

Chapter 10

Doing the 'Do: Grooming

In This Chapter

- ▶ Weighing the pros and cons of long and short coat styles
- ▶ Planning your grooming routine
- ▶ Keeping your Yorkie's coat clean and neat
- ▶ Taking care of your Yorkie's teeth, nails, and ears

Grooming your Yorkie is important for two reasons: The first reason is a vanity thing. A well-kept coat just looks and feels good, no matter what the style. Go beyond well-kept, and you can have a real beauty or cutie on your hands. The second reason, though, is the one that really matters: health.

Regular grooming makes for a healthier dog. Not because a doggy-'do is intrinsically healthful, but because of the simple act of grooming itself: When you take the time to care for your dog's coat, ears, teeth, and nails — yes, these parts need grooming, too — you're more likely to prevent problems (infected gums, for example) before they start and discover problems (like skin conditions or lumps) before they get out of hand. And don't forget that the time you spend grooming is quality time you spend bonding with your dog. And a happier dog is often a healthier dog.

If you haven't groomed a dog before or if you have some experience grooming but want specific tips on how to groom a Yorkie, keep reading.

The Long and the Short of It: Grooming Options

Just because many standard photos of Yorkies show the long hair and top knot doesn't mean that that's the only acceptable coat style. It's not. In fact, any clean, brushed Yorkie is a cutie. But the long coat and the puppy cut are the two most popular coat styles.

The long coat

The long coat is the style you typically see in breed books and on many Yorkie Web sites. It's also the standard style at dog shows. The reason the long coat is so ubiquitous is because the Yorkshire Terrier coat is one of the defining characteristics of the breed. Its color, texture, and length are outlined in the breed standard — as is the preferred coiffure (the single or double top knot). As cute as a shorter cut is (see the next section), it doesn't show off the coat to best advantage.

If you want to keep your Yorkie's coat long, keep these points in mind:

- ✔ **Achieving the long, silky coat takes dedication and care.** Your Yorkie supplies the coat, which, like human hair, continues to grow. Everything else — the daily brushing, the weekly shampooing and conditioning, the wrapping it up to keep it off the ground, and more — is up to you. If you fail to do these tasks religiously, then that beautiful coat ends up a tangled mess.

Wrapping your Yorkie's coat (that is, winding the ends around folded papers and securing them with a band) is a task you don't really need to do unless you're trying to grow a coat suitable for the show ring. But if you *are* trying to grow a show coat, then keep your dog in wraps 24/7 and only take the wraps out for the show ring. Wrapping protects the coat, allows it to grow, and also helps keep it clean, especially important for the boys, who get urine on themselves. You can start wrapping your dog as soon as the hair is long enough — usually when your Yorkie's around 9 to 10 months. See the section "Wrapping it up" in this chapter for instructions on how to wrap a Yorkie's coat.

- ✔ **The top knot and bow are musts.** You can choose between a single bow right in the middle or two bows on either side of a straight part, but a bow you will have — and you have to know how to put it in. See the section "The piece de resistance: Adding the bow" in this chapter for instructions.
- ✔ **If your Yorkie's coat is soft instead of silky, you may not be able to achieve the look you want.** Soft hair mats more, is more difficult to keep clean, and breaks more easily. The sheer work of grooming a soft coat to the breed standard probably isn't worth the trouble. You may have to resign yourself to a shorter cut.



If you plan to show your Yorkie, keep him in the traditional long coat. It's part of the breed standard (refer to Chapter 2).

The short coat

The alternative to a long coat is obviously a short coat. One of the more popular short coat styles is the *puppy cut*. Look at a Yorkie puppy, and you get a pretty good idea what that style is. Essentially for a puppy cut, you (or a professional groomer) trim the coat into short layers all over the body and around the face.

Other short-style options include the modified *Schnauzer cut*, where the coat is trimmed short on the torso and left longer on the legs, and the face is trimmed in the traditional Schnauzer mustache, or the modified *Westie cut*, which is similar to the modified Schnauzer cut except that the hair on the head and face is trimmed to frame the face. You can see examples of these styles in the color insert.

If you opt for a shorter style, keep these points in mind:

- ✔ **Shorter cuts mean less time grooming.** If you love everything about Yorkies except for the grooming chores, go with a shorter cut.
- ✔ **You'll probably need a professional groomer to achieve the look you want.** Although you can certainly do the work yourself, trimming a dog takes quite a bit of skill, the right equipment (clippers with blades of various sizes), and a practiced technique. Unless you want to learn how to do it yourself and can stand your Yorkie looking a little (or a lot) rough around the edges until your skill improves, hire a professional.
- ✔ **A short cut doesn't get you entirely off the grooming hook.** You still need to groom your Yorkie regularly. Of course, everything's relative: *Regularly* with a short cut is a lot less frequent and time intensive than *regularly* with a long cut. Giving her a quick brush every day or every other day, a bath about every week, and a trip to the groomer once every month or two is fine.
- ✔ **What you gain in ease of care, you lose in the traditional Yorkie appearance.** These short cuts cut the blue part of the coat right off. If you plan to show your Yorkie, go with the long coat; see the preceding section. Save the short cut for when her showing days are over.

Setting Up a Grooming Schedule

To keep your Yorkie in the pink, grooming is going to be part of your regular routine. How regular? Depends on the task. Certain tasks, like brushing, teeth cleaning, and cleaning the area where

urine collects on males (simply use a damp cloth and warm water), you do daily. Other tasks, such as ear trimming and nail clipping, you do on an as-needed basis. Table 10-1 outlines how frequently you need to perform the various grooming tasks.

| <i>Task</i> | <i>How Frequently</i> |
|----------------|--|
| Bathing | Weekly or bi-weekly, depending on how dirty your dog gets (Note: Wipe urine from males daily) |
| Teeth cleaning | Daily, if possible; otherwise, at least twice weekly |
| Ear trimming | At every coat trim or as needed to keep the ears erect and pointed. Note: Trim the ears more frequently for puppies because the hair's weight can cause the ears to droop |
| Nail clipping | Check nails at every bath and trim as necessary |
| Coat trimming | Monthly or bi-monthly for short coats and as needed for long coats |

Caring for the Coat

Yorkies are single-coated dogs, which means that, unlike many dogs, they don't have an undercoat. In this way, your Yorkie's coat is a lot like human hair, and like human hair, it continues to grow. The texture of the coat combined with its length and the Yorkie's tendency to be active make mats and snarls inevitable. And that's where you come in: You get to tame the tresses.

Whether your Yorkie has a long or a short cut, you have to attend to it regularly, if you want to keep it in good condition. The only mandatory tasks you need to perform when grooming the coat are bathing, brushing, and periodically trimming. Of course, many Yorkie owners don't stop there: They wrap and band, too.

Bathing beauties

Bathing your dog doesn't have to be the disaster that's often portrayed in the funny pages or on TV commercials. With a little planning and know-how, bath time can actually proceed quite uneventfully.

Training your Yorkie for grooming

Yorkies aren't born with an innate fondness of having brushes pulled through their hair, water dumped over their heads, and soap worked into a lather all over their bodies. They need to be trained to like grooming time and to stand still for it. Here are some suggestions and tips:

- ✔ **Start early:** You can begin training your puppy to tolerate (and hopefully, eventually enjoy) grooming as soon as you first bring him home, without ever turning on water or pulling out a snarl.
- ✔ **Start elsewhere:** When you groom, you touch your dog in places that you miss when you're just petting him: the inside of his ears, his paws, under his tail, around his eyes, and so on. So getting your puppy used to being touched in these areas is one of your first tasks.

The best place to get your pup accustomed to being touched in new areas is away from the grooming table, sink, or countertop. And the best time to do so is when he's relaxed — or even napping — in your lap. Take this quiet time to gently massage his feet, around his eyes, in and around his ears, and so on. Also lift his tail. Talk in a soothing voice and give him treats for accepting your ministrations.

- ✔ **Start slow:** Pick a single task — like brushing — and do a little of it (be sure to stop before your pup's had enough), and then give him a treat. Repeat this process frequently throughout a day and gradually extend the amount of time spent on the task. When you actually do begin grooming, don't make the first "real" session a tour de force of all you know: Do only those things that cause the least stress. No de-matting, no fishing for wax in the ear — nothing that will make him not like being groomed.
- ✔ **Stay safe:** No matter how much your Yorkie accepts your touch, all your work goes out the window if he feels insecure when you lift him to a countertop or put him in a slick tub. Be sure to use a heavy towel for him to sit on so that he doesn't slip all over the place, and keep an eye and a hand on him so that he doesn't launch himself off the counter.

First, get your supplies together. A wet dog shivering in the sink and plotting his escape — which invariably involves leaping the distance from the sink or counter to the floor — isn't a good time to go hunting for the shampoo. Here's what you need on hand before you start washing your dog:

- ✔ A sink or tub
- ✔ Dog shampoo and conditioner



Don't use human shampoo or conditioner on your Yorkie. His pH levels are different, and shampoo made for your hair is too harsh for his coat and skin.

- ✔ Mineral oil to protect his eyes
- ✔ Cotton balls to keep water out of his ears and to clean the eye mucous
- ✔ A big, fluffy towel (for drying) and a smaller towel (for the dog to sit on while he's in the sink to keep him from slipping)

You also need to prepare your Yorkie's coat for bathing. And that means gently removing tangles with your fingers while the hair is still dry. If you get the hair wet before you remove the mat, you end up with a knot that's almost impossible to remove and a very unhappy Yorkie. By pre-grooming for mats and tangles before bathing your dog, your Yorkie will enjoy a bath and may love the attention, making the experience more pleasant for both of you.

After pre-grooming, you're ready to bathe your Yorkie. Let the water run until it's the right temperature (warm), and then follow these steps:

- 1. Put the cotton balls in your Yorkie's ears, one drop of mineral oil in each of your Yorkie's eyes, and your Yorkie on the small towel in the sink.**

If you lined the sink with a towel, be sure that the towel doesn't cover the drain. Yorkies — and every other animal I can think of — don't like water rising toward their heads.

- 2. Thoroughly wet down your Yorkie's coat with warm water.**
- 3. Apply the shampoo to the back of your dog's head and, with gentle strokes, work the shampoo down his back to his tail (see Figure 10-1).**
- 4. Let the shampoo soak for a few minutes and then rinse thoroughly.**

To rinse your dog, spray the water in the direction that the coat naturally lays. Don't forget to rinse under his tail and on his tummy.



If you're working in a tub or a sink without a spray nozzle, use a large plastic cup to rinse rather than force your dog to sit under the tap of running water.

- 5. To clean your Yorkie's face, put a small amount of tearless shampoo in your hands, rub them together to form a**

slight lather, and then use your fingers to carefully clean the hair around the ears and muzzle; rinse.

When rinsing the face, being careful is particularly important. I recommend using a cup filled with fresh water (not the bathwater) rather than your sink's spray nozzle. You have more control over the flow and the pressure.

6. Remove the eye mucous.

Being careful, use your fingers, a damp cloth or cotton ball, or your fine-toothed flea comb.

7. Apply the conditioner according to the directions, and rinse thoroughly using a spray nozzle or a cup.

Be sure to get all the conditioner out. If you don't, your Yorkie's coat becomes a magnet for dirt and grime.

8. When you're done, squeeze out the excess water from the coat and then wrap your dog in the big fluffy towel.

Hold your towel-wrapped dog for a bit so that the towel absorbs most of the water. Then let him go and watch in amazement as he simultaneously shakes himself and literally runs circles around the house. When he calms down and you stop laughing, it's time to brush his coat.



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Figure 10-1: Gently work the shampoo through your Yorkie's hair to avoid creating more snarls.

Brushing basics

Whether you're brushing a dog you just bathed or simply doing the daily 100 strokes, make sure that the hair is at least a little damp. Brushing a completely dry coat can cause breakage. If your dog hasn't just come out of the tub, spray her lightly with a mixture of conditioner and water (3 parts water to 1 part conditioner).

To brush your Yorkie's coat, gather your pin brush and your comb (see Chapter 5 for a list and description of the necessary supplies) and then follow these directions:

1. Using the pin brush, brush through the entire coat thoroughly.

Just as you would brush long human hair, begin at the ends and work your way to the skin to avoid turning a little snarl into a painful tangle.

2. As you come across mats, pick as much apart with your fingers as you can and, using your comb, carefully comb through them.



If your Yorkie tends to get a lot of mats, consider buying a mat rake, which is essentially what it sounds like: a wide-toothed comb designed to rake through most snarls. Also keep in mind that if, despite your regular grooming, your Yorkie still has problems with matting, it may be because your Yorkie doesn't have the proper silky single coat, but a much softer double coat. If this is the case, consider buying a soft slicker brush to work out the mats before you bathe him.

If you come across a particularly stubborn mat that won't let go, cut it out with a pair of scissors. And then promise yourself that you'll brush more regularly to avoid that problem in the future.

3. End by using your fine-toothed comb to comb through the hair one last time.

Don't forget this last step. You'll be surprised at the little snags and knots that remain in the coat, and this final comb-through gets them out (see Figure 10-2).



If you're gentle and brush your Yorkshire Terrier regularly enough so that mats don't form, your dog will love having her coat brushed and combed — which makes your job easier and more enjoyable.



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Figure 10-2: Finish any brushing session with a fine-toothed comb to get out any remaining snarls.

Blow drying

You don't have to blow dry your Yorkie's coat (you can let her air dry, if you want), but here are reasons why you may want to:

- ✔ If you're trying to create the sleek, smooth look of the traditional Yorkie coat, blow drying helps straighten any wayward waves.
- ✔ When the weather's cold or if your house is drafty, blow drying reduces the chance that your Yorkie will become chilled.
- ✔ If you don't have time to wait for her to air dry — for example, you're leaving and don't want a wet dog on the furniture or you're planning to take her outside — you'll need to blow dry her.

- ✓ If you get your dog professionally groomed, you can bet the groomer will use a blow dryer. By blow drying at home, you help her get accustomed to the noise and sensation of air blowing over her (see Chapter 8 for tips on helping your Yorkie make friends with your blow dryer).

The supply list for blow drying is pretty short: a blow dryer and a towel or rubber mat for your dog to stand on so she doesn't slip around. You can use a blow dryer made for humans or one made especially for grooming dogs (some models come with a stand so that both your hands are free; look in pet-supply stores for various models). If you use a human blow dryer, be sure it has multiple heat and power settings that let you control how much and how hot the air is. To blow dry, follow these steps:

1. Towel dry your dog's coat and brush it thoroughly, being sure to remove all snarls and mats.

See the preceding section "Brushing basics" for instructions on how to brush your dog's coat and get rid of snarls and mats.

2. Set the dryer's heat setting on low or medium and the power setting on medium.

If this is your dog's first time under the blower, set the heat and power switches on low. Remember to take it slow and easy, and resign yourself to the fact that you may not be able to dry her whole coat.

3. Begin drying the back area first and work your way to the front, gently combing through the hair with your fingers as you go.

To avoid burning your dog, move the dryer in small circular motions over the area you're drying rather than blast straight away at one spot. Combing through the coat with your fingers separates the hair, makes it dry a little faster, and also lets you feel how warm the heat is.

4. Switch the power to low and dry the hair on the head and muzzle.

Be sure to get the hair behind her ears.

5. Turn the power back up to medium and dry under the tail and on the crest, or chest.

You have to lift her tail to dry her tail area, and you may have to lift her chin to get a good shot at the crest.



6. Hold on to your dog's front legs with your free hand and lift her to standing position; dry her tummy.

Pay particular attention to the upper part of her inner thighs and her “arm pits,” which tend to get neglected.

7. When she's dry, brush her coat thoroughly again.

Voila! A Yorkie with that “fresh from the salon” look.

Simple trimming tasks

You trim your Yorkie's coat for a couple of reasons: one, to give her a particular style and to neaten her up. Two, to get rid of hair that can lead to problems, such as the hair around the anus or on the pads of the feet. Tasks that fall into the former category require practice, patience, and skill. If you lack these qualities or the desire to acquire them, rely on professional groomers. Tasks that fall into the latter category, however, are ones that any Yorkie owner can perform with confidence — after a little practice. In the following sections, I tell you what you need to know to do routine maintenance trimming.



Trimming can be as simple as clipping the hair around the feet to make them look neater or as extensive as cutting a long coat into one of the more sculpted shorter styles (such as the modified Schnauzer cut). Perform the tasks you feel comfortable with, and have a professional do the rest.

To groom your Yorkie, you need these necessary items:

- ✓ Standard hair-cutting scissors with rounded tips
- ✓ Hair clippers



Be very careful when you use scissors or clippers on your Yorkie, especially if you've never performed these tasks before. Combine your inexperience with a dog who isn't used to standing stoically for grooming, and you can end up hurting your dog or suffering a bite wound yourself. If the whole idea makes you nervous, rely on a professional groomer.

Trimming around the feet

One trimming task you should feel comfortable doing is trimming the hair around and under the pads of your dog's feet. This hair grows long enough to drag on the ground and cause all sorts of

problems. Not only does it pick up dirt and burrs, but it also impedes your dog's traction. At least once a month, inspect your Yorkie's feet and cut away the excess hair using standard hair-cutting scissors with rounded tips that you can find in any drug or beauty-supply store.

Follow these steps:

- 1. Hold your dog's leg firmly in one hand and carefully cut the excess hair in between the pads of his feet.**

Sometimes this hair grows pretty thick. Rather than trying to cut through a whole clump at a time, take little snipping cuts.

- 2. Hold the paw, pad down, and trim the hair in a half-circle around the front of the foot.**

You don't need to cut the hair on top of the foot or up the leg. Simply trimming the hair around the foot is enough to neaten it up and keep it from dragging on the ground.

- 3. Repeat steps with the three remaining feet.**

Trimming around the ears

You need to keep the hair around adult Yorkies' ears trimmed to accentuate their upright point. On puppies, you trim the hair around the ears to help the ears stand erect (although sometimes, when a puppy teethes, his ears droop temporarily; in this case, trimming doesn't help). To trim the hair around your Yorkie's ears, use clippers with a #40 blade (see Figure 10-3).

Follow these steps:

- 1. With your Yorkie secure, trim the hair on the front of the ear about half the way down.**

Figure 10-4 shows how far down on the ear you need to trim. To more easily apply the little bit of pressure you need to trim, put a finger behind the ear to hold it upright when you're clipping.

- 2. Trim the hair on the back of the ear, again about half way down.**

- 3. If necessary, use scissors or your clippers to neaten the hair on the sides of the ears to form a V-shape.**

You don't want to cut into the ear skin, so make this final trim in bright light when you can see and follow the contour of the ear.



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Figure 10-3: Use clippers with a #40 blade to trim the hair around the ears.

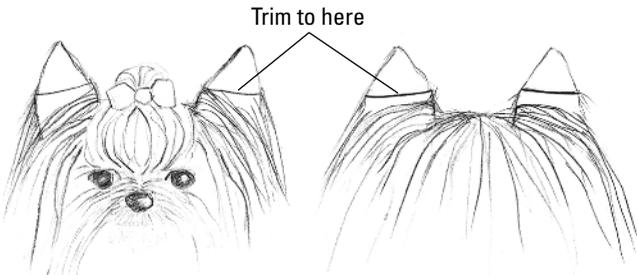


Figure 10-4: Trim the hair about halfway down on both the fronts and backs of the ears to keep them neat and trim.

Trimming around the anus

Long-haired breeds are notoriously difficult to keep clean around the rectal area. All that hair in the one place where you want a clear shot . . . well, suffice it to say that you have to help eliminate the problem. To do that, keep the hair around the anus short.

Use a pair of scissors, or preferably a clipper, and simply cut the hair short in a circle about an inch in diameter around the anal area. Do this at least every month.

The piece de resistance: Adding the bow

A little bow-ribbon is one of the immediately identifiable features of the Yorkshire Terrier breed. Sure it's cute, and you can spend quite a bit of time perusing the different patterns and styles and trying to figure out whether a rhinestone center looks chic or trashy, but the bow actually serves a practical purpose. It keeps all that hair out of your dog's eyes.

Putting in the bow, called *banding*, isn't difficult, but you do have to practice. You need a comb, three small latex bands (you can buy these items in the beauty section of most drug or grocery stores), and a bow, which you can get from a pet-supply store. Then follow these steps to put the bow in your Yorkie's hair:

- 1. Using the comb, part the hair across the top of the skull, from ear to ear.**

To put in two bows, create a center part and work one side at a time.

- 2. Part the hair from the outer corner of each eye up to just above the ear.**

Now you have the hair you're going to band.

- 3. Put the first latex band on the hair and work it to the center, between the ears.**

Don't use rubber bands, which tear and pull at the hair. Latex bands hold nicely and slide out easily without breaking the hair. Also, don't pull the hair very tight when securing the band, which can damage the skin and lead to (sometimes permanent) hair loss. And then what would you do with all your pretty bows?

- 4. Pull a couple of strands of hair loose (but not out) to create a little poof over your dog's brow.**
- 5. Put the second latex band in about an inch above the first one in the same tail of hair.**

Although some people forgo the second band, the second band makes creating a nice little top knot that much easier.



- 6. Put the second band behind the first band (this forms the top knot) and put the third band around both, to secure the top knot in place.**
- 7. Finish with your bow.**
- 8. Practice until you get the look you want.**

If your first effort looks a little wobbler-jawed, pull it out and try again. Of course, depending on how amenable your Yorkie is to your attempts, you may get only one practice session a day. But take heart. Before you know it, you'll be banding with the best of them.

If you have a puppy or a Yorkie with a short cut, you may still be able to put a bow in, although you may not have enough hair to create the flounce at the top (Steps 5 and 6). If that's the case, just let the hair stay loose above the band and add the bow.

Wrapping it up

Wrapping is a task for those owners who are serious about creating a show-quality coat. To wrap, you need latex bands, wax-paper squares (or some other appropriate paper, like rice paper or bakery tissue), and a comb.

To wrap your Yorkie's hair, make sure that the coat is clean and thoroughly brushed; then follow these steps:

- 1. Fold wraps in a tri-fold (as you would a letter).**

When you wrap the hair, it will lay in the middle section of the folded paper.

- 2. Part the dog's hair into sections; put a latex band around each section to hold it in place, being sure to leave some space between the roots and band for comfort (think of a loose ponytail).**

As you part your Yorkie's hair, keep in mind how his body moves. For example, the crest would be one section; the hair over each shoulder and flank would be other sections (to enable him to move freely).

- 3. Take the first section of hair and place the end of the hair in the center of the tri-fold paper.**

4. **Fold the wrap in half, from bottom to top, with the hair inside.**

This step clinches the hair so that it's less likely to come out while you're rolling the wrap up.

5. **Fold or roll the wrap up (as you would a hair curler) until it's about 2 to 3 inches from the dog's body; then fold the end sections of the tri-fold over the hair.**

6. **Secure the wrap with a latex band.**

7. **Repeat Steps 3 through 6 for the remaining sections.**

Now stand back and admire your handiwork.



Don't wrap a soft coat. Doing so can break your Yorkie's hair, which isn't a good thing if your objective is a long coat (and presumably it is if you're taking the time and effort to wrap it).

Tackling Other Grooming Tasks

In addition to grooming your Yorkie's coat, you also have other areas — such as her eyes, ears, nails, and teeth — that you need to attend to.

Clipping nails

Untrimmed nails can cause a variety of problems for your dog. They're more prone to cracking and bleeding, can get caught on things, and can impede his balance on hard surfaces. In addition, some nails curl and, if left alone, grow back up into the soft tissue of your dog's paw. An easy way to prevent any of these problems is to regularly clip your dog's nails.



The best time to clip your Yorkie's nails is right after a bath, when the nail is softer and easier to cut. So after every bath, check your Yorkie's nails to see whether they're due for a clipping. The other good time to trim nails is whenever your dog needs it. An obvious sign that your dog needs a trim? The clitter-clatter of nails over hard surfaces.

The key to trimming nails is to *not* cut into the *quick* — the nail bed that runs down the middle of your dog's nail and grows as the nail grows. The quick is full of nerve endings and blood vessels, which means that it hurts like the dickens and bleeds like a fountain if cut.

Yorkies' nails are challenging to clip because their nails are black, and you can't see the quick. So, when you cut the nails, you're cutting blind. (In Figure 10-5 I reverse the colors, so you can visualize where the quick is located.) If this task is too stressful for you, leave the job to your groomer or vet.

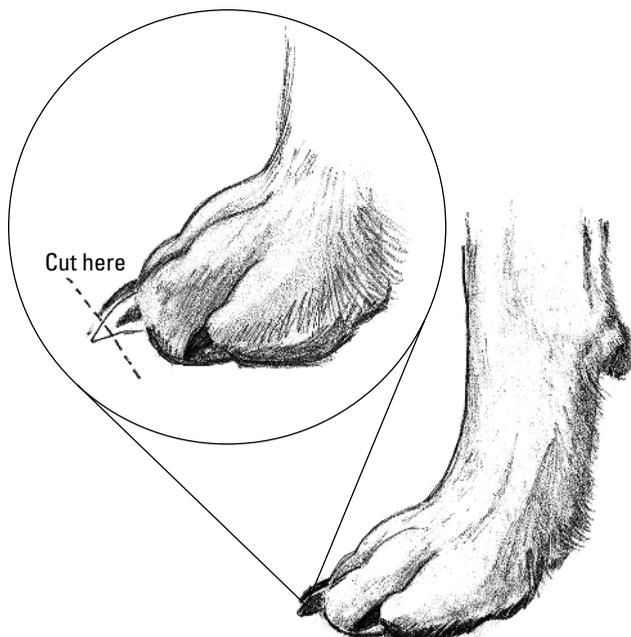


Figure 10-5: Although you can't see the quick, it extends into your Yorkie's nail, and you must avoid it when you clip.

To trim nails, you need a pair of sharp nail clippers designed for use on dogs and some styptic powder (which hopefully you won't have to use). Then follow these directions:

- 1. Hold your Yorkie in your lap and with your free hand lift one paw, using your thumb and fingers to work the hair away from the nail and apply enough pressure to the toes to extend the nail slightly.**
- 2. Clip several small slivers of the nail off at a 45-degree angle, looking carefully at the nail after each snip.**

You're looking for a small black dot underneath the center of the nail, which is the beginning of the quick.

3. When you see the quick, stop.

If you happen to cut into the quick, use the styptic powder to stop the bleeding, prostrate yourself in front of the dog and beg his forgiveness, and then give him praise and a treat.

4. Repeat these steps for each nail.



Only clip as many nails in one sitting as your dog can comfortably tolerate. If you get only one paw done, fine. Do another paw later, and another after that one until you can cross this task off your list.

Cleaning and examining the ears

At every grooming session, make a quick check of the ears. You're looking for dirt or wax, any signs of infection or problem, and hair blocking the ear canal.

To keep your dog's ears in tip-top shape, you need a cotton ball or cotton swab, ear-cleaning solution (you can find this solution at pet-supply stores or at your vet's office), and scissors or tweezers. Then, follow these steps:

1. Remove any excess hair blocking the ear canal.

You can clip it with scissors, tweeze it out, or pluck it with your fingers.

2. Dab the ear cleaning solution on a cotton swab or cotton ball and gently wipe out the inside of the ear.

The part of the ear you can see is called the *ear pinna*. This part is the area that you clean. Don't stick the cotton swab down the ear canal because you can puncture the ear drum.



If you notice signs of infection — redness, swelling, sensitivity to touch, or a foul odor — take your dog to the vet immediately.

Checking and cleaning teeth

You brush your dog's teeth for the same reason that you brush your own: to forestall gum disease and infection, get rid of plaque, avoid bad breath, and brighten your smile (see Figure 10-6). Of course, dogs don't smile, but you can bet that a healthy mouth makes for a happier dog.



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Figure 10-6: Regularly brushing your Yorkie's teeth keeps them clean and gives you the opportunity to check for sores or infection.



Although dogs don't get cavities, they do suffer from gum disease, which, if left untreated, can become very painful and lead to tooth loss.

When you're ready to brush your dog's teeth, gather your supplies (pet toothpaste and your dog's toothbrush) and do the following:

- 1. Squeeze a small amount of toothpaste onto the toothbrush; work the toothpaste into the bristles.**
- 2. Place the bristles at your dog's gumline (where the teeth and gums meet), and using a gentle rotating motion, brush the teeth in that area.**

Be sure to get around the base of the tooth and between the teeth.

- 3. Move to a new section and repeat Step 2.**

Spend most of your effort on the outside of the upper teeth, where the bulk of the plaque builds up.

- 4. Repeat these steps until all the teeth are cleaned.**
- 5. Rinse and spit.**

Just kidding.

