

## Healthy Ear Maintenance for Your Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier:

Soft Coated Wheaten Terriers, like all dogs, require regular ear maintenance. It is important for you to periodically check your dog's ears to ensure that it is healthy and free of bacteria or yeast. Bacteria and fungi can build up and cause an infection, especially in long coated, drop eared breeds such as a Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier. To avoid problems, keep your dog's ears clean, dry, and well-ventilated. It is important to recognize and treat ear infections early. Dogs with recurring ear infections may be caused by an underlying skin disease.



### To Pull or Not to Pull:

There are different schools of thought on pulling the hair in the healthy ear or cutting the hair inside the ear. You should discuss this process with your breeder and veterinarian to determine which approach to take. Remember, we are only talking about a healthy ear. Make it a point to smell your dog's ears when you pet them. If the ear smells fine don't pull, if it starts to smell ripe then you must start treatment.

**Cutting the hair:** Many vets and breeders believe that unless there is a problem you should not pull the hair but rather cut the long hairs away with small scissors. The belief is that if the ear is dry and clean it does not need to be plucked. The hairs in the ears serve as a protectant. If there is a discharge, redness or odor take your dog to the veterinarian immediately. The rule of thumb is if the ear is healthy leave it alone except for basic grooming. This would include the elimination of ear cleaning solutions as regular maintenance as those are considered a foreign containment to the ear in this scenario.

**Pulling the hair:** The other school of thought is to periodically pull the long hairs out of the ear. Keep the inside of the ears free of excess hair to avoid accumulation of wax and debris. "In a healthy ear either you, your groomer or your veterinarian can either use your fingers, use a blunt-nosed, sterilized hemostat or tweezers and gently pull the hair out of the ear cavity. A small amount of ear powder sprinkled on the hair will make it easier to grip. The ears are sensitive so work slowly and considerately. Do not remove too much hair at once; rather, remove small quantities at frequent intervals. Check ears regularly for redness or odor, which may indicate infection. (If there is a discharge, redness or odor take your dog to the veterinarian immediately, see below). Cut away excess hair from around and beneath the ear".<sup>1</sup>

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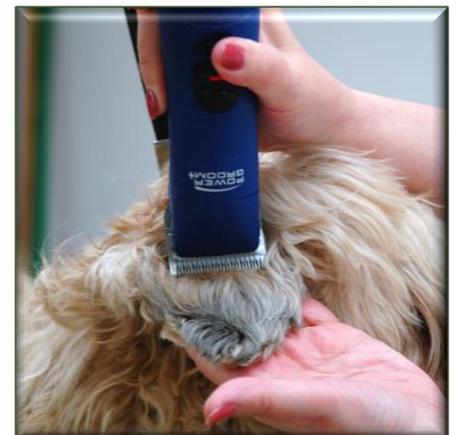
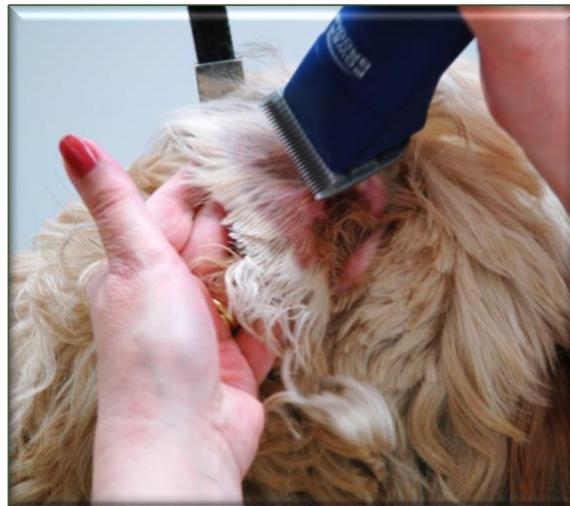
<sup>1</sup> The Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier Owner's Manual, SCWTCA, Inc.  
<http://www.scwtca.org/pubs.htm>

Be aware that there are external conditions that negatively affect your Wheaten Terriers ear canal. Swimming, excessive bathing, other animals licking the ear and damp environments are examples of these external conditions. If your dog is exposed to these conditions extra precautions should be taken. If you find that your pet gets ear infections after swimming, bathe the dog with a hypoallergenic shampoo after swimming or, at the minimum, rinse your dog's coat with water and then, dry out the ears with a cloth. Consult with your vet about topical ear-drying products.

### **Grooming for the healthy ear:**

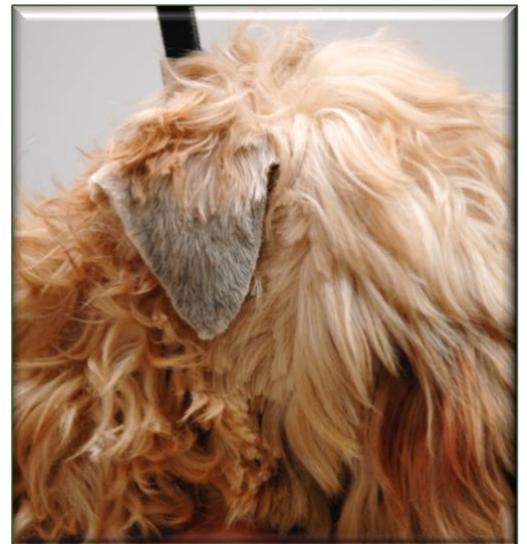
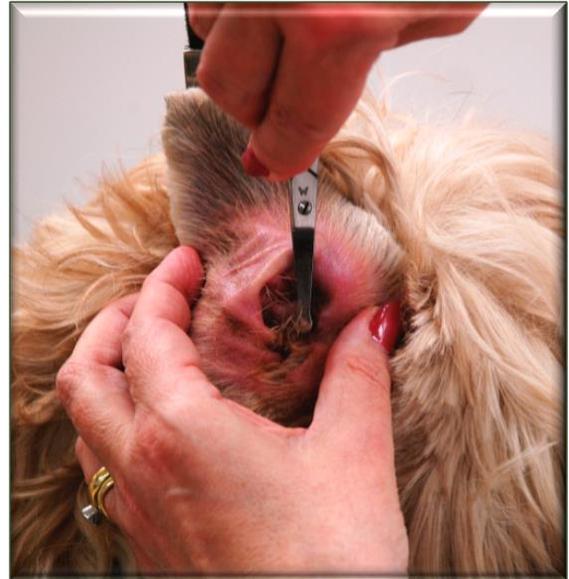
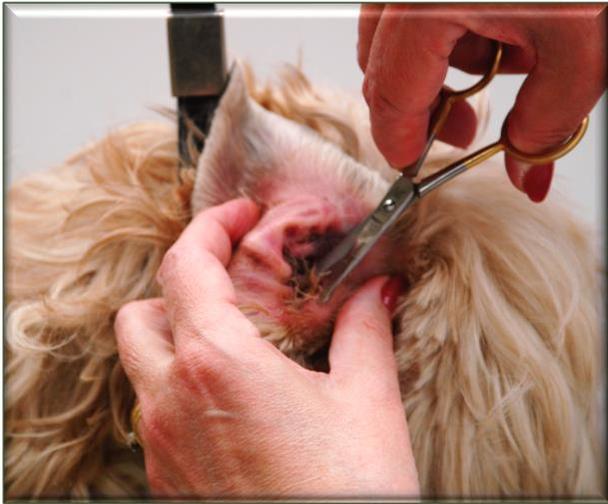
"Clean off the ears using a #10 blade on the inside and a #7 blade on the outside-BUT only clipping the bottom 2/3 of the outside ear with the #7 blade. Clip from the center of the ear towards the outside edge, to avoid nipping the folds on the inside edge of the ear. Scissor off the fringe of coat around the leather of the ear".<sup>2</sup>

Photos of an ear before, during and after grooming:



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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scwtca.org/groom/index.htm>



Photos of a wheaten that needs ear grooming but is still a healthy ear:



Photos of pulling hair with tweezers and what it looks like when it comes out.

### Ear Infections:

Signs your wheaten has an ear infection:

- 1) The dog is scratching and/or shaking his ear
- 2) Head tilt
- 3) Loss of balance
- 4) Odor
- 5) The infected ear may droop



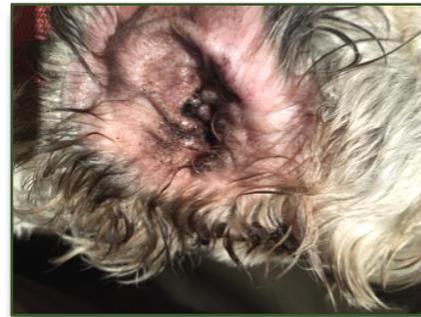
If your Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier has an ear infection it is important to seek immediate care from your veterinarian. Do not attempt to clean or groom the ear at this point. Ear infections are very painful for the dog. Ear infections are caused by either allergies, or the introduction of some foreign material such as a foxtail, or a parasite, and for some dogs that would include water or a cleaner/powder. This creates an unhealthy environment for the otherwise normal flora of the ear canal.

Allergies, skin rashes and sores can manifest within the ear as well as other areas on the dog's body. Ear infections may be the only sign your veterinarian has that the dog has environmental or food allergies.

Yeast is a particularly difficult and stubborn medical condition. If you suspect a yeast infection it is important to see a veterinarian right away. Ask your veterinarian to examine your dog's skin under a microscope or perform an ear cytology. Many dogs will need to be sedated to have this procedure performed. Sedation is a humane way to clean the ears and perform necessary medical procedures. A pain reliever may be

prescribed by your veterinarian. Treatment of yeast skin or ear infections will require either topical or oral medication including anti-biotics. Be diligent in treating the infection and do not stop the medication prior to the prescription directions. It is important to always finish any medication as prescribed by your veterinarian. As with all chronic ear problems it is also important to investigate any potential underlying diseases which may be triggering the yeast infection.

Pictures of Soft Coated Wheaten Terriers with an ear infection that needs medical attention:



Picture of dogs with a severe yeast infection:

Some yeast infections present as white, swollen and you can no longer see the canal.



Going untreated or as the result of chronic infections the infection may reach the middle ear, affected dogs may have a head tilt, a lack of balance, and unusual back-and-forth eye movements. These symptoms are called “vestibular signs” and represent a serious complication of the middle ear infection. Middle ear infections can also cause paralysis of the facial nerve, leading to a slack-jawed appearance on that side of the face. Dogs with ear infections endure chronic pain. Left untreated or because of chronic infections the ear drum becomes permanently damaged, which can then spread to the middle ear. The dog can go deaf, require an expensive surgery that can include removing the entire ear canal. Chronic infections permanently damage the ear drum. These dogs can require medication and treatment for the remainder of their lives. While regular

maintenance can aid in reducing recurrent infections but understand that the dog will always be at risk for future infections.

Healthy ears are essential to your Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier's overall health and comfort.

