

10 Dogs That Shed the Most – and 10 That Shed Least

Looking for a dog that won't drive you crazy with heavy shedding? There are plenty of breeds to pick from ... If it's too late to pick, there are things you can do to help manage shedding. What NOT to do and the best strategies for staying on top of the issue.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Which dogs shed the most and least is a constant topic of debate among pet owners and veterinary professionals
- Dogs have furry coats for a reason, and shedding is a natural and necessary function
- Shaving a shedding pet is typically not a good idea
- Feeding a balanced, species-appropriate diet and regular brushing are the best tools to manage shedding around your home

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The colder months of the year give those of us with pets a little break from the heavy shedding seasons of spring and summer. But don't get too comfortable, because in just a matter of months the warm weather will return and we'll be up to our eyeballs in dog (or cat) hair once again!

Which dog breeds shed the most and least is always a hot topic with pet owners and prospective pet parents. Not long ago, VetStreet polled 249 veterinary professionals to get their opinions on heavy vs. light shedders. Here are the polling results:¹

Heaviest Shedders:

- Alaskan Husky
- Alaskan Malamute
- Labrador Retriever
- German Shepherd Dog
- Golden Retriever
- Siberian Husky
- Akita
- Chow Chow
- Great Pyrenees
- Saint Bernard

Lightest Shedders:

- Poodle
- Bichon Frise
- Toy Poodle
- Chinese Crested
- Yorkshire Terrier
- Maltese
- Chihuahua
- Maltipoo
- Goldendoodle
- Labradoodle

Over at DogChannel.com, the list of heavy shedders includes several additional breeds:²

DogChannel.com List of Heaviest Shedders

- Akita
- Keeshond
- Alaskan Malamute
- Kuvasz
- American Eskimo
- Labrador Retriever
- Australian Shepherd
- Newfoundland
- Beagle
- Norwegian Elkhound
- Belgian Sheepdogs (Sheepdog, Malinois, Tervuren, and Laekenois)
- Old English Sheepdog
- Bernese Mountain Dog
- Pomeranian
- Border Collie
- Pug
- Chihuahua
- Rottweiler
- Chow Chow
- Samoyed
- Collie (rough & smooth coats)

- Shetland Sheepdog
- Dalmatian
- Shiba Inu
- German Shepherd
- Siberian Husky
- German Shorthair Pointer
- Saint Bernard
- Golden Retriever
- Welsh Corgi (Cardigan & Pembroke)
- Great Pyrenees

Shedding 101

The purpose of your dog's coat is threefold:

- To regulate his body temperature
- To protect his body's largest organ, the skin
- To help with sensory perception

There are actually three types of dog fur. There's the undercoat that some breeds have, which is a layer of soft thick hair that provides insulation. Undercoats are typically found on dogs bred to live in very cold, wet climates.

Next there are guard hairs, or the outer coat, which is stiff and longer to protect the undercoat and/or the skin from temperature extremes and water. The guard hairs of some breeds (terriers, for example) are so coarse they actually shed water.

Finally, there are the whiskers, which are stiff hairs that grow around a dog's face and provide sensory stimulation.

Unlike human hair follicles that can accommodate only one strand of hair, dogs' hair follicles grow several hairs each. Your dog's hair follicles contain oil that helps keep his skin and coat in good condition.

When the hairs sprouting from hair follicles stop growing, they are shed to make room for new hair growth. How and when shedding takes place depends on your dog's breed, his overall health, and genetics.

Dogs with double coats (for example, Golden Retrievers) are considered the heaviest shedders. They typically "blow" their undercoat during the spring and fall. Other breeds like the Dalmatian shed year-round.

It's important to understand that shedding is a normal and necessary function designed to maintain your dog's coat and skin in healthy condition.

Is Shaving a Shedding Dog a Good Idea?

Many guardians of shedding dogs (and even cats) wonder if it doesn't make sense to simply shave their coats off, especially in the spring and summer.

This isn't usually a good solution. Your dog's coat is like the insulation in your home that keeps the house from getting too cold in the winter, and too hot in the summer. Your dog's coat does the same thing – it works not only to keep her warm in cold weather, but also to protect her from the effects of too much sun.

An animal's coat also protects against sunburn and skin cancer. Dogs with thin coats, or white or light-colored coats are especially vulnerable to sun damage.

Generally speaking, I think dogs do best wearing their natural coat, as long as it's maintained in good condition.

One exception would be dogs with recurrent hotspots or other skin conditions. Some of these pets do better with shorter hair because their owners can manage their skin conditions more effectively. Additionally, some dogs can't clean their private areas very well, so keeping the perianal hair trimmed away is more hygienic for these dogs.

In my opinion, double-coated breeds should never be shaved unless there's a medical reason to do so, as their undercoats act as an excellent insulator against the summer heat. It seems counterintuitive that an extra layer of fur would help your dog stay cooler, but it does. Air is a natural insulator, and air trapped between the hair follicles and hairs on your dog's body does a very efficient job keeping body temperature in balance.

The Best Way to Manage Shedding

Preventing your dog's coat from shedding isn't possible, nor is it desirable because shedding is a natural and necessary function. However, you can do a lot to manage the amount of hair your dog deposits around your home with regular brushing, and by feeding a balanced, species-appropriate, organic, and non-GMO raw diet with healthy amounts of omega-3 essential fatty acids and zinc. Adding additional coconut oil can also be very beneficial in reducing the amount of hair loss.

If you have a heavy shedder in the family, daily brushing is a must – especially during shedding season. Short-coated shedders can benefit from brushing with either a grooming glove or a curry brush.

Keep in mind that if your dog is stressed for any reason, she'll tend to shed more hair. This can be stress caused by illness, surgery, a visit to the boarding kennel, groomer, or veterinarian, moving to a new home, or the addition or loss of a family member (two- or four-legged).

Sources and References

[VetStreet July 21, 2014](#)

[DogChannel.com July 26, 2013](#)

¹ [VetStreet July 21, 2014](#)

² [DogChannel.com July 26, 2013](#)
