



Expert Grooming Article



Labrador

Originally a Water Dog of Newfoundland for retrieving fowl, the Labrador Retriever was brought to England in the early 1800's, recognised by his close coat which runs water off like oil and above all, an otter tail and known for good looks and style as a retriever, trial and shooting dog.

The Labrador has always been described to me in 3 vital parts - head, coat and tail. With this in mind, the head we can't change but the other 2 vital hallmarks we can work on, starting with the coat. (read more over page...)



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Between the shows oil his coat with **Plush Puppy Seabreeze Oil** at a ratio of 1 tablespoon:1 gal/4 litres of water. Work well into the coat with a sponge or carefully pour over and squish well through. This is a super oil - water soluble and won't build up. It is also all naturally derived and there is nothing quite like it for the depth of colour it tends to add to the coat and the wonderful healthy vigour that goes with continued use. The Labrador coat needs to be waterproof with a low sheen like that of the preen gland oil on ducks.

Now for the show grooming and your standard says that the coat is a distinctive feature - short dense without feathering, giving a fairly hard feel to the touch and a weather resistant undercoat to protect from water, cold and ground cover.

For the face and head use **Plush Puppy Let's Face It**. This is a hypoallergenic sulfate free low foaming shampoo designed for faces. It's no tear formula with the highest quality Blue Cypress Extracts, Panthenol with Pro Vitamin B and SugaNate. These special ingredients clean, sooth, add moisture, aid healing and have anti-inflammatory benefits. A small golf ball sized amount directly to the face and eye area allows you to thoroughly clean without causing irritation. Can be used in and around ears also with the same benefits. It's low foaming design allows easy of rinsing yet complete cleaning.

Use **Plush Puppy All Purpose Shampoo**, the 'shine' shampoo and best suited to the Lab, diluted at 1:5 (1 part shampoo to 5 parts water). Alternatively pop a few squirts into the tank, bath or bucket, and if you see suds and too many bubbles, you have added too much. It's as simple as that. There are times when you just have to refresh and clean that coat and this is the bath one does when a bath will just not do!

If your Lab is out of coat then use **Plush Puppy Body Building Shampoo** great for that 'more' coat look. Use the shampoos at the ratio of 3:1 for maximum effect for showing, and diluted anywhere up to 10:1 for less effect. For those with Black Labs exhibiting unwanted reddish or brownish warm tones use **Plush Puppy Black Opal Shampoo**.

Black Opal Shampoo is brilliant for toning black coats and giving depth to faded coats and enhancing natural colour. This is not a dye that colours the coat but a strong stain. It is specifically to reduce fading and rusty tones - a real back to black product. Use this 50/50 with water for easier application or apply undiluted to hard to cover areas. Leave 5-10 mins then rinse. This shampoo gets better the more you use it and you will love the results. It is low foaming also which suits the texture outcome for your Lab coat - you definitely don't want froth and bubbles with a Labrador coat. Ensure you pre-bath a dirty dog before using Black Opal for maximum effect.

Never condition a Lab. It undoes all the hard coat work you have done and makes the coat soft and fluffy. Use instead **Plush Puppy Seabreeze Oil** as your final rinse. This will hydrate the coat but not change texture. Add 1 tablespoon to 4 litres/1gal of water, saturate through the coat and leave in. Do not rinse out. This will give that healthy vigour to the hair, leaving correct texture.

For this coat we swear by the **Plush Puppy Ultimate Anti-Static Porcupine Brush**. This 1/2 dialon 1/2 bristle oval cushioned brush gives you that smoother, straighter and glossier finish to your drying that other brushes won't do. We recommend using a high



velocity dryer after bathing. Truly this removes all that dead coat thus preventing the moth eaten look short coats can get when shedding. By blow drying you will "roll" the coat - eliminating that horrid patchiness which keeps you from the ring for several weeks. This dog is often believed to be a wash and wear dog and for other purposes he is, but because you have chosen to present at a dog show, you have all sorts of glamour breeds to compete against, so why not "up the ante" and make the best of your Lab. Why should he not be a superbly efficient dog and a glamour star as well?

A great hint for gaining texture instantly is to use **Plush Puppy Powder Puff Terrier**. Use a tiny amount to the area requiring harsher texture. Brush well through to disperse. This will also deodorise and dry cleanse. For ringside emergencies to feet and other badly soiled areas, use **Plush Puppy Wonder Wash**. Spray to area, foam up coat with hands and towel dry.

On show days, **Plush Puppy OMG** is "the" great grooming spray. This concentrate can be broken down (diluted) to suit each dogs coat type. As a general rule, we recommend 1 part OMG to 25 parts water which is a good starting base for most coats. OMG leaves a shine and vigour to the coat that won't build up on the hair. We don't call it OMG for nothing - it really works.

The trimming is relatively easy but does need a little attention. The Lab's tail is a very distinctive feature, so use thinning scissors or shears to just gently neaten up the end of the tail rounding the end off to give that otter feature with the peculiar rounded look. Don't forget to do the nails.

Nothing looks worse than a dog with long nails! A little hint that works for me is to cover the dog's eyes when cutting nails if you have a dog that hates nails being shortened. Kind of works like a horse who wears blinkers.

For Show day also, spray with **Plush Puppy Odour Muncher** to eliminate any kennel or crate smells and a spritz of **Plush Puppy Shine and Comb** for that low sheen glamour. I do like a dusting of **Plush Puppy Pixie Dust** just lightly applied on strategic areas with your brush. The secret is "just" a dusting and not to turn your dog into the glitter fairy. If you can see this shimmer as you apply it, you have gone too far overboard! It should only be detectable in the sunlight.

Your Lab is now ready to compete - to show himself as a retriever of the gundog group in both form and function. His beautiful stable temperament with his outgoing tractable nature allows this dog to adapt to the show ring like a duck to water so to speak. Groomed beautifully with the coat exhibiting and highlighting all the healthy desirable traits for his function, your eager to please Labrador is hard to go past. His wonderful intelligence and character, together with soundness, are always a winning combination.

