

To BATH OR NOT TO BATH

That is the question.....

Personally I like to bath my cats before a show although I do know that some people prefer not to as it can be quite hard work as well as noisy for the cat that objects.

The younger your cat is when you start bathing, the better it is. Many cats will eventually grow accustomed to being bathed on a regular basis and will be less likely to scream the house down.

Before giving your cat a bath, you'll need to gather the required supplies:

- Clean towel
- A jug
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Nail clippers
- Cotton balls
- Cat brush/comb (if applicable)
- An assistant – if you know your cat is feisty

First, clean the cat's ears to remove any debris and check for signs of ear mites and trim nails - very important! Brush the fur to remove excess fur that's been shed, and to remove any mats and other things that may be caught in the fur. Although I'm sure this will not be necessary as you groom regularly? You can also use this time to check for any signs of flea infestation as you will be rejected from a show if fleas are found.

The second stage is the fun bit – introducing cat to water. Cats prefer tepid (lukewarm) bath water as opposed to hot. Hot water will cause your cat to be uncomfortable and can also dry out the skin. Some people prefer to use the bath I on the over hand prefer the kitchen sink as it is a smaller area and seems to have less of a fear factor for the cat. So will provide both methods:

The Bath

Fill the bath with enough water to cover the cat's feet up to 4 inches. If your cat does not object to bathing then you can use a shower spray, I brought all my Devon's up years ago happy for me to use a spray attachment. Ensure the bathroom door is shut and have everything within reach. Because of a cat's independent nature, restraining isn't the best idea. If you talk gently and just block all the ways out of the tub, the cat will eventually calm down. If the cat still insists on getting out of the tub, then you will need to hold the cat.

Place the cotton balls in the cat's ears to prevent water from getting into the ear canals. Getting water in a cat's ear can disturb the pH balance in the ear canal, which can make the ear more susceptible to an infection. Lather the cat up with shampoo gently massaging the cat's body. When the cat is completely lathered up, take a cup and gently pour water over the cat to rinse all the shampoo off. Even though the cat may seem thoroughly rinsed, rinse the fur again. Cat fur can still contain soap that is not visible, but will still cause some skin irritation.

If your cat has had problems with dry skin after being bathed, then you may want to add conditioner to your cat. Each type is different depending on the brand. Make sure to follow the directions that come with the product, and that you rinse it off thoroughly to prevent irritation to the skin.

After the cat has been thoroughly rinsed, you will need a towel to dry your cat. Before using the towel try to gently remove excess water from your cat by running your hand down their back and sides. After this gently blot the cat dry. Rubbing them can cause the fur to mat and can also hurt a cat because their skin is so sensitive. Your cat will try to shake off. You can prevent getting the whole room drenched by laying a towel over the cat until he is finished shaking off. Make sure the cat stays warm. You can use a blow dryer set on cool to dry your cat if the noise doesn't frighten him. Never use a heated setting because a cats skin is very thin and sensitive and the direct hot air can not only dry out their skin, but also it can seriously burn your cat.

After the whole bathing process is over, never forget to give your cat a reward. Treats and cuddling are a great reward for a job well done. This will let your cat know that you still love him and that he was a good cat in the tub. Making sure that a rough experience has a pleasant reward in the end is the best way to keep your cat from becoming resentful toward you. Over time the cat will become used to having his bath and will take it all in stride with minimal resistance.