



To Shave or Not to Shave (Your Pug)

By Eva Hart

It's July. It's blistering HOT! Your pug is panting even harder than ever and you know the heat has everything to do with it. You've heard that some pug owners shave their dogs in the summer to keep them cooler and reduce shedding. But, is this really a good idea?

As the summer moves from warm to hot, many pug owners consider shaving their pugs to make their dogs more comfortable. Researching this issue and talking with experts makes one thing very clear: Opinions are divided, with half advocating shaving pugs in the summer, and the other half advising against it. As a pug parent, the best you can do is make a good, well-reasoned and well-researched decision. Consult a trusted veterinarian or groomer to get their input on the subject. Ultimately, though, the decision is yours. Trust yourself to make the right decision for your adorable pug!



Max, a former Pug Pals rescue



Some random shaved pug

Here are both sides of the argument.

“Don't Shave Your Pug”

Groomers and veterinarians alike have uttered these words. There are a few primary reasons for taking this stand.

1. A pug's fur protects him from overheating.

This is the main reason for arguing against shaving a pug. The fur insulates the pug from hot and cold; without that defense, they are at greater risk of becoming too hot in the summer, or too cold in the winter. According to Kathy Salzberg, a Certified Master Groomer who has been grooming pets since 1976, pugs should not be shaved. "They do not get haircuts," Salzberg said in an article on dogchannel.com. "In fact, having your Pug shaved is a big no-no. That double coat protects them from heat and cold. They don't tolerate heat and humidity well."

2. Pugs are indoor dogs anyway, so there is no reason to shave them.

Bred as companion animals, pugs are comfortable at room temperature. They should not spend too much time in the heat. Shaving may be an unnecessary expense.

3. Shaving to keep them cool may actually pose a danger to your pug.

Having a shaved pug might lull you into thinking they are okay outside for more significant amounts of time. Even shaved pugs cannot tolerate extensive time outdoors in the heat. They are still prone to overheating and sunstroke, and shaving adds potential sunburn to the mix.

4. The cooling benefit isn't significant, and the risk of sunburn and bug bites is greater.

Dr. Sarah Hadley, a veterinarian at Broadway Vet Hospital in Boise, said: "If someone is shaving in the summer to keep their pug cool, I don't see much benefit because pug hair is pretty short, and taking off what they do have puts them at risk for sunburn." While all pugs are susceptible to sunburn, fawn pugs are most at risk. It's important to realize that dogs—whether shaved or not—aren't immune from the damaging rays of the sun. More bug bites are also a real possibility for the pug without a lot of hair for protection.



Dog with sunburn (we couldn't find a picture of a pug with sunburn)



Dog with sunburn on nose and mouth

5. Shaving a pug doesn't help with shedding.

Pug owners might make the mistake of shaving their pet thinking that it will solve their shedding problem, but some experts say this doesn't help. The pug simply sheds shorter hairs, not fewer. There is really no point in shaving a double-coated dog. It doesn't make them shed less, you run the risk of the coat growing back in even thicker than before, and it may never grow back in right.

If you are looking to deal with a shedding issue, please read our [grooming article](#).

“Shave Your Pug”

Interestingly, both groomers and veterinarians recommend this course of action as well. Perhaps an even stronger voice in support of shaving pugs in the summer comes from pug owners themselves.

1. Shave a pug for the dog’s medical reasons.

A veterinarian may direct a pug owner to shave her pug if the dog has a medical problem such as fungus or severe allergy.

2. Shave a pug for your own medical reasons.

This, more than the pug’s comfort, may be a good reason to shave your pug. “I have one client who shaves her pug because of her own allergies and says it really helps cut back on dander,” said Dr. Sarah Hadley from Broadway Veterinary Hospital. “The pug is fine, and the hair grows back normally.”

3. Reputable groomers recommend shaving pugs.

The fact is shaving pugs makes money for groomers. But they are also believers in the benefits of a well-executed shave accompanied by warnings about too much sun right after the shave. The groomers we have talked with say they wouldn’t offer the service if they felt a pug could be in danger because of it.

4. The pug’s hair grows back normally.

Anna Stallcup from Nampa, Idaho owns a pug and has had experience in shaving her pug. “After I shaved my pug her hair grew back really funny and she got ingrown hairs,” Stallcup said. “But my sister also owns a pug and she shaves him every summer and she’s never had problems with his hair growing back normal. I would just tell pug owners that if they want to shave their pug to try it on a small area of their skin first and see how it grows back and if it’s fine then go for it.”

5. Protect your shaved pug with sunscreen if you are out in the sun for longer than 10 minutes.

This is important especially during the first weeks following the shave. While keeping your pug indoors during the heat of the summer day is a good idea, sometimes we just can’t avoid having our dogs out in the elements with us. For those days, bring along sunscreen for both yourself and your pug. However, all sunscreens are not equal. Research the best sunscreen for your pug. Whether your pug is shaved or not, be aware that the areas on a dog most likely to get sunburned are the nose, tips of the ears, around the mouth, the underbelly, and eyelids.

6. Black pugs are the ones who really benefit from being shaved in the summer.

Because their dark fur absorbs instead of reflects heat, black pugs are better candidates for a summer shave than their fawn counterparts. Anecdotally, owners of black pugs seem to be the strongest supporters of shaved pugs.



Hanna, right after her shave, May 2012



Hanna's lion tail

7. A pug who is rarely out in the elements can go either way—shave or no shave.

An equal number of people who have opinions about shaving and not shaving their pugs can point to the fact that the summer heat just doesn't matter if the pug is in a climate-controlled environment 90% of the time. Therefore, shaving is simply a matter of personal preference. Live and let live!