



Whether your companion animal is a dog, cat, rabbit or horse, they all need to be provided with good grooming to remain healthy. Matted or knotted hair can cause skin irritation and pain. Many dogs and cats will constantly lick the area, trying to remove the knot himself, resulting in hot spots—moist, raw sores on the skin. Hair that is left long and dirty, reaching into an animal's eyes, can cause the eyes to become inflamed and infected. Dirty, ungroomed hair is many a parasites' playground.

Professional groomers provide an essential service to many pet owners. Teresa Campbell is the owner of Ja-Pens Grooming Salon, a pet grooming facility in Virginia Beach. Teresa put down her comb and scissors to offer us some insight into operating her business and on being a groomer.

### **How did you get started as a dog groomer and come to own Ja-Pens Grooming Salon?**

In 1986 I was hired by Ja-Pens Pet Center as a kennel attendant. Over the next five years I learned how to bathe and groom. I was then promoted to manager. In February 2010, the owner of Ja-Pens Pet Center retired and sold the property. I was allowed to keep the Ja-Pens name and opened Ja-Pens Grooming Salon in March 2010.

### **What kind of training did you have to get for grooming?**

I learned grooming as an apprentice. I was taught by Penny Fitzgerald, Jean Clendining and Kelly Morris. They are the original Ja-Pens family. I have also attended many seminars on different aspects of our industry.

### **What kind of animals did you have growing up?**

I was raised on a farm in West Virginia. Being the youngest of five, I had the animals for playmates. We had chickens, cows, horses, dogs, cats and rabbits. One of my best memories was the year I bottled raised an abandoned pony. I also rehabbed injured and orphaned bunnies, squirrels and chipmunks, releasing them back into the wild when they were ready. In the early 80's I worked at a breeding kennel caring for around 35 Dobermans and Great Danes.

### **Do you have your own dogs or other animals?**

My husband and I currently share our home with two Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Wendy and Myles, a Bernese Mountain Dog, Chevy and an 18-year-old cat, Lucky, who was rescued from Virginia Beach Blvd. when she was about five

weeks old.

### **What is the most difficult part of the work?**

Grooming is a very physical job. We put in long hours on our feet; scissoring and clipping puts great stress and strain on our hands; lifting all sizes of animals takes its toll on our backs.

### **What makes a person a good groomer?**

A good groomer must have many qualities. First and foremost is a love for animals. They must also possess creativity and the ability to envision what the finished style will be. I love to work on a mixed breed pup whose owner says, "Just make him cute." A good groomer must be able to listen, question and comprehend what the customer is looking for in a style for their pet. Often they will say one thing and mean another.

A good groomer needs patience with the animals as well as their humans. And they need to have a good sense of humor. Laughter lessens stress; the animals are less stressed if we are not stressed. Good groomers need to be able to put the animal's welfare above all else, even human vanity. I will not hurt an animal that is matted just because their human wants a particular style.

### **What are the current new trends in grooming?**

Since animals are seen more and more as family members, people are willing to treat them to special services. We offer specialized shampoos for treating skin problems. We also offer a spa treatment that includes a facial, aromatherapy shampoo and a conditioning treatment with extra massage. As concerns for our environment grows, companies are now offering "green" products. One of the fastest growing trends is creative grooming. This involves dyeing the pet's hair and creating intricate patterns clipped and scissored into the hair.

### **Are there any misconceptions that people have about what you do?**

People tend to think all we do is "play with puppies all day." They don't realize that not all animals are cooperative. We get bruised and scratched almost every day, and sometimes even bit. Another misconception is that we have magic potions that make tangles and matted hair disappear. The truth is, that while we do have things that make brushing and combing hair a little easier most of it boils down to good-old elbow grease. A customer once asked me where they could purchase some.

### **What has brought you the most pleasure in your work?**

The rewards of my job are numerous. I enjoy seeing an owner's reaction when they pick up their pets and having dogs run to the door and paw it to get in so they can jump on me and kiss me. A dog's first grooming is very important. Providing a new puppy a positive experience for its first grooming makes things easier for both the pet and it's groomer. But probably the most rewarding thing is working on a dog that is scared, growling and biting, and through patience and kindness this dog becomes a dog that welcomes me and the grooming process.

### **Is there anything that would surprise people about your work?**

People would be surprised that a groomer can save their pet's life. When we groom a pet on a regular basis, we can observe slight changes that can easily be overlooked by the owner. We have caught cancer and infections in the beginning stages from noticing slight changes in lumps and bumps and sometimes in the pet's behavior. I think many would be surprised at how attached we get to these animals. We may see them only a few hours every month but they become like one of our own. I often tell people that I do this job because I can't have all the animals I want to have at home so I borrow theirs for a few hours.

### **What has operating Ja-Pens taught you?**

Grooming is not just a job it's my passion. You will be hard pressed to find anyone who loves what they do more than I do.

### **What makes Ja-Pens different than other dog grooming services?**

I have over 25 years of experience and my manager, Laura, has over 8 years. We strive to make sure everyone is comfortable leaving their pets in our hands. Our customers are more than customer—they are our friends and family.