Pictoral Guide to Grooming the Kerry Blue Terrier

A photographic overview, by master groomer Arlett van Dijk, with professional photographs by Ria van Middelaar and translated from Dutch by Janet Joers

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The Groomer

Arlett van Dijk is a world-class champion groomer and Kerry owner. She travels around the globe to compete in professional grooming competitions.

Arlett received her grooming license in 1989. Since then she regularly attends classes and seminars to improve her skills. In 1992 she started with competitive grooming.

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Arlett grooms all breeds, but for competitive grooming she prefers Kerries.

Credentials of the Groomer

- Benelux Grooming Championship (Competed every year since 1997)
  - 2 Bronze
  - 2 Silver
  - 1 Gold
- 1999 Burbank, California
  - Fifth place in level 1
- 1999 IJA Championship
  - Best Technical Award
- 2000 Berlin Grooming Competition
  - Best of Difficulty Award
- 2001 European Grooming Championship
  - Silver
- 2001 Montpellier Grooming Competition
  - Bronze Ciseaux d'Or champion class
- 2002 Montpellier Grooming Competition
  - Silver Ciseaux d'Or champion class
- Grooming Champion of Holland in 2001 and 2002
- 2002 Groom Expo, Hersey Pennsylvania
  - Best of Difficulty Award
- 2004 Groom Expo, Dallas
• 2005 Grooming Championship in Luik, Belgium
  o  First in Elite class
• 2009 Grooming Championship in Luik, Belgium
  o  Reserve Best in Show
• 2011 Grooming Championship in Genk, Belgium
  o  Best in Show
• 2015 Member of the Dutch team at the World Grooming Championships

The Photographer

Ria van Middelaar is a professional photographer for many dog magazines in the Netherlands. She has contributed to several dog books.

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1. Introduction

Introduction to trimming a Kerry

This photographic overview of grooming a Kerry Blue Terrier is intended to help beginning and novice Kerry owners understand the Kerry trim and learn how it is achieved. It is also meant to help amateur Kerry groomers improve their techniques, and introduce nongrooming Kerry owners to trimming techniques they can pass on to their local groomers. Ultimately, it is hoped that this presentation will peak the interest of nongroomers and encourage them to learn more about trimming their dogs themselves.

Although an aura of mystique surrounds the art of masterfully sculpting a Kerry, anyone can follow these clear, sharp photographs and the guidance of Arlett van Dijk. By visualizing the "lines" of the Kerry--lines that your eye can be trained to see--for each part of the Kerry anatomy, the basic pattern of the Kerry trim becomes apparent. How to achieve those lines, and what tools are used to create them, are concisely described. Before and after shots provide comparison and make the trim pattern clearly visible.
The photographs are arranged in a series of "mini-lessons" on each part of the Kerry's anatomy—feet, ears, head, shoulders, tail, and so on. This organization makes it easy to find specific information, and allows you to pick and choose areas to concentrate on. The sequence of the mini-lessons can be varied, and indeed, every professional Kerry groomer has his or her own preferred order.

No pictorial guide to grooming a Kerry can possibly include everything you need to know to groom every part of a Kerry, and that is not the purpose of this one. Indeed, whole articles have been written on trimming nails, clippering between the pads, and teeth cleaning, and no doubt new articles could and will be written about every facet of grooming a Kerry. So where possible, this guide includes hotlinks to additional information and resources to help move you beyond the introduction. But for those of you who are truly serious about grooming your own Kerries, nothing can compare with the experience of actually watching a professional Kerry groomer transform your own dog. This sort of "nearly hands-on" experience is invaluable and should not be foregone in favor of written guidelines.

Whether your goal is to ultimately turn your Kerry into a groomed-to-the-nines masterpiece, or to just tidy him up between scheduled grooming appointments, let this pictoral guide serve as your first step into the wonderful world of Kerry grooming.
Tips for best results

- Always bathe your dog, comb it out thoroughly, and dry it completely before beginning to trim. Using a crème rinse or detangler on the coat can help remove snarls and tangles.
- Keep your shears and clipper blades ultra-sharp. If you don't know where to have them sharpened, contact any local dog grooming shop, beauty shop, or barber shop and ask where they have their equipment sharpened.
- Keep your equipment clean. Store your shears in their protective cases when not in use, and follow the guidelines that came with your clippers for cleaning the blades and regular maintenance.
- Reduce heating of the clipper blades and keep them lubricated by using any of the coolant/lubricating sprays available at pet supply stores or catalogs.
- Always handle shears and clippers with UTMOST CARE to avoid injury to your dog.
- Be patient with your dog and with yourself. It will show in the finished "product," and you'll both be happier with the results!
2. Equipment, Before & After

2.1
You will need the following equipment:

- Shears: One pair of slim straight 6-inch (15 cm) shears (optional), one pair of straight 7 1/2 to 8-inch (18 to 20 cm) shears, one pair of curved 8 1/2-inch (21 cm) shears, and one pair of double-sided, 36-tooth thinning shears (or similar).
- Clippers with detachable blades, such as Oster (R) or Andis (R), among others.
- #15 blade for head, throat, belly, feet, and rear; #30 blade for ears.
- Hemostats for ear-plucking
- Nail clippers
- Slicker brush
- Fine and medium-toothed metal comb
- Wide-toothed metal comb (optional)
2.2
Before—Body

Donnoly has good length of hair for sculpting.
2.3
After—Body

Note these lines:
• gracefully arcing neck to the flat topline of the back,
• straight front from the throat to the toe,
• angled line from the brisket to the waist,
• angled line below the tail, rounded rump, curve to the hock, and the
• vertical line to the paw.
2.4
Before--Head

No neck, shapeless head, hanging ears, unruly facial furnishings.
Note the clean neck and head, forward ears, and how neatly the fall and whiskers lay. The straight line from the nose to the top of the head, and the line down the back of the neck are easy to see.
3. Feet

3.1 Before

Note the hair between the pads.
3.2
Clippering pads

Pull the pads apart with one hand, then use a #15 blade and clipper the hair from between the pads. Glide the clippers on top of the skin to avoid nicking the pads.

Do NOT dig into the skin with the clippers.
3.3
Clippering pads

Continue gliding the clippers on top of the skin to avoid nicking the pads.

Note the angle of the clippers.
3.4 After

finished paw reveals the pink skin between the pads.
3.5
Shaping the feet

Hold your curved shears at a 45-degree angle and trim around the foot. Make sure your Kerry is standing properly, with its foot firmly on the table.
4. Nails

4.1 Nails

Pick up each paw and separate the toes with one hand, and clip off an 1/8-inch (6 mm) or less of nail with the nail clippers. In case of bleeding, have a styptic powder handy.
5. Ears

5.1 Inside of ear

Using a #30 blade, clipper up the inside of the ear with the lay of the hair (from the center out) while holding the ear as flat as possible in your hand.

More info on cleaning and plucking ears on the web site.
5.2
Outside of ear

Using a #30 blade, clipper down the outside of the ear with the lay of the hair (from the center down) while holding it flat in your hand.
5.3
Outside of ear

Note the direction of the clippers toward the outside edges of the ear. Glide the clippers smoothly on top of the skin to avoid nicks.
5.4
Edges of ear

With the thumb and index finger of both hands, feel where the edge of the ear is.
5.5 Edges of ear

Using the slim straight shears, with your thumb and index finger marking the edge of the ear, carefully scissor off the hair fringing the ear.

Note: Less experienced groomers may prefer to clipper the edges of the ear using a #30 blade, beveling the edges top and bottom.

Warning: Go slowly as you must be very careful not to cut the ear.
5.6 Edges of ear

Notice how the groomer uses her thumb and index finger to guide the shears to avoid cutting the ear.
6. Ear Plucking

6.1 Opening the ear

Hold the ear open so you can see deep into the ear canal. Make sure the light shines directly inside the ear.

Some groomers apply ear powder inside the ear prior to plucking to improve the grip of the hemostats and prevent slippage.
6.2
Outside of ear canal

Using the hemostats, grasp small tufts of hair and pull straight out. Start at the outside of the ear canal and work your way in. That way you'll have a better view of all the nooks and crannies inside the ear.

Warning: The ear has lots of nooks and crannies. Make sure you only grab the hair and not the skin.
6.3
Inside of ear canal

As you work your way deeper inside the ear canal, pull the ear out rather than up.
6.4
After

After plucking, the pink inside the ear is easy to see. You may now want to clean the ear with ear cleaner and a cotton ball or Q-tip.
7. Head

7.1
Before

No neck, shapeless head, hanging ears, unruly facial furnishings.
7.2
Clippering under the jaw

Using a #7 or #8.5 blade, clipper against the lay of the hair from the back of the jawbone toward the beard.

Stop approximately 1 1/2-inches (4 cm) beyond the corner of the mouth.
7.3
Clippering the throat

Using a #7 or #8.5 blade, clipper with the lay of the hair from the back of the jawbone down to the breastbone. You can easily feel the breastbone with your fingers.
7.4
Clippering the skull

Using a #7 or #8.5 blade, clipper the top of the head from just behind the eyes to where the ears fold. Do NOT clipper over the dome of the skull.
7.5
Clippering the sides of the neck

Using a #7 or #8.5 blade, clipper from the bottom of the ear straight down to the shoulder blade.
Clippering the cheeks

Using a #7 or #8.5 blade, clipper the sides of the head from the back of the eye to the ear. Clipper from the outside corner of the eye down to the corner of the mouth, then back along the cheeks to below the ear.

This is also a good time to check the teeth for plaque build-up. You may want to scale the teeth yourself or schedule a teeth-cleaning at your vet's.
8. Fall

8.1 Flat top

Note the straight line from the top of the forehead to the fall. A properly groomed Kerry head appears flat on all sides, like a brick.
8.2
Blending the fall behind the eyes

Use thinning shears behind the eye to blend the fall with the clippered part of the head.
8.3
Flat sides

After thinning the fall and side whiskers with thinning shears, use the straight shears, pointed nose-ward, to trim the sides of the fall in line with the side of the head.

Note: While not shown here, the thinning shears are also pointed nose-ward in the fall and whiskers.

Warning: Be careful around the eyes. Steady the head with your other hand.
8.4
Flat top and sides

Looking down on top of the head, notice how the fall extends the line from the cheek to the nose. The eyes are not visible, and there are no Schnauzer-like eyebrows!
8.5
Brick-like head

This beautifully groomed head is flat from the dome of the skull to the nose, and from the cheeks to the nose--like a brick.
Note that the fall on top begins at the outside corners of the eyes, and the whiskers on the side begin at the inside corners of the eyes.
9. Shoulders

9.1 Blending the neck with the shoulder

Use the straight shears to blend the clippered part of the neck with the rest of the body.
9.2
Scissoring the shoulder

Angle the shears downward to create a straight line from the shoulders, down the leg, ultimately to the toes.
9.3
Scissoring the vertical line to the leg

When viewed from the front, the shoulders and the outside of the front legs visually create a perfectly straight vertical line.
10. Topline

10.1 The Back

Using the straight shears, scissor a perfectly straight line on top of the back from the tail to the point where the neck joins the body. This is the point where the shoulders join the back, which you can feel as a slight indentation with your fingers.
10.2
Creating the arched neck

Holding the dog’s head up in a natural position, use the curved shears to scissor the top of the neck from between the ears down to the back to create a graceful arch.
10.3
Blending the neck with the back

Using the curved shears, continue scissoring the arch on the top of the neck to blend with the flat topline of the back.
When viewed from above, the neck should gradually widen at the shoulders and flow cleanly into the back and sides.
11. Body

11.1 Sides

Using the curved shears, angle the shears downward and scissor to create a "barrel" from the sides to the belly.
11.2
Underside

Using the straight shears, scissor a straight line from the brisket up to the belly, maintaining the angle of the scissors as shown.
11.3
Waist

Trim off excess hair on the body immediately in front of the back legs to create a waist. Do NOT bring the waist up to the topline.
12. Front

12.1
Before

Although overgrown, you can still see the vertical line from the throat to the paws.
Using the straight shears, scissor a straight vertical line from the chest down the front of the legs. Scissor the chest closely, trimming off all excess hair to create a straight-front silhouette.
12.3
Front legs

Continue using the straight shears to extend the vertical line from the shoulders down the outside of the legs to the toes. Also trim the back of the legs vertically to create "stovepipes."
12.4
Paws

Trim the leg vertically to the toes. Never cut into the hair surrounding the paws to reveal the foot. Your Kerry would look flat-footed!
12.5
After--Side view

Note the straight vertical line from the throat, down the chest and legs to the paws. The backs of the front legs are also trimmed vertically straight.
12.6
After--Front view

Note how closely the chest is trimmed, and how the neck, shoulders, and legs flow gracefully into each other. The vertical lines are easy to see.
13. Rear

13.1
Before--Rear view

Position the dog in a wide-legged stance. A stacked pose helps you visualize the curve from the topline to the hips, and the straight line from the hips to the paws.
13.2
Clippering

Using a #15 blade, clipper around the anus up the back of the tail to the tip. Then below the anus, clipper down the rear between the legs.

Do not clipper wider than width of the clippers.
Standing behind the dog, use the straight shears to trim excess hair from the inside of both legs to create a straight vertical line to the paws.
13.4
After--Rear view

Note the symmetrical curve of the hips and the straight vertical lines on the inside and outside of both rear legs.
Visualize the 45-degree angle from the topline in front of the tail to the rump, the curve of the rump, the inverted curve to the hock, and the vertical line from the hock to the paw.
13.6
After--Side view
Using the straight shears, scissor down the back of the legs from the rump to the hock. Make sure the dog is standing correctly, as shown.
14. Tail

14.1
Before

Gently hold the tail up to trim it.
Standing behind the dog, use the straight shears to trim excess hair off both sides of the tail at the base, blending the hair with the clippered area on the back of the tail.
14.3
Base

Holding the tail up and slightly forward, trim around the base to blend it into the topline and to accentuate the angle of the hips. Cocking the tail forward while trimming around the base ensures that the finished tail doesn't look "pasted" on the dog like an afterthought.
14.4 Sides

Continue using the straight shears to trim the sides of the tail from the base, vertically to the tip. Blend the longer hair on the sides with the clippered area on the back of the tail. Create a uniformly straight tail—not a pyramid.
14.5
Front

Hold the tail straight up and trim the front of the tail vertically to the tip.
14.6
After

Note the straight lines of the tail—front, rear, and sides.
15. Underside

15.1 Before

Lay the dog on its back, spread-eagle, to clipper the belly and genitalia.
15.2
Clippering inner thighs

Using a #15 blade, clipper the scrotum or vulva and up the inner, upper thigh areas as shown.
15.3
Clippering belly

Using a #15 blade, clipper the belly from the genitalia forward to the navel, creating in an oval pattern.
Cleanly clippered genitalia promotes health by minimizing the chance for bacteria to grow.
Healthy pink skin is clearly visible on the properly clippered underside.