



Grooming the Kerry Blue Terrier

The Kerry Blue Terrier is an up-standing dog with tremendous style and elegance. No where in the standard is the dog described as square, but a square look is more pleasing so the majority trim to achieve that look. The coat is described as soft, dense and wavy. It takes time to learn to trim with

these waves, but with the correct grooming we think the Kerry Blue is one of the most beautiful dogs in the Terrier group.



The first step in grooming your dog is to start with a good bath. The dog must be thoroughly brushed out before the bath. Any knots or mats left in the coat when bathed will be much more difficult to remove. Never brush a dry, dirty coat. Lightly spray the dog with water or a mixture of leave-in conditioner and water.

Trim the nails and clean the ears. Kerries can have a lot, or a little, hair growing inside the ears. In the past it was always stressed this hair be removed to avoid infection. But we have spoken to several vets who suggest the hair inside the ears be left alone if there is no evidence of infection. If you choose to follow this advise, monitor the ears for foul odor and be sure to clean them at least weekly with any one of the good ear cleansers available in pet warehouses or through catalogs.

Begin With The Clipper Work

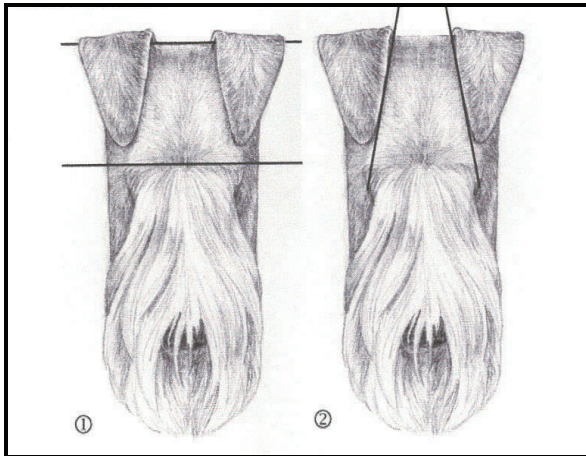
Head and Ears

The look you are trying to achieve is a head which appears long and narrow, like a brick, with the planes of the head being flat and squared off.

Before you start, take time to look at the structure of the dog's head. Inspect the ears and face and familiarize yourself with the conformation. Clipper the ears on both sides with a #15 blade. For a smooth finish on the outer ear clipper against the lay of the hair, or in the direction from the ear tip to the top of the back skull. When clipping to the top of the back skull. When clipping the underside of the ear pay special attention to the double ear flap on the lower portion of the ear. These flaps are paper thin and can easily be nicked with a clipper. Clipper the entire ear, stopping where the ear joins the head. Next, clipper a line, about a finger's width, around the back of the ear where it joins the head. The easiest and



safest way to remove the remaining hair on the edges of the ear and get a sharp, clean line is to use your forefinger and thumb as a protective shield. Hold the entire length of the edge of the ear securely between your thumb and forefinger so that only the very edge is exposed. Trim the edges with scissors or with a #40 blade, going with the growth of hair.

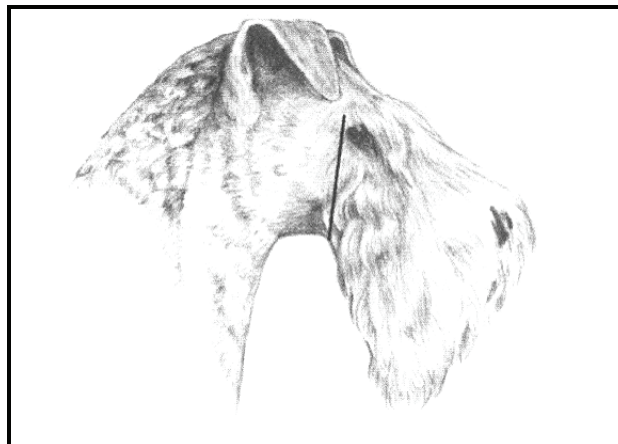


With a #10 or #15 blade clipper the top of the head from an imaginary line between the ears where they touch the head (about an inch or so forward from the occipital bone) to about 1/2 inch above the brow bone. You can see this in illustration 1. The occipital bone is the bony part you can feel on the top of the dog's head between the ears. If the head is coarse or bony, use a #7 blade instead. You can also clipper with the #10 or #15 blade from the lines

shown in illustration 2 and use thinning shears on the top of the head. Do not clipper beyond the occipital bone, it will widen the look of the head and ruin the long, narrow look.

With a #10 or #15 blade clipper the throat and cheeks against the growth of the hair, from the base of the ear to a deep "V" or "U" at, or just above, the breast bone. The decision of how far down the neck to clipper is a matter of personal preference and the conformation of the dog. From the base of the ear where it joins the neck is a cowlick that runs down the length of the neck. Clipper the throat against the growth of the hair up from the breast bone, along this cowlick. This will define the outside perimeter of the clipped neck. Follow the cowlick down the neck tapering into the "V" or "U" described earlier. This line will assist you later in trimming the neck.

Looking at the illustration, you see a line extending from the outside corner of the eye to the corner of the mouth. Clipper behind this imaginary line, toward the neck. This should blend into the head and neck you've just done. Next, lift the hair along the upper part of the mouth and clipper about 1/2 inch behind the flew on the lower jaw. This will add length to the head. For an even better look clipper underneath the lower jaw, past the follicle, to where the hair grows in both directions. This may be about an inch from the end of the lower jaw in some dogs.



Stomach

Clipper the stomach from the loin to the second row of nipples on a bitch and to about one inch in front of the penis on a dog. The pattern is an oval and extends to the inside of the loin on both sexes. If your dog will lay down on the table or you have a helper to gently keep him on his back while you work this part of the grooming will be faster and easier. Strive for a neat look, but since this won't be seen by anybody it is the least important step.

Feet

To remove the hair between the pads of the feet, use a fine tooth blade like a #30 or better still a #40. Be careful not to press the blade too deeply into the foot as the skin between the pads can be easily cut. Some people prefer to scissor the hair between the pads to remove it.



Rear

How wide to clipper the rear of the Kerry Blue is a huge area of contention between groomer and exhibitors. If the rear is clipped from one inch up the back of the tail to the pin bones in a rough oval shape, the effect enhances the look of a wide, powerful rear that generates the driving movement this breed is known for. If the clipped area is little more than a blade width from the tail to the testicles or vulva, the dog looks neat and not so exaggerated. In older dogs this more narrow approach is probably more flattering. Experiment on the dog and see which looks better to you.

Either way, clipper the rear of the dog around the anus and about one inch up the back of the tail directly above the anus. Clipper with the hair growth under the anus about a blade width. Clipper around the testicles or vulva and on the inside back of the

thigh about two inches. This will be scissored to blend with the leg later.

Scissoring the Kerry Blue Terrier

Topline

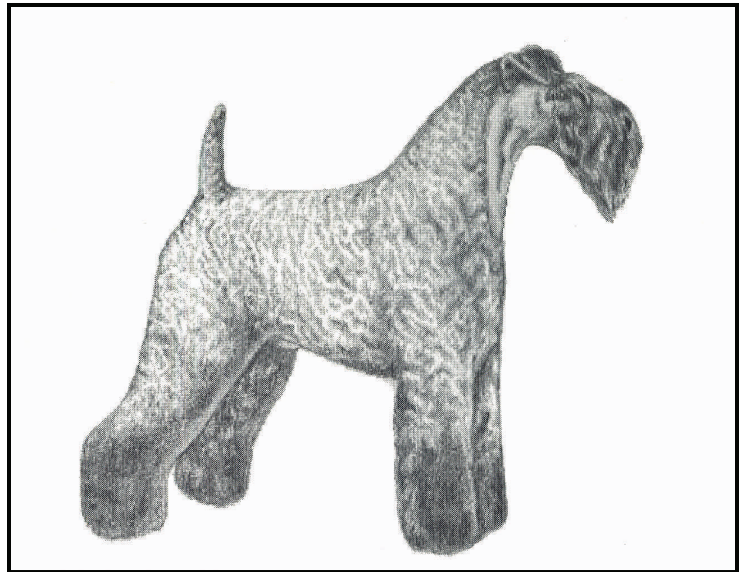
Start by scissoring a flat topline on the back of the dog. Many people are surprised to learn that the back of the dog is only the distance from the hip bones to the withers. The coat here is relatively short about one inch or less. To maintain a smooth finish, try to scissor in the direction of the hair growth. Never trim over the dog's back coming down the sides. Remember: Don't scissor what you can't see.

The area on the dog from the pin bones to the base of the tail is the croup. Trim this area flat.

Neck

The neck tapers from the head, transitioning to the withers in a smooth line. This part of the trim defines the elegant look of the breed and can be adjusted to make the dog appear to be more square and have better shoulder layback. There are two parts to scissoring the neck: the sides and the back of the neck. Do the sides of the neck first. Hold the head up and forward arching the neck. Begin scissoring the side of the neck toward the shoulders keeping your scissors at a 45 degree angle.

Trim the back of the neck from the occiput to the beginning of the dog's topline which should be roughly just behind the withers. Blend this transition to the topline carefully and avoid creating a dip behind the withers or leaving a hump there. Do not leave a mane of hair on the neck. This will not enhance the dog's outline and will make the neck appear shorter.



Front

Scissor the front of the chest flat and blend the hair flush with the clipped neck. The chest needs to be scissored close in order to enhance the length of the neck, and help keep the dog looking short backed. The front of the dog, from the neck to the toes should fall in a straight line.

Blend the front around the point of the shoulders and into the shoulder line.

Rear Legs

Brush the leg coat up and out away from the leg. This will make the legs easier to trim and allow for a fuller look. Start by scissoring around the back feet, slightly undercutting them, to give the dog the appearance of standing on his toes. Scissor in the angulation on the back legs down to the hock on the back side of the leg. Extending the hair at the hock out beyond the hock about one inch will add angulation and enhance the bend of stifle.

The closest scissored area on the rear legs is where the leg bends. Blend the clipped area of the back leg into the hair on the inside of the thigh. Angle the scissors toward the outside of the front leg as you trim. Remove enough hair from between the back legs to keep the dog from appearing to move close in the rear. This gives the Kerry his characteristic wide rear stance.

The thigh should not be flat, but curved around to give the illusion of a powerful rear quarter. Point the scissors inward when scissoring the front part of the upper thigh. Leave the hair longer on the front and outside of the back legs. Be careful not to leave chaps on the rear legs and not to cut up too high in the tuck up as this can add length to the body and makes the dog appear to lack strength and substance.



Body

Above the tuck up, just behind the last rib, slightly cut in on the loin area giving the dog a waist. Trim from behind the last rib back toward the front of the rear leg. When viewed from above you should not see this waist.

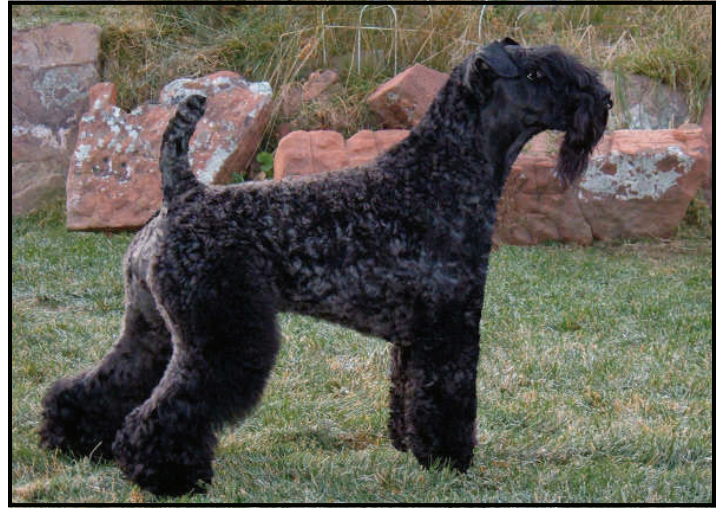
Scissor the underline from the tuck up in a straight downward line to the elbow. Some people add a slight curve to enhance the square look of the dog. Be careful not to over do this as you can lose the correct balance between the front and rear of the dog. Make one vertical cut along the brisket where it joins the front leg. This single cut defines the line and shape of the dog's body. To give a curved look to the body along the dog's side, comb the hair up on the sides of the dog and scissor in the rib spring. The hair can be short here, less than one inch. The dog's chest should be no lower than its elbow. Unlike the shoulder the brisket behind the elbow should curve back toward the loin to reveal the good rib spring in the dog.

When scissoring the body, remember the anatomy of the dog. Trim in the direction of the bone growth to maintain a smooth finish. That means when scissoring the ribcage don't cut across the body, but at the angle the ribs lay.

Tail/Rear

Scissor the back of the tail very close. Leave the hair longer on the front side and taper from the base to the tip. Holding the tail upright blend the hair in front of the tail over the croup to set the tail up high. Trimming this hair too short will give the appearance of a low tail set. Don't leave a tuft of hair on the croup in front of the tail in hopes of making a low tail set look higher. This can make the dog's topline appear to rise and his back look dippy.

To define the rear and trim in the angulation, find the angle between the point of the hipbones and the pin bones. From the pin bone on the rear of the dog lay your scissors in a 45 degree angle to the tail and scissor this area close across. This will create a plane on each side of the tail. Blend these planes into the thigh of the dog to enhance the look of a powerful rear and a higher tail set.



Front Legs/Shoulders

Brush the leg coat up and out away from the leg. The front feet should be scissored first with a slight undercutting of the pasterns to give the dog that up on the toes look and set the line for the trim on the front legs. However, Kerry Blues do not have sloping pasterns so don't over do this. Scissor the shoulders close going down the leg to the elbow. You want to keep this hair short. Continue down the outside of the front leg keeping the shears vertical and creating a flat line. The shears should be angled toward the opposite back leg while trimming this line.



Generally, it is not a good idea to trim the legs by lifting them up. But you can lift the front leg and scissor off the excess hair at the armpit. Be careful to point the scissors slightly toward the elbow.

The inside of the front leg should be scissored down from the chest in a straight vertical flat line. The hair midway down the inside of the front of the leg should be left longer than the hair immediately down from the chest. This allows for a fuller front leg which can mitigate a too wide front. Trim the front of the front legs from the side and be careful to create a flat, straight line from the chest to the toes. Don't scoop out the legs on the front.

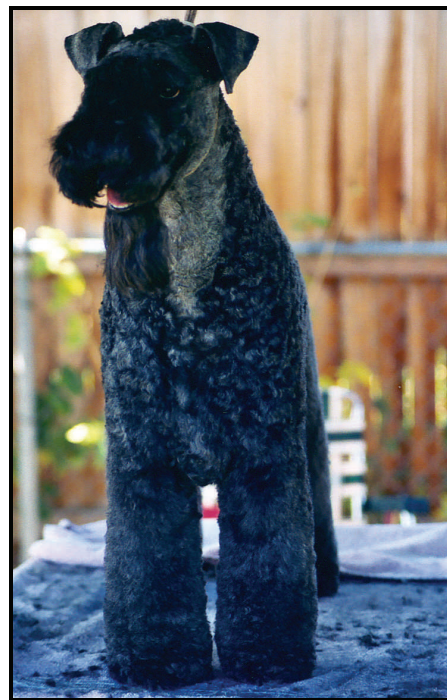
Stand in front of the dog and trim the hair between the legs. Leave an inverted "V" of hair between the front legs. This finishing part of the front leg trim should enhance the overall balance between the body and length of leg and neck

and be pleasing to the eye. There are several ways to trim the front legs as the dogs in this section show. Either one is correct and presents a nice look.

Head

The Kerry Blue is not a head breed in the sense of the Bull Terrier but the head is very much a contributor to breed type. The head can be one of the most complex parts of the trim and it helps to have an artist's eye.

There is some controversy between groomer and exhibitors with regard to the top of the head. Many clipper the top skull as described earlier, but others contend that to enhance the length of the head the top skull should be scissored or thinned and blended back into the neck at the occiput. Either way is acceptable. As to the rest of the head, start by combing the fall forward. Holding the scissors parallel to the skull scissor the eyes $1/2$ or $3/4$ of an inch

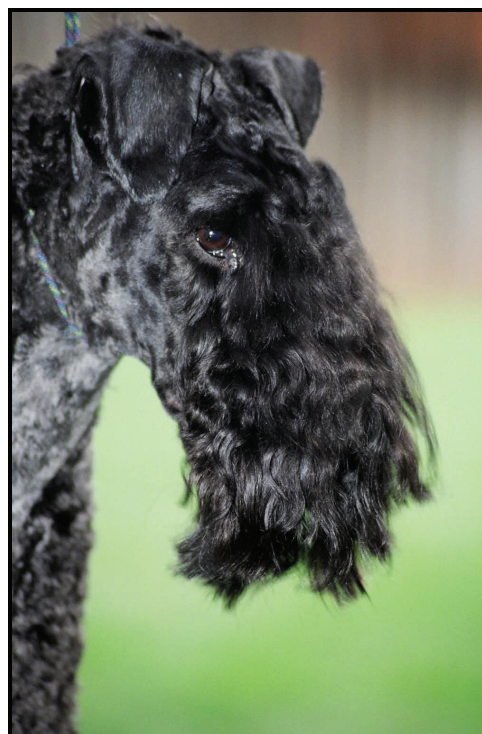


straight forward from the outside corner of the eye. This line must join the fall straight forward and not form an hour glass look.

Move the fall to the opposite of the head from the side you are working on. Comb the hair on the face down separating it left and right as it grows. Do not comb this hair forward. Using thinning shears thin and comb it out, one section at a time where it appears bulky. Remember you are striving for a brick shaped head. Continue until this hair lays flat. Trim the edge from the corner of the eye to the corner of the mouth close, to blend naturally with the clipped part of the head. Repeat on the other side.

Now comb the fall forward. Thin and comb through over

each eye straight forward. Do not over thin. The fall should lay flat. Again, the head should be brick-like and not have an hour glass appearance when viewed from the front. If the fall fans out too much at the nose thin it to keep the rectangular look. Never trim the length of the face furnishings. Thin the underjaw to give the impression of the hair laying forward. This gives the head a longer look.



Finishing

Skillful scissoring will now put a smooth finish on the well groomed Kerry Blue. Scissor off any rough edges and blend the parts of the dog's trim together with the natural lay of the hair.

Setting the Wave



The standard calls for a coat that is soft, dense and wavy. It should not be curly and should not be presented as a scissored poodle coat.

To restore the wave on a coat blown dry, spray the coat lightly with water, then using a damp sponge smooth over the coat following the natural lay of the hair. Spray the coat again, this time more heavily with water and lightly smooth over the coat again with the

sponge. Let dry and then comb through the coat in the direction of the hair growth. Repeating these steps two or three times, brings out a beautiful wavy in the coat and trains the coat to fall into place. You do not need to bring the wave back into the leg coat, just the body and neck.

The Kerry Blue Terrier is not easy to groom. It takes an understanding of the breed and much patience to achieve a look that is reflective of the Kerry Blue's terrier style .



Common Mistakes in Trimming the Kerry Blue

- One common mistake is to leave a skirt and a bib. This is caused by not blending the side coat into the body of the dog. And not trimming the chest hair flat to the front of the dog.
- Many people learned to groom this breed from pictures in text books showing dogs in styles popular in the fifties. This results in too much hair off over the hips and chaps on the upper thighs. Rear legs should appear muscular with a rear rounded over the hips when viewed from behind.
- Another common mistake is to clipper the top of the head too far past the occipital bone and into the neck.
- Trimming the fall in front of the nose, creating a short foreface is a mistake because the Kerry head should look long.
- Leaving too much hair on the face; not thinning it out enough also shortens the look of the head and inhibits the dog's vision. **NO BOUVIER HEADS!**
- Resist the urge to take too much hair off the front of the back legs. Even in a pet trim it is possible to maintain the characteristic shape of the Kerry leg.

