh over how cute it is!



LCA Ch. Ashford's Malik Aswad Lambert.
Photo Gini Denninger