

CADENETTES

"What do I do with her coat?" I often get asked this question. Some owners like to keep their Pyr Shep (Berger) brushed out, and spic and span clean, but if you prefer less work and would like to experience owning a traditional and rustic Berger des Pyrénées (Pyrenean Shepherd) then you can let his coat naturally cord to form cadenettes or matelotes. These cadenettes or matelotes will naturally form on the rump, hind legs, front legs and in-between the front legs. It is not necessary to intervene at all if you want the style of matelotes that are wide and dense tiles of matted coat, but if you prefer the look of smaller cords, as we are often used to seeing on the Puli, then some preparation is needed in the beginning to establish these smaller, more free hanging cords.

These are described in the FCI Standard:

"In some dogs the mixture of coarse and woolly hair can produce sorts of strands or cords called "cadenettes" and sometimes matted or felted hair called "matelotes" which overlap like tiles on the croup. "Cadenettes" can be found on the chest and the forelegs at elbow level."

The AKC standard says the following:

"...the long-haired dogs are often more heavily furnished with woollier hair that may cord, especially on the elbows, croup, and thighs, but never on the head."

There are pluses and minuses to allowing the coat to cord. On the plus side, once the cords are established (after a couple of years) there is little work to maintain the coat. On the minus side, this type of coat can collect dirt especially if the dog is living on a farm, or if it is a male dog, urine may also soil the coat. But, both these problems can be washed away, on occasion, with no damage to the coat. Bathing is no problem and is done the same as any other bath. Just wet, soap, wash and rinse. It will usually take half of a warm day to dry naturally. The cords of hair act like a candlewick and draw the moisture to the ends so the dog's body does dry quickly. (I would recommend against using blow dryers and keeping bathes to a very minimal.) Occasionally you will also end up picking out bits of lawn debris as well, but this happens with all coats.

One difficulty that many run into when allowing the cords to form is the problem of solid mats forming. The coat will form solid mats as a result of the felting process taking place. This process can occur when the cadenettes/matelotes are consistently exposed

CADENETTES

to external pressure and stress. Most commonly this will occur when a dog is crated for extended periods of time, and turns around or spins in a plastic crate, or spends an abnormal amount of time repeating the behavior of sitting, standing, lying down, sitting, standing, lying down in their crate. This action coupled with dampness and/or humidity from the confined space results in the felting or matting of the dog's coat.

The Pyr Shep was developed to be an outdoor farm dog. They are rarely still, and are on the move much of the time, and should not be confined to a small box for hours and hours. Allowed to roam around farms and pastures in the open air the coat is remain dry and loose. This lifestyle is conducive to a coat that maintains itself in the natural process of cording with little management on the part of the owner.

Included in this article are examples of dogs that are corded, and an explanation of the process, to help those of you who also want this cadenette style on your Pyr Shep.



Figure 1 - DOG 1 as a mature adult

CADENETTES

DOG 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

A close-up (Figure 4) shows while thicker mats are developing around her midsection. These thick mats need to be pulled apart by hand, but not combed out.

Continuing this work will result in an adult dog with cadenettes. *(Refer back to page 2, Figure 1 to see this dog as a mature adult.)*

Here we see our brindle female, Hoopla, (Figure 2) when she is only a couple of months old. It is apparent in that picture that she is going to have a very abundant coat and, like her mother; so she will be allowed to let her coat cord. This type of coat is a lot of work to keep from not matting, so it is easier to "go with the flow" and manage the mats for a few months until they are established on their own. The small cords form with no help down her thighs, but thicker mats form around the midsection and hips, which is where you will have to intervene by pulling them apart with your hands into smaller mats. This does not need to be done on a daily basis. The dog usually doesn't like you yanking on his coat, but it is just a quick tug to make one mat into two mats, then two mats into four mats. You can do this over a few weeks, so as not to irritate the dog too much.

Looking at the same dog (Figure 3) at 6 months old, you can see the outline of her rump appearing higher than her shoulders. This is expected as the loin and rump have a thicker undercoat.



Figure 4

CADENETTES

DOG 2

This fawn female (Figure 5) was kept combed out until she was a year old, and finished showing. Now she is two years old and the thicker undercoat is starting to mat on her rump producing more of a rise over her loins. The cording is not predominant right now, but they are starting to form on their own down her hind legs. These small cords will continue to grow longer as they collect the hair that is shed out every year. Splitting the mat at the base about every six months or after every normal shed will keep the cords free of one another.



Figure 5



Figure 6

A solid mass, or mats will form, which will need to be split into approximately equal separate cords (Figure 6). I have found that these mats of undercoat that develop around the midsection form what I can only describe as a "flat slab" of matted hair. Out of these "slabs" protrude clumps of the longer outer coat and these give you an idea of where the mat needs to be divided. Just grab the desired clump or section that you want to form into a cord and pull it apart from the rest of the mat.

Here is the same dog two years later. (Figures 7 & 8) The cords are well established and after a period of hair growth you can see that there is 2" of growth forming a solid mat, or what the FCI standard calls matelotes (overlapping tiles of matted hair). You can either leave this or, at your leisure, pull the cords apart once more to form longer cords. If you imagine your hand as the dog's coat you can imagine that your fingers are the "cords/cadenettes" and your palm is the "matelote". If you pull your fingers apart then you split the matelote into long strands. After many, many years the cords can get very long, but you can trim them if they get too long, so they are not dragging on the ground.

Figure 7

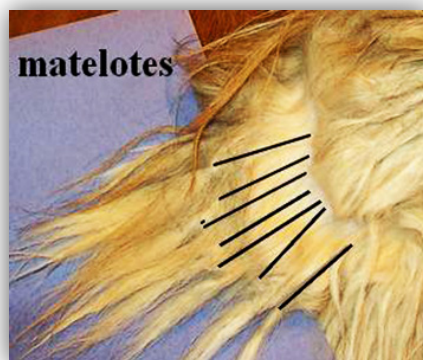


Figure 8

CADENETTES

The fawn female (Figure 9 & 10) seen as a mature adult - both standing and moving.



Figure 7



Figure 8

CADENETTES

DOG 3



Figure 9



Figure 12

DOG 3 (Figure 11) is a brindle male puppy showing the proper outline; with the thick coat developing behind the shoulders on his rear. Then another photo (Figure 12) at two years of age which shows the cords becoming more distinguishable. This is certainly an awkward stage as he looks to be supporting mats, but as the cords lengthen they become more noticeable and appealing.

As a mature adult (Figure 13) the cords are obvious and no longer need much maintenance once they are established. After a bath it is a good idea to quickly go through the cords and pull them apart from one another, as the water can cause more felting.



Figure 10

CADENETTES

Cadenettes will also form on the front legs and chest. (Figures 14 & 15)



Figure 14



Figure 15

When trotting away the cords swing like the dog is wearing a hoola skirt!



Figure 16



Figure 17

CADENETTES

DOG 4



Figure 18



Figure 19

This fawn female did not start her cadenettes until she was 3 years old. She has a coat that naturally forms thinner, rounder cadenettes. (Different coat types often do form different types of cadenettes.) The first photo (Figure 18) is when they were first started, then the second (Figure 19) is the usual awkward stage. Keep working on them and close your eyes!



Figure 20

The same dog (Figure 20) shown later with fully developed cadenettes.