

## Tidying Your Border Terrier

### A Grooming Guide for Show Dogs and Pets

Please note that in addition to this guide, Border Terriers enthusiasts should familiarize themselves with the [BTCA Statement on Presentation](#). (see end of this guide)

**The Border Terrier Club of America, Inc. would like to make known its concern about and disapproval of the use of ANY kind of artificial enhancement on Border Terriers. The use of chinks, dyes, mousses, sprays, drugs, surgery or any procedure which alters mental or physical characteristics is prohibited by AKC Rules and is contrary to the essence of the Border terrier. We would like to remind everyone that the Border Terrier standard emphasizes that it is a natural, working breed and should be exhibited as such. We appeal to all breeders, owners, handlers, fanciers and approved judges to uphold and protect the integrity of the breed. Thank you for your support.**



#### "A Well Groomed Border Terrier"

The Border Terrier Standard approved by the AKC has the following on coat. "A short dense undercoat covered with a very wiry and somewhat broken top coat which should lie closely, but it must not show any tendency to curl or wave. With such a coat a Border should be able to be exhibited almost in his natural state, nothing more in the way of trimming being needed than a tidying up of the head, neck and feet."

#### "Head Study"

As the AKC *Border Terrier*

*Standard* implies, people who have Borders as companions can keep their dogs looking their best and preserving the water resistant nature of their coats using the same methods as the people who exhibit them. The major task in grooming the Border is to pull out, or "strip" its old coat when it has "blown", that is, when it has become overgrown and dead. At this point the hair can be pulled without any discomfort to the dog. The following is the general procedure; you will soon discover which particular combination of methods and grooming positions work best for you and your Border.

First, place your Border on a non-slip surface at a convenient height and choose a grooming position. Most people prefer to strip out the coat standing at the rear of the dog, off to one side, facing forward. Some prefer to strip the coat standing in front, facing the dog. Some within either preference also feel that stripping certain parts of the Border (for example, the rear legs) is best done with the animal lying on its side.

If standing at the rear and side of the dog, with one hand grasp the dog's hide at the shoulder firmly enough so that the hide will not move when you pull on the hair. With your other hand, trap a few hairs between the thumb and index finger and pull the hairs out with a firm and quick motion **in the direction the coat grows** (in this position, towards yourself). Strip out the coat evenly, making sure to keep the hide from moving in each area you strip.

#### "Photo 1"

If you prefer standing in front, facing the dog, steady the animal with one hand and, as before, use the thumb and index finger of your grooming hand to pull out the hairs in quick pulls **in the direction the coat grows** (in this position, away from yourself). (Photo 1)



#### "Photo 2"

A stripping knife is used simply to improve your grip on the hairs you are stripping out. It acts as an extension of the fingers. Trap a small number of hairs between the thumb and the underside of the knife and pull the hairs out, again, in a quick motion **in the direction the coat grows**. Take care not to cut the coat with the stripping knife. If you see cut hairs, try holding the blade of the

knife more exactly parallel to the coat and closer to the animal's body



No matter which position you work from, stripping motions should always be quick pulls *in the direction the coat grows*.

### Stripping Particular Areas of the Coat



"Photo 3"

**1. Tail.** According to the Standard the tail should be "moderately short, thick at the base then tapering." Often its shape is likened to that of a carrot. To maintain this shape, strip the tail in three sessions. Strip the basal third when you strip the body of the dog. In 1 to 2 weeks strip the middle third, and 1 to 2 weeks later strip the tail tip. For routine tidying pull the long dead hairs on the underside of the tail and the long dead hairs at the tip. Be careful to strip smaller amounts of hair when working on the tail and rectal areas, as these are tender. (Photos 3 and 4



"Photo 4"



"Photo 5"

**2. Legs.** Take all the dead hair off the legs, including the feathery hair at the back of the legs, the point of the elbow and the front lower joints.

**3. Throat and Chest.** Strip by the same methods as you did the body, thumb and finger or thumb and stripping knife. (photos 5 and 6 show the front before and after stripping).

**4. Head.** Strip the head in small amounts at a time, grasping hairs near their tips. Consult a good Border Terrier head study, work patiently and step back to check your work often. Keep in mind as you groom the head that the Border does not carry the abundance of face furnishings found on many other terrier breeds.



"Photo 6"

Remove all the dead hair from the top of the skull down to between the eyes, and to the eyes' outside edges, being sure not to leave any "eyebrows". Strip out the cheeks evenly from the outside corner of the eye downward to the outside corner of the lips and outward under the ears. Remove any tufts or single hairs standing up in front of the eyes. Remove the dead hair in front of and inside the ears. Take the long dead hair off the outer ears by hand, going carefully around the edges to give a neat appearance.

The AKC *Border Terrier Standard* notes. "A few short whiskers are natural to the breed". When tidying your Border's whiskers, remove any excessively long straggly hairs carefully, a very few at a time: **Whiskers grow slowly so mistakes last a long time.** At the lower edge, a Border's whiskers follow the natural line of the jaw, rather than being triangular or goatee-shaped. (see Head Study)

**5. Underbody.** Scissors may be used to trim the scanty hair of the tender abdominal and inner back leg areas, to tidy the sensitive sheath area of the dog and the vaginal area of the bitch, and to neaten the feet. Curved, safety-tipped scissors are suggested.

**Concluding Notes:** Experienced Border Terrier people can strip a dog completely in 1 to 2 hours. It may be easier for the novice to strip the back and sides in one day and finish the rest of the coat no more than a day or two later.

The new outer coat of the dog will usually take 6 to 8 weeks to develop. During its growth period, regularly "rake" the coat - that is, use the stripping knife as you would a comb to remove overlooked hairs and loose undercoat. Once your Border's new outer coat has grown in it may be possible to prolong its good looks and delay the next stripping by a method called "rolling". This means selectively picking and pulling out the longest hairs that refuse to lie smooth. This regular pulling initiates new coat layers by breaking up the first coat into several lengths. It must be done carefully not to take too many hairs in one spot. Not every dog's coat can be successfully rolled, and it is an art learned only through practice.

Use of clippers on the normal, healthy Border Terrier is NOT recommended. When the dead coat is stripped, as described in this guide, each hair comes off entirely. Clipping or scissoring removes only the outer length of a hair, leaving the rest of it to shed out. Also, clipping leaves the guard hairs the same length as the undercoat, rendering it useless as protection from the elements - in other words - the coat will lose its weather resistant quality. Clipping also changes the look and texture of the coat quite noticeably.

Some Borders have "easy care" coats that seldom need stripping. Such coats roll naturally, and weekly routine tidying keep them neat longer than usual. (Dogs with this type of coat often have scant whiskers or other furnishings). A very few Borders may be "single coated" - that is, they lack the undercoat which provides the protection from cold and wet. Although easy to care for, a single coat is incorrect for a Border. Some Borders have very silky, thin silvery hair on the top of their heads. This is very difficult and painful to the dog to strip out. Much careful pulling may remove it, but it will return.

A terrier coat's natural protective oils are removed by soap, so a Border should be bathed only when absolutely necessary. Use only a shampoo made for dogs, if possible one formulated specifically for terrier coats. After the bath the dog should be brushed daily to restore the natural oils to his coat.

Brush your Border at least weekly, pulling out any long hairs you might have missed while grooming. Using this opportunity to examine your dog thoroughly will help to keep your dog in good health as well as good coat.

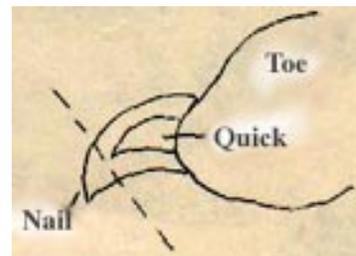
The Border's nails should be trimmed regularly if they do not stay short enough through walking on abrasive surfaces. Try not to trim so deep as to cut the quick. Don't forget the dewclaws even if the rest are OK.

Clean teeth are important to health as well as appearance. Examine the dog's teeth regularly and arrange for heavy tartar deposits to be removed by a Vet or experienced groomer.

This Guide was prepared for and approved by the Board of Directors of the Border Terrier Club of America, Inc.© 1986, BTCA, Inc.



- Grooming Aids:
1. Fine comb
  2. Natural bristle brush
  3. Nail clippers
  4. Stripping knife
  5. Safety-tip scissors



## **BTCA Statement on Presentation of the Border Terrier (Over-grooming and Coloring)**

The essence of type for the Border Terrier is the purpose for which it was developed. It is a working terrier with moderation in all aspects of appearance. Deviation from the qualities necessary for a working terrier results in a loss of type and a loss of identity. Knowing what was originally intended for the Border Terrier is critical for the breeder and the judge of the breed. It helps us to stay on purpose. If we pay respect to nothing else, certainly it should be to what the creators of the breed intended. These are the characteristics that do in fact define a breed. As a prominent judge recently wrote, breed character is the immediate impression the dog gives at first sight. Does the dog convey what it is intended to be? "In the flashy artificially groomed, and supercharged world of pure bred dogs the Border Terrier is a master of understatement." The Border Terrier is a natural terrier. He is a working terrier. Gone are the days that the Border could come into the ring with just some "tidying" up. But the Border Terrier who enters the show ring dyed, legs fluffed up, with gobs of facial hair has lost his identity as a Border Terrier - a terrier developed in the English Scottish borders to hunt fox, otter and vermin.

The Border Terrier was recognized in Britain in 1920 and in 1930 in the US. From the beginning Border breeders and owners have been concerned that Kennel Club recognition might lead to changes in their appearance. The American standard was written to create a blueprint of a working terrier – a terrier which would not be a "fancy" terrier. Form was to follow function - dyed coats, or no coats, or fluffed up legs, or gobs of facial hair serve no purpose in a working terrier. We have tried strenuously over the years to retain those traits that keep the Border Terrier from becoming just another fancy terrier in the terrier group. With the growing popularity and success of the Border in the show ring, and the increase in exaggerated grooming, we are fearful that we may be losing the battle.

For us, the over groomed, dyed Border with fluffed up legs and gobs of facial hair conveys the picture of another fancy terrier who is on his way to losing his essential breed character. We urge all owners, breeders and judges to keep in mind the purpose of the Border Terrier as well as the ethical requirements of the rules and regulations of the American Kennel Club in presenting dogs in the show ring.

***The following Statement is to be included in the BTCA National Specialty Premium List and Catalog. It may also be included in the Exhibitor Package:***

***The Border Terrier Club of America, Inc. would like to make known its concern about and disapproval of the use of ANY kind of artificial enhancement on Border Terriers. The use of chinks, dyes, mousses, sprays, drugs, surgery or any procedure which alters mental or physical characteristics is prohibited by AKC Rules and is contrary to the essence of the Border terrier. We would like to remind everyone that the Border Terrier standard emphasizes that it is a natural, working breed and should be exhibited as such. We appeal to all breeders, owners, handlers, fanciers and approved judges to uphold and protect the integrity of the breed. Thank you for your support.***