

Holiday Playbook

Production Bathing for the Holiday Rush

With the right strategy for the busy season, professional groomers can get more done in less time without letting the quality of their work suffer.

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The holiday rush is around the corner, and you may be wondering how you can get more done in less time without letting the quality of the work suffer. Here's my method—it's a fast-paced game with many variables to mix it up daily. After all, whoever thought pet grooming would be a boring job? There are three basic rules to this game:

RULE #1: REVIEW YOUR WORKLOAD

Review all the dogs on your roster for that day or session. This works best when you have multiple pets arriving at one time, so you can stagger them according to coat type, size and degree of difficulty.

RULE #2: B&B DOGS GO FIRST

Do your largest and furriest dog first—something that can be bathed and then lightly high-velocity dried to lift and separate the fur. Spending a few minutes with the high-velocity dryer on each pet allows a clear view of any special needs of that animal while enhancing airflow to the coat once it is placed in an inactive drying situation.

Bathe and set up the coat on all the bath and brush pets first, starting with the largest and most time consuming dogs, and work down the line of difficulty to the least difficult of the bath and brush pets. Once all the bath and brush pets are bathed, then proceed with dogs that need active drying to yield the best results.

RULE #3: BATHE TRIM DOGS LAST

Your goal on all trim dogs is not only to get the pet clean, but to get the coat tangle-free and as straight as possible for the finished trim. After all the B&B pets are bathed, start washing your trim dogs. Start with the pet that has the heaviest and straightest coat—something that can sit for a few minutes while you bathe your other haircut pets without risking the coat drying before you get to an active drying method. Let the pet sit in a warm place wrapped in a towel. Proceed washing the next pet based on size, coat density and curl factor—clients with less curl hit the tub before those with curly coats. Curly coats, such as Bichons or Poodles, go to the tub last.

Once all the trim pets are bathed, start drying. The first pet up on the drying table should be the one that has the curliest, but lightest coat, since that coat type will dry the quickest. If the coat dries before an active form of drying can take place while the coat is still damp, it will be impossible to remove the curl unless you re-wet the pet.

Once the curliest coats have been used and dried so they are absolutely straight, move to the next kinkiest or wavy coat type (also weigh in the coat density factor). A lighter or shorter coat will need to go before a heavier or longer coat. A typical example would be that you have two dogs of equal size and similar haircuts like a 1.5 on the body and a fuller leg style. One dog is a Lhasa and the other is a Maltese/Shih Tzu mix. Normally, the Maltese cross would have a lighter density of coat than the Lhasa, thus the Maltese mix gets dried before the Lhasa.

Continue this process moving from the curliest coats down the line. The key is to get to a coat before it is dry, so the heat of the dryer can straighten out the fur. Remember, the goal is always to have a straight, fluffy, mat-free coat to finish. Curls and kinks in the fur make it impossible to execute a trim that is smooth and sleek. If a coat gets too dry, it must be re-wetted and the drying process starts over.

There are many variations to how this game gets played out to be effective. It is what makes a day interesting to a professional pet stylist. The better you get at this game, the faster you will be able to get through multiple pets without sacrificing quality.

How far can you push yourself before you get lost in the order of bathing pets? Test yourself and see how you do. It's a fun game that can be challenging yet really invigorating. The more dogs, the more fun, and reward when it goes smoothly!

Melissa Verplank, CMG, is CEO of the Paragon School of Pet Grooming. Are you and your team up to speed? Efficiency drives profit in any grooming operation. If you or your team need industry-leading training, visit ParagonPetSchool.com to learn about our individual and pet business programs. To further hone your skills, visit our GroominarNetwork.com to join a community of groomers and stream more than 1,200 video tutorials designed for every level of groomer.
