

# “HANDSTRIPPING” and “CARDING” THE MYTHS VS THE FACTS!



**Hand-stripped Fox Terrier**

## WHAT IS HAND-STRIPPING?

I am often asked “what is hand-stripping?” I guess I should start with the question – which breeds of dogs lead themselves to Hand-Stripping?

VERY generally speaking these would be sporting, toy, terrier, hound, some herding and working breeds.

Examples (and by no way exclusive) of these would be:

<p><b>SPORTING:</b>            German Wirehaired pointers            Italiane Spione            Wirehaired Visla            Wirehaired Pointing Griffon            Cocker Spaniel            English, Welsh, Sussex, Fields,            etc Springer Spaniel</p>	<p><b>TOY:</b>            Brussels Griffon            Affenainscher            Cavalier King Charles            Havanese</p>
<p><b>TERRIER:</b>            Border Terrier            Cairn Terrier            Dandie Dinmont Terrier            Wirehaired Fox Terrier            Irish Terrier            Russell Terrier            Sealyham Terrier            West Highland White Terrier            Miniature Schnauzer            Scottish Terrier            Welsh Terrier            Airedale Terrier            Glen of Imaal Terrier</p>	<p><b>WORKING:</b>            Giant Schnauzer            Standard Schnauzer</p> <hr/> <p><b>HOUNDS:</b>            Irish Wolf Hound            Wirehaired Minature Dachshund            Wirehaired Standard Dachshund            Scottish Deer Hound</p>

Before-during-after hand-stripping if this lovely Border Terrier....

**Before Handstrip with  
Blown coat**



**During Hand Strip –  
Notice Guard Hairs vs Undercoat**



**During groom close-up**



**Post groom**



The hair growth cycle for wiry coats has four stages:

- **Anagen:** The growth phase where hair follicles actively produce new hair.
- **Catagen:** The transition phase where hair stops growing and the outer root sheath attaches to the hair.
- **Telogen:** The resting phase where the hair is at a standstill and not growing or shedding.
- **Exogen:** The fallout phase where the hair falls out and a new hair begins to grow.

Hand stripping is most effective during the Telogen phase because the hair follicle is detached from the dermal papilla, allowing for easy and pain-free removal of the hair.

### **WHAT IS THE USE OF GUARD HAIR?**

- **Protection from the elements:**

Guard hairs help shed water, snow, and other debris, keeping the animal dry and comfortable.

- **Protection from abrasion:**

Their robust structure protects the undercoat and skin from cuts, scratches, and other damage.

- **Color and pattern:**

Guard hairs often have the most pronounced pigmentation and gloss, contributing to the animal's coat markings, which can be used for camouflage or display.

- **Threat display:**

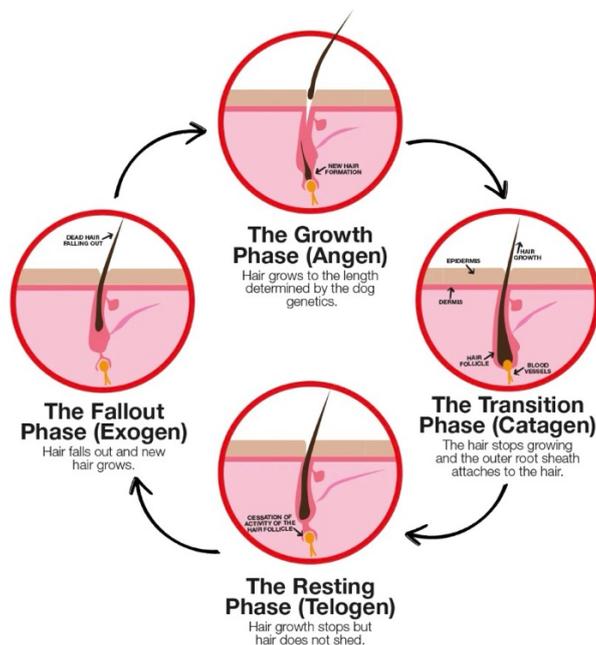
In many mammals, the guard hairs can be raised by the pilomotor reflex, making the animal look larger and more intimidating during a threat display.

- **Temperature regulation:**

While undercoat is primarily responsible for insulation, guard hairs can also help regulate temperature by trapping air between the coat layers.

Hand-stripping is a technique in which the outer guard coat is plucked from the dog's skin at the Telogen. This procedure helps retain the proper coat texture and the rich colour of the breed. Hand stripping is a way to remove loose, shed hair from a dog's coat, removing all of the shed hair from root to tip rather than simply shearing or clipping the coat down as is the case when trimming or clipping the coat. If certain coats are clipped rather than hand-stripped this causes the tips of the guard hairs to become soft, dull and the dog's colour will fade.

A dog's hair follicle is made up of a thick guard hair and soft undercoat. The cycle of growth for hard, wiry coats has 4 stages.



Ref <https://christiesdirect.ie/blog/Hand-stripping:-The-Basics.html>

When the coat easily comes out it is called a 'Blown Coat' and ideally the hand-stripping should correspond with the dog's natural cycles based on the environment and hormone levels. Most pets I groom are done only 2 or 3 times a year the dog has to be taken back to the undercoat.

The most effective way to hand-strip a dog is to do at least every 4 weeks, and "roll the coat", which means instead of taking the coat right back to the undercoat you are only taking away the top, dead, longer guard hairs and leaving the shorter guard hairs, so the dog will always have a lovely strong-coloured wire texture to it. If you are showing your dogs which need to be stripped this would be done daily or at least weekly. The result of doing this often, means that the coat always has new layers growing and is therefore easy to keep in top condition at the desired length.

Hand stripping is designed to work hairs out of the coat that have already been shed, and to remove hairs that are still rooted but loose enough to be pulled out with gentle pressure that won't cause the dog discomfort. Using your fingers to pluck or a stripping knife a few hairs are plucked out at a time shaping the coat and accentuating the natural outline of the dog. This should not hurt the dog at all and I find that most of the dogs I do fall asleep on the table and are excited to see me the next time they are in for a groom! This should only be done by someone experienced in hand-stripping as if done wrongly, as you could imagine, it could hurt the dog.

Hand stripping contrasts with clipping and trimming the coat because as the term implies, it means working the coat by hand. This can be quite labour intensive, particularly for larger dogs, and it is quite an involved process.

If you own a young puppy of a breed that is commonly hand stripped and you are planning to have them hand stripped as adults, it is a good idea to get them used to the process and ensure that it is a good, comfortable experience for them while they are still young. This will help to ensure that they enjoy their grooming sessions and are easier to groom as adults.

The term "rolling a coat" means that only the top layer of dead coat is removed leaving the new coat below. The result of doing this often, means that the coat always has new layers growing and is therefore easy to keep in top condition at the desired length.

## **WHAT IS CARDING?**

Carding a dog's coat is the process of removing the dead undercoat, leaving the topcoat intact. This is done using a carding knife, which is a tool with a fine blade. Carding helps remove dead hair, prevents matting, and can enhance the overall appearance and health of the coat. When you hand strip a dog you will also "card" it at the same time. With a silky, double coated dog e.g. Cocker Spaniel, I would mainly card the coat to allow the top hair to lay flat.

There are a variety of coats on dogs and each dog should be assessed and its coat treated according to its type and the lifestyle that the dog has, the cost of keeping a coat in good order and the amount of time/effort that each owner has to offer maintaining a coat.

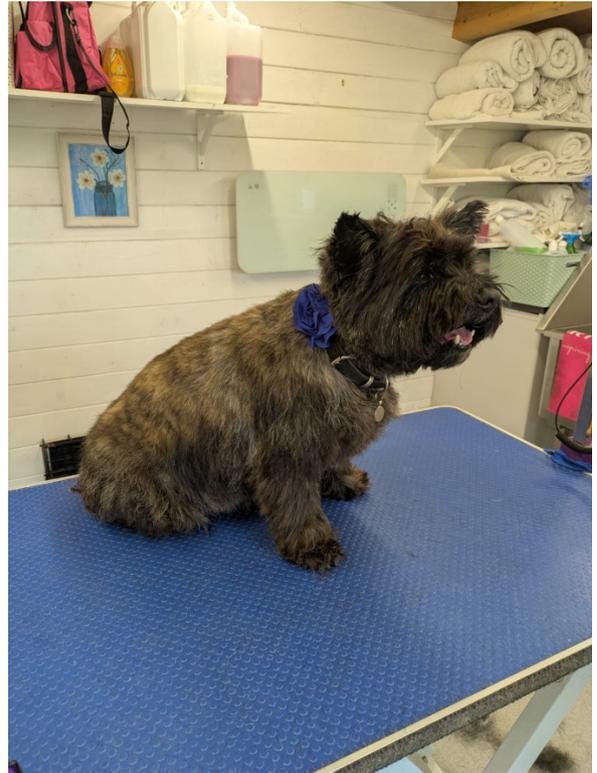
There are certainly times when hand-stripping is the wrong thing to do as it may cause discomfort. I strictly adhere to "Humanity over Vanity" when it comes to grooming. Times when it is hard to strip is generally speaking because of one of the following reasons:

- **Old age** – when a dog cannot stand for any length of time – it is a much lengthier process than clipping and a dog needs to stand still for longer periods of time. I allow time during my grooms for dogs to move around/step outside to take a minute.
- **Spaying or neutering** – hormones affect the coat and often the coat will turn soft and lose its lustre and strength once a dog is spayed or neutered, thus taking away the ability to strip the guard hairs. Often you can still happily card the coat.
- **Previously clipped coats** – When a dog has had its coat clipped the ends of the hair are cut and the coat turns soft – often causing "coat funk". This can take years and much consolidated work to get back to a properly strippable coat – I have managed to do this but it is not always advisable due to the time and cost.

I do hope this has shed some light into hand-stripping and I'm always happy to answer any questions you may have! Enough of my waffling on now and here are some pictures of some very gorgeous doggos I've been lucky enough to strip recently!

Many thanks from me and waggy tails from Winnie! Xxx

# Gallery





Clipped VS Handstripped



Clipped

Handstripped