

# Conditioning the Golden Retriever Coat for the Show Ring



Conquerer Golden Retrievers  
Rob Paterson

<http://www.conquerergoldens.com>  
[info@conquerergoldens.com](mailto:info@conquerergoldens.com)

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# All That is Hairy

## The Golden Retriever Coat

is of paramount importance in allowing this sporting breed to do the job it was created for. Texture is something all exhibitors should know and understand the importance of.



## What the Standards Say

**GRCC:** Dense and water repellent with good undercoat. Texture not as hard as that of a short-haired dog nor silky as that of a setter. Lies flat against body and may be straight or wavy. Moderate feathering on back of forelegs and heavier

feathering on front of neck, back of thighs and underside of tail. Feathering may be lighter than rest of coat. **Excessive length, open coats, or limp, soft coats are undesirable.**

**GRCA:** Dense and water repellent with good undercoat. Outer coat firm and resilient, neither coarse nor silky, lying close to body; may be straight or wavy. Untrimmed natural ruff; moderate feathering on back of forelegs and on under-body; heavier feathering on front of neck, back of thighs and underside of tail.

Coat on head, paws and front of legs is short and even. **Excessive length, open coats and limp, soft coats are very undesirable.** Feet may be trimmed and stray hairs neatened, but the natural appearance of coat or outline should not be altered by cutting or clipping.

## **Genetics Dictates the Coat of Each Animal**

No amount of grooming or supplements will change that. However, conditioning and supplements can still have their place in the conditioning of the correct coat.



Coat will not dictate a win in the ring, however, coat is a piece of the entire puzzle that makes up the Golden Retriever. Despite what some may think (or want to think) a dog rarely wins or loses in the ring due to coat alone. Most breeders and judges would choose a dog that embodies the written standard but may lack coat (yet is correctly textured) over that of a heavily coated dog who can't move it's way out of a paper bag.

If you have a dog that carries little coat or a dog that seems to be 'loaded' year round, it is important when walking into the ring that what ever coat is there is correct and in the best condition as genetically possible.

## **There are Many Ways to Condition the Coat**

Over the years I have had dogs that do not carry much coat, some that I consider carry too much, and everything in between.



Thankfully, it was drilled into me, from the beginning, what is of importance is to make sure what ever coat is there is in the best condition possible. Picking up tips from Handlers and Breeders with far more experience than I, I came up with my own routine that, thus far, has worked for all of my dogs. It is a lot of work, and not something that can be started a week or two before ring time. On average I start about three months before I know I will be sending a dog out.

Of course the way I do things may seem excessive to some, that's ok. We all do things differently. Some people will take a dog from the field right to the show ring, some will purchase every supplement known to man. This is just the way I do things, and what I have found to work for my dogs.

Rob Paterson

# Key Points



- Coat should not be about quantity, rather it's about quality
- A dog can only have what the genes allow, however the condition can make or break a coat (literally!)
- A soft and/or silky coat that many seem to think is a good thing, is neither functional or correct for this Sporting Breed
- Plush or a coat that stands on it's end is also neither functional or correct for a Golden Retriever
- Texture, Texture, **TEXTURE**



# What Is Needed

Tools - Shampoo - Conditioner - Supplements

## **Pin-Brush**

I prefer Chris Christensen or PurePaws



## **Rake**

Any Rake will do, I do prefer a single tooth row over a double/triple row rake.

## **Teflon Comb**

I prefer one with a handle for most work, to prevent hand fatigue.





**Shampoo**

Pure Paws Factor Zero

**Shampoo**

Maintenance

Pure Paws Forte

Pure Paws H2O

Show Day

PurePaws Amplify



**Conditioner**

Some of my favourites are Fructis (by Garnier), Ice on Ice (Chris C.), or Hydrating Spray (Eric Salas)





**Deep Condition**  
Pro-Line Pro-Gro



**Supplements**

A good Wild Salmon oil and/or Organic Extra Virgin Coconut Oil.

**The Schedule**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Bath Day	Brush Day	Bath Day	Brush Day	Bath Day	Brush Day	Bath or Brush Day

# Bath Day

Monday - Wednesday - Friday

## The Bath

If you are starting with a coat that is still blowing, I suggest bathing in warmer water, get yourself a bottle of cheap 'creme rinse' and empty the entire bottle on the coat, let sit for five minutes and rise. Use your forced air dryer to blow out all of that coat, you will be amazed at the amount that comes out. This will allow you to work with a 'clean slate' faster then waiting for it to fall out on it's own.

If you are starting with a new coat, I prefer the water to be a little bit cooler (never cold). The first bath day of the week (Monday) I use Pure Paws Factor Zero (this brings the coat back to 'zero', a clean slate if you will), subsequent baths (Wednesday & Friday) I will use either Pure Paws Forte or H2O (Forte strengthens the hair, H2O adds hydration), of course, use which ever shampoo you prefer, I only listed what I use since I often get asked. Pure Paws Amplify is used on Show Days only. Only once a week (Monday) do I actually bath the dog down to the skin, i.e. really rubbing it in, the other days I try to bath the coat rather than the skin (this helps keep the dogs natural oils and such intact). I never use conditioner/cream rinse after shampooing.





## **Drying & Brushing**

When drying use a forced air dryer (I much prefer to use one without heat), and blow in the direction of the coat while using a rake to remove undercoat. About 1/2 way through the drying process I then change direction and back blow the coat while using a pin brush to back brush (if there is heavy shedding of undercoat, continue to use rake). During the last five minutes of drying I will return to blowing the coat in the direction it naturally falls while combing with a teflon comb. The key is to get as much coat out as possible. Always ensure your Golden is completely dry after a bath, unlike swimming bathing a correctly textured Golden Retriever coat allows water to penetrate the top coat.

## **Clean Coat Grows**

The key to growing coat is two fold:

- A) Ensure the coat is clean
- B) Remove undercoat prematurely, which speeds up regrowth

Golden Retrievers, like any double coated breed, shed undercoat all year long, and of course twice a year have their big coat blow, or roll over. Each day a Golden will lose hair, the key to speeding up the regrowth is to get the hair out shortly before it was naturally going to be shed. The back blowing and brushing does just that, removes those hairs that may not have been naturally lost for another few days.



# Brush Day

Tuesday - Thursday - Saturday

## Conditioner

The only time I use conditioner is on Brush Days (note, I consider conditioner and deep conditioning two different aspects of coat care). In a 500ml spray bottle I add 15-30mls of conditioner, the rest regular water. I don't necessarily want to use conditioner on the coat for any other purpose then to prevent static. Static can break the coat, so one should never brush a Golden without spraying some type of heavily diluted conditioner on the coat before hand. Conditioner also attracts dirt, and remember it is clean coat that grows, that is why I dilute it so much (if you are using a bottle of conditioner just for brushing, a 500ml bottle should last you many many months).



## The Work Begins

This is the part that takes some time. Starting in a small section of the coat, spray your watered down conditioner of choice. Create a line with your comb and back comb the area, lightly spraying more watered down conditioner if needed. Never work on a

completely dry coat.

This accomplishes two things, 1) you are removing any undercoat that is just getting ready to naturally shed thus stimulating growth of new undercoat and 2) lightly conditions the coat to prevent static. Static can be a coats worst nightmare as it is drying and will lead to breakage of the hair shaft.

### **Finishing Up**

Once you have completed the section by section back combing (and your arm hasn't lost all sensation), lightly spray the entire coat again, holding the spray at least 18 inches from the coat (applying a light misting to the overall coat). Take your force dryer and pin-brush, and dry the coat while brushing in the natural direction of the coat. We are NOT trying to create a coat that stands on end, that is not correct. We are doing two things in this process, blowing coat in the natural direction, and over time training any curls to lay flatter. Always ensure your Golden is completely dry after spraying.



# Conclusion

## What About Day 7

Day 7 (usually Sundays for my schedule) are usually a toss up for me, sometimes it's a brush day, sometimes a bath day, sometimes a nothing day.

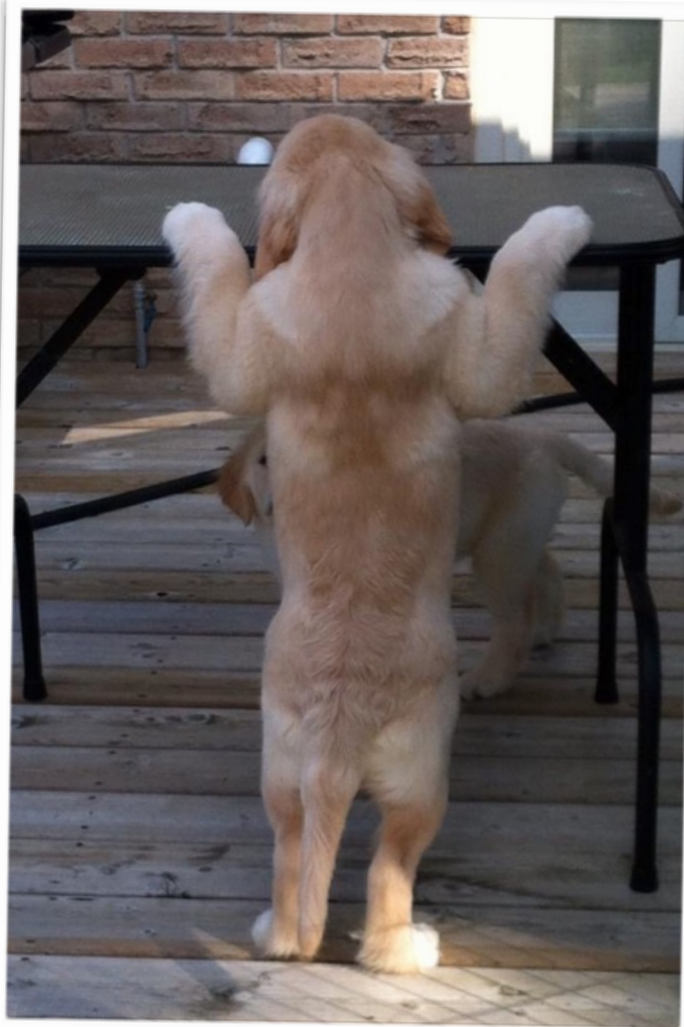


## Coat Damage

My dogs spend a considerable amount of time at the cottage in the spring, summer and fall; this includes swimming, running in the brush, and pretty much everything else that is horrible for keeping coat in prime condition. I refuse to keep dogs in a bubble, so they are free to do these things, with a little change in the grooming routine. During this time, to prevent breakage to the pants, tail, underbelly, and foreleg feathering I will apply Pro-Line Pro-Gro deep conditioner at night. A light misting and comb through is often all that is needed. A correctly textured coat should be able to handle the rigours of these activities, however a little help never hurt.

## What I Don't Do

- I never do this routine on a dog that doesn't enjoy being groomed, it is not fair to the dog.
- I do not start puppies on this, for starters their coats are forever changing, and it is a lot to ask a puppy to be happy about this amount of grooming. I do however bath and dry puppies several (three or so) times a week. I find by the time they are six months they are more than happy to get on the table, and get excited when they see the bath supplies come out.



- Never ever allow a dog to live in a bubble for the sake of coat care, that is no fun for anyone. They are dogs, let them play, roll around, and have **fun!**