



## GROOMING THE LAGOTTO ROMAGNOLO



## 01: WHY WE GROOM THE LAGOTTO THE WAY WE DO

Grooming the Lagotto Romagnolo can be a topic of debate but the traditional method of grooming puts the protection of the dog above all else.

Before explaining how a Lagotto should be groomed, it is important to answer certain questions to clarify our understanding of WHY a Lagotto should be groomed in a particular fashion. Consider the following: The Lagotto is a working dog and will behave as such. They love to keep their noses to the ground, running in the forests, sniffing through brush and keeping their tails up to follow their noses.

The coat on the chest, under belly, beneath the tail and inner thighs are not exposed as the dog will be searching with his head down so these areas should be cut shorter as they are the areas which are most likely to matt. We must also consider hygiene - the tail should be groomed tight so it does not get hung up with branches, brush or other surprises as they should carry it raised. Using a brush on a Lagotto is not recommended as it strips the undercoat, thus ruining the coat. The undercoat offers protection, waterproofing and insulation from heat or cold. Puppies, on the other hand, have not yet developed an undercoat and are much more affected by extreme temperatures than the adults.

Regardless of whether you are grooming a Lagotto for showing, working or as a companion, the grooming is the same with a minor difference in coat length for show dogs. For show dogs, the grooming is identical but slightly longer overall.

If you are currently working with your groomer, don't forget to remind them that the Lagotto coat should not be brushed out when it's dry as this removes the undercoat which only increases the likelihood of matting and the coat on the bridge of the muzzle should not be removed as this

eliminates their natural protection for the eyes. It is also important to note that **most groomers have not seen many Lagotto and are unfamiliar with the correct style of grooming** so they fall back on the familiar grooming methods for poodles or bichons - this is incorrect for the Lagotto.

Considering these points, we must concede that the Lagotto should be groomed in a way that protects them in the best way possible to suit their intended purpose. Improper grooming erases this natural protection and leaves the dog more susceptible to injury.

Correct grooming of a Lagotto Romagnolo means that the coat on the head should be longer, the coat on the legs should appear longer, the coat on the bridge of the nose and around the eyes is for protection of eyes and should remain, however slight trimming may be necessary to clear the vision pathway. The lower ear and around the ear should be trimmed to the leather and kept longer at the front so the ears blend in with the head. This makes the ears less likely to get hung up or torn by branches.



**Photo Above:** Note how the tail is shaped like a carrot, wide at the base, narrowing to the tip. Head is kept longer than the core body, with minimal trimming.

## 02: COAT CHARARISTICS OF THE LAGOTTO

Hair of woolly texture, semi-rough on the surface, with tight, ring shaped curls, with visible undercoat. The correct clip is un-pretentious and contributes to accentuate the natural, rustic look typical of the breed.

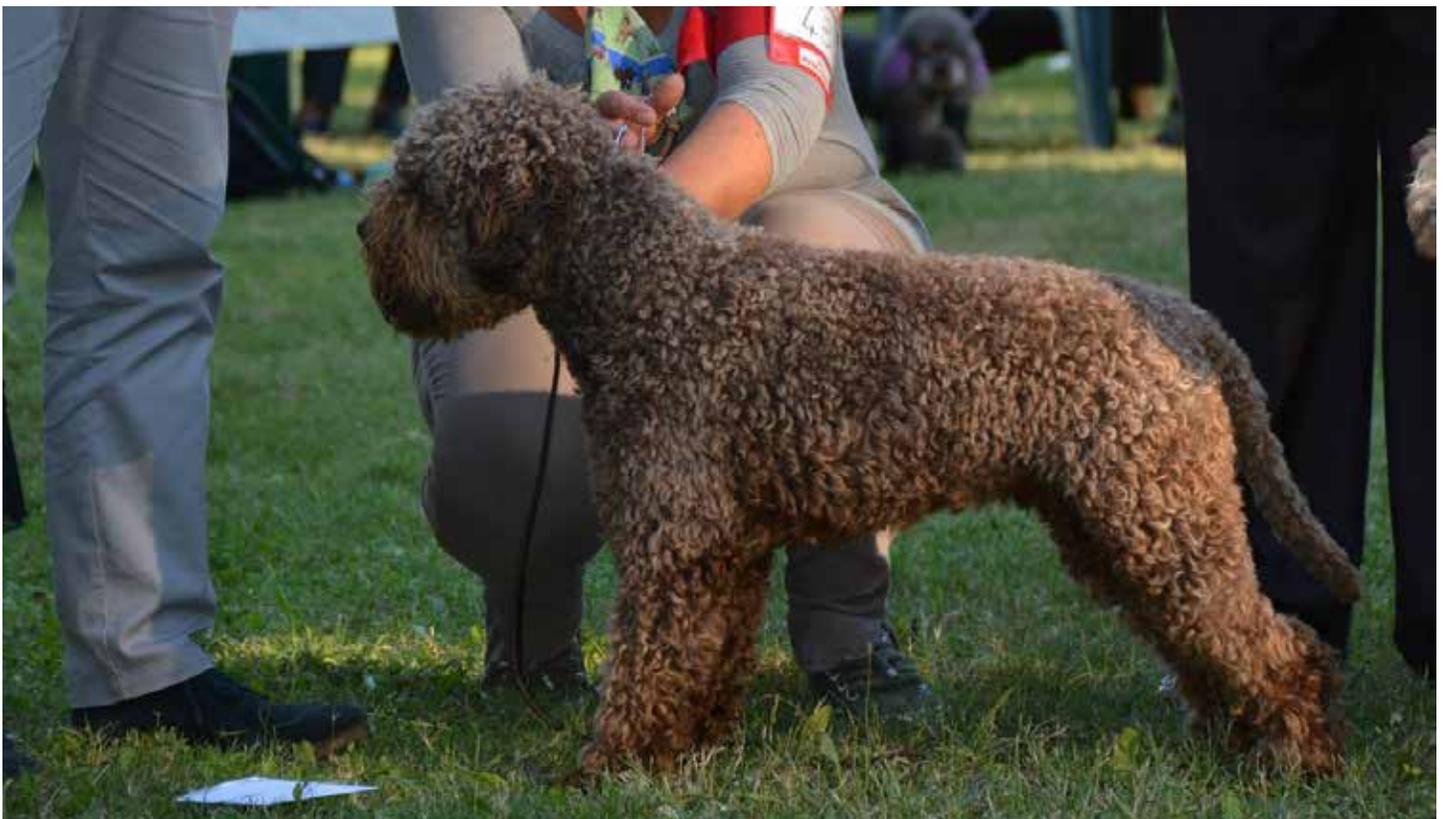
**HAIR:** Of woolly texture, never twisted to form thin cords, semi-rough on the surface, with tight, ring shaped curls, with visible undercoat. Curls must be evenly distributed all over the body and tail, except on the head, where the curls are not as tight forming abundant eyebrows, whiskers and beard. Even the cheeks are covered with thick hair. The topcoat and specially the undercoat are water-proof.

If not clipped, the hair tends to become felted (as it continuous to grow); therefore a complete clipping must be performed at least once a year. Felted topcoat and undercoat must be removed periodically. The clipped coat must not be thicker than max four centimetres and it should be uniform with the silhouette of the dog. Only on the head the coat can be longer, but not as long as to cover the eyes. The area around the genitals and anus should be clipped short.

The coat must not be formed and brushed up in the fashion of the poodles and bichon breeds. Coat clipped short preventing it from curling or assessment of texture. Any excessive hair-styling will exclude the dog from being qualified. The correct clip is un-pretentious and contributes to accentuate the natural, rustic look typical of the breed.

**COLORS:** Off-white solid colour, white with brown or orange patches, brown roan, brown (in different shades) with or without white, orange with or without white. No blacks in the Lagotto Breed.

**Photo Below:** Great example of woolly texture and curls, note how the head is longer tapering to a shorter coat on the neck and core body. Legs longer, tail shaped like a carrot.



### 03: GROOMING Q & A

This grooming guide serves as a great visual resource for properly grooming the Lagotto. We never want this breed to turn into a poodle or bichon in terms of how we present in the show ring, or elsewhere. In addition we must also practice good animal husbandry in terms of cleanliness and health for the skin,

**Are Lagotto easy to groom?** It all depends on how you want your Lagotto to look. If you want the classic Show Lagotto then there is a fair amount of grooming involved. You'll need to learn scissoring techniques and how to handle clippers/figure out blades. The good news is that it isn't that hard to learn! I did not have a great deal of grooming experience prior to my Lagotti and by taking some scissoring lessons, asking a lot of questions, and studying dogs in pictures and in the flesh, I've gotten pretty good.

**Grooming process:** First bathing and conditioner. While they are still wet, use a mat cutter to remove mats as it's easier wet and less damage to the coat. Remember to do minimal combing (ears, beard and paws). The adult Lagotto with a full double coat should not be completely combed out to avoid ruining the coat. Because of the thick undercoat scissoring is the preferred method rather than a clipper.

**Want less grooming?** Then clip back in the spring as you would a puppy cut... 1/4 to 1/2 keeping the head the classic full look. It will take approx three months for the coat to grow out. To maintain the shorter version, once

you have them clipped back, monthly scissoring will sculpt and keep them short. Remember to check ears and trim nails every two weeks.

**Are all Lagotto coats the same?** Lagotto coats have a lot of variation. So your dog may mat more easily than others. The colors are different as well. And the coats and colors change over time. So just when you think you know something about Lagotto grooming, you get a dog that is a different color and has different issues! Some dogs have more soft "cottony" undercoat than others. Some dogs have a LOT of ear hair and needs plucked periodically, others do not.

**I'm just going to take my dog to the groomer! They know what they're doing! Don't they?** Most groomers have never seen a Lagotto or even a picture of a Lagotto. More than likely your dog will come home looking like a poodle or bichon. Groomers don't know what to do with our dogs yet. So you will have a very hard time dropping off your dog at the groomer and having it look the way you expected when you pick them up! The shape of the head and the proper trimming of the tail seem to be the areas of most confusion.

**Important Note:** The Lagotto MUST be cut back about 4 to 5 times a year. This is very important as the coat grows, matts increase and these matts can be extremely painful for your dog. Hunters and working dogs prefer to maintain a short coat from heads to toes. So in the end, there are a few different ways to keep your Lagotto groomed based upon your preference. We mostly discuss the Classic Lagotto look throughout this document.



## 04: THE LAGOTTO PUPPY CUT

With out a puppy cut, a lagotto will not develop the proper classic coat. Left un-cut, the coat gets long and heavy preventing the coat to curl. (see below example on right).

### PUPPY CUT PROPORTIONS

The core body and legs can be cut anywhere from 1/8 to 1/4 inches long. Keep the head a bit longer with NO trimming between the eyes (not like a poodle or bishon). Scissor and shape the head and legs for a puppy cut. In general, its not as important how we style the Lagotto puppy at this point than it is to cut short to get the curl started. You may even need a few puppy cuts to achieve this. Remember it can take up to a year for the Lagotto to develop its adult coat. As adults, it is health to rejuvenate the coat once a year with a puppy cut.

Ears should appear short. From the bottom tip of the ear leather, cut straight following the entire back of ear leather. Do not cut the front of the ears as this gives a full round look to the head. I also feather the lower ear hair shorter transitional into the upper ear. (this helps to give the round look to the head). Beards can be trimmed and the crown of the head rounded. In general, you are looking for a round full head. Do not cut much around the eyes, cut only enough for them to peek through.

Tail should not be long or flagged, rather, should be shaped like a carrot.... wider at the base narrowing to the tip. The tip of the tail shall be cut just above the bone to give a short appearance.

**NOTE:** It is not the job of the groomer to teach grooming manners... Prepare your puppy for a positive grooming experience by daily handling of legs, ears, tail. Teach them how to stand still while working with them and reward them for good behavior.

Below is a link to a video on how to cut a puppy. Video produced by Jaqueline Barbieri.

 <http://youtu.be/eyObtpTTYsU>



CORRECT EXAMPLE



INCORRECT PUPPY WITH NO CUT

## 05: THE CLASSIC LAGOTTO SHOW CUT: HEAD

This grooming guide serves as a great visual resource for properly grooming the Lagotto. We never want this breed to turn into a poodle or bichon in terms of how we present in the show ring, or elsewhere.

Overall the head should be sculpted to appear round with the appearance of short ears. Mostly “shaping” the head and beard.

- 1) From the bottom tip of the ear leather, cut short following the entire back of ear leather. Do not trim the front of the ear as this gives the full round look to the head.
- 2) From the bottom of the ear leather, scissor the hair at an angle shorter at the bottom to blend into the middle (or 1/4) of the ear, giving a smaller ear appearance and adding to the overall roundness to head. (see example below).
- 3) Beards should be trimmed and shaped. The best way to know what is needed is to stand back and look at the head and trim as needed to achieve the round look. See bottom right photo.
- 4) Eyes should be visible, avoid excessive trimming.



**Above:** Example of where to trim ear, from bottom tip of leather, following the back of the ear leather.

**Below Left:** Angling the bottom ear hair

**Below Right:** Correct head shape



## 06: GROOMING THE SHOW DOG VS THE WORKING DOG

Correct grooming of a Lagotto Romagnolo means that the coat on the head should be longer, the coat on the legs should appear longer, the coat on the bridge of the nose and around the eyes is for protection of eyes and should remain. The lower ear and around the ear should be trimmed to the leather and kept longer at the front so the ears blend in with the head.

While the head and legs are kept longer, the core body is sculpted shorter (approx 1 1/2 inches). The tail should be cut and shaped like a carrot, wide at the base narrowing to the tip. The hair at the tip of the tail should be cut just above the bone giving a shorter appearance to the tail.

It's healthy and a must to rejuvenate a the coat of a Lagotto. It takes about three months for the coat to return to

the desired show length which is about 1 to 1 1/2 inches long on the core body. This also makes grooming much easier. Those that hunt with their Lagotti keep them clipped short and easy to clean and see ticks!



The following pages are visual references of proper Lagotto grooming, some shorter cuts, some longer. Use this as a visual guide as to how to groom your Lagotto properly.

**Photo Right:** This is somewhat in-between a show coat and a working coat. When not showing, I like to keep the core body and legs somewhat short, while I enjoy the classic head look. Keeping them short makes it much easier to care for many dogs!

Below Example of a Working Dog Cut



Below Example of a Show Dog Cut









## MY MOST USED GROOMING TOOLS



**SLICKER BRUSHES** Systems® Slicker Brushes are gentle enough to use on all coats. Large Slicker Brush features extra-long pins embedded in an air-cushioned rubber pad, and an extra-long wooden handle.

I like the smallest one, easy to use on the paws, ears and beard.



**RESCO ALUMINUM HANDLE COMBS** Wide tooth, (Coarse 25 pins) Lightweight-Yet Strong, Designed to fit perfectly in your hand.



**ANDIS DEMATTING TOOL** Featuring an anti-slip, easy-grip handle for safe and comfortable grooming, the Andis® Dematting Tool 9 Blades are specifically designed to effectively remove mats, tangles, and knots while leaving a healthy skin and coat.



**GEIB GATOR SHEAR KIT** Three high-quality Geib® shears in one convenient kit. Geib® Gator Shears are made from a high-quality stainless steel alloy. Ideal for dogs of all sizes.



**ANDIS NAIL CLIPPER** With spring-loaded action and a safety stop to prevent over cutting, Andis® Nail Clippers make trimming nails a snap! These innovative clippers have been sharpened and heat treated for strength and optimum cutting, and the anti-slip, easy-grip handle makes for a safe and comfortable grooming experience. Ideal for dogs of all sizes.

**NOTE:** I shop on-line at PetEdge.com, or Amazon for my supplies.