



ABOUT COCKER SPANIELS

**COCKERS ARE INTELLIGENT, GENTLE DOGS
THAT THRIVE AS PART OF A FAMILY**

Cocker Spaniels got their name from flushing and retrieving Woodcocks. From 1936-1952, then again from 1983-1990, Cocker Spaniels were the #1 breed in the USA, according to AKC registrations. Cockers need daily mental and physical exercise with a life expectancy of 12-15 years of age.



A Condensed List of Famous Cocker Spaniels

Disney's Lady and the Tramp, Zeke (Bill Clinton), Checkers (Richard Nixon), Feller (Harry S. Truman), Einstein (George Clooney), Arthur (Elton John), Sophie, Solomon, Ivan, and Sadie (Oprah Winfrey), Pookles (Rita Hayworth), Rowdy (Shirley Temple), and Lupo (Prince William and Kate).

Typical Temperament and Behaviors

Definitely indoor and lap dogs! Cocker Spaniels do not do well when left alone for long periods of time because they are very social and enjoy the company of "their people". They are not suited to live outside alone in a kennel.

- Most are easy to train because they are very willing to learn and truly want to please
- Cheerful, gentle, sweet, and sensitive temperament with their people
- Some are "Velcro" dogs who are happiest next to you all day and sleeping with you at night
- Merry, trusting, lively, playful, devoted, energetic, and scent-motivated
- Tend to bark which make them good watchdogs
- Can be difficult to completely houstrain; crate training is recommended to help with the process.
- May exhibit submissive urination caused by overexcitement but typically grow out of it around 4 years of age
- Usually good with older children, but less so with youngsters under age 6 who may be rough with them. If a Cocker has been raised around young children, they tend to do well with youngsters.
- Tend to gain weight easily, so diet and exercise are important
- Need regular grooming (about every 2 months year round). Brushing them at least weekly will keep their coat smooth and matt-free.
- Their smooth, silky coats tend to shed moderately; curly coats do not shed much, if at all



Health Risks

Allergies

Allergies can be a common problem in Cockers. Minor licking of the paws can sometimes be alleviated with ½ to 1 adult Benadryl twice daily. If this doesn't help, consult your veterinarian.

Ears

Cockers have long beautiful ears that don't allow enough air to circulate creating a warm, moist environment where bacteria will grow. This causes otitis externa, where the ear canal becomes inflamed and swollen shut. That's why they require diligent care. A preventative method to ear otitis externa is to shave the hair inside the ear flap.

Depending on your dog, you might have to clean his ears weekly... or even daily. You can use cotton balls, tissues, Q-tips, and baby oil to clean your dog's ears:

1. Wet the Q-tip or tissue with baby oil.
2. Insert the Q-tip or tissue into the dog's ear and wipe the ear out thoroughly. Be very careful not to insert it too far into the dog's ear canal.
3. Pour baby oil onto a cotton ball.
4. Twist the cotton ball inside the ear to clean it
5. You're done!

If the ear smells pungent, the dog may have a yeast infection. Yeast infections can be mitigated by removing wheat from their diet, which is found in many treats and poor-quality kibble. Your veterinarian may also recommend ear drops and daily cleanings until the problem is resolved.

Eyes

Common eye problems include Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA), glaucoma, and cataracts. Occasional eye exams are recommended.

Cherry Eye (an easy surgical fix) and Dry Eye are common conditions that are not serious, but can be unsightly. Wipe under the eyes often. "Natural Tears" (saline) eye drops are very helpful to dogs with dry eye.



Skin

Papillomas (wart-like bumps) are a common occurrence. You can try removing them with Olive Leaf Extract drops (usually found at specialty vitamin stores). Use the extract several times daily over a period of a few weeks until the area dries up, turns black and scabs off.



Healthy skin begins with a good diet. Again, the choices are endless. The rule of thumb is this: if your dog does well on the food you buy, his skin and coat are healthy, he has energy and enjoys life, he is maintaining his optimum weight, his intestines are working well, the food is highly digestible leaving little-to-no feces to clean up, keep giving it to him.

But if the dog's energy level is low, his coat is dull, his skin is dry, itchy or sore, and/or a vet check shows no thyroid or other medical condition to account for any anomalies, consider switching the diet or supplementing with fatty acids.

Grooming is essential for clean healthy skin and for helping the owner become aware of any skin/hair problems that may be developing. Flea allergies can cause severe skin problems, so a daily examination of the dog during flea season is a must. Contact allergies can also cause skin to break out. Irritated skin leads to scratching, which can open the skin to staphylococci infections.

Teeth

Some dogs need to have their teeth brushed several times weekly or they will develop gingivitis, leading to tooth loss. Use only dog approved cleaning products, never use human toothpaste. If you cannot brush often, give your dog treats to help clean their teeth. Raw sweet potatoes are good, but start with small quantities then slowly build up to an entire potato to avoid bowel issues.

Other

New research has identified Immune Mediated Hemolytic Anemia (IMHA) as a health concern. The immune system attacks the blood cells, resulting in blood in the urine which typically results in death.

Cancer, cardiomyopathy-heart conditions and joint issues are also common in Cocker Spaniels. Keep your dog at a healthy weight to minimize joint issues. Schedule annual check-ups with your veterinarian, or sooner, if you believe your dog is in distress. Early diagnosis is important!

Grooming

- Grooming your dog frequently not only heads off potential medical problems, but it also gives you and your dog one-on-one time to bond. It's essential to the health and happiness of your Cockers.



- For everyday practical purposes, many owners keep their dogs' coats very short to reduce hair matting. Cockers with longer coats require daily brushing to prevent tangling and matting. You can use a pin brush, slicker brush, and/or a soft bristle brush for various areas of the coat.

- Clip or trim the toenails using a canine nail trimmer, being careful not to cut the quick (the pink area inside the nail), else bleeding will occur.



- Cockers need frequent combing, brushing, periodic bathing, and clipping in order to maintain their beautiful coat. They are not "wash-and-wear" dogs.
- A lot of grooming can be done at home. While spending this one-on-one time with your dog, you can also tackle hair-matting while they are small and don't hurt the dog.
- The first step in home grooming is to teach the dog to accept the attention. The best strategy is to start when the pet is a puppy, teaching him to accept the handling of all of his body parts and to stand and lie on his side by command. If the dog has a tough time staying still, place a mat on the kitchen table for traction. If an older dog is not already trained, he can still be taught to stand or lie still and accept this necessary attention. As with any training effort, you may need more patience working with a shy or fearful dog than a confident or dominant one.
- When grooming a dog with a slightly matted coat, work gently to avoid irritating the skin. Use a detangling comb (below) to cut thru the matting. Comb small sections of hair and go slowly. When working thru matts, try to hold the fur at its roots.



- Comb the outside of the tangle, gently progressing towards the skin. Work in short sessions and praise the dog frequently. The first place where mats form is under the arms. Simply cut the hair from that area (it's hidden, anyway). If the coat is severely tangled or matted, clipping the dog entirely is best. The hair will grow back and he will be happier.
- Keep the area between your dog's toes clear from tangles; they can easily become matted and trap things like seeds, thorns, and other vegetation. Also, trim the hair in between the pads of his feet, too. This could become matted & cause your dog considerable pain when walking, if not removed.

Bathing

- Frequent baths will strip the coat of essential oils causing irritation or drying out the skin. Several choices of dog shampoos and conditioners exist: scented, unscented, medicated, aloe, herbal, dry powder, and flea and tick. Some Cockers have allergies and scented shampoos may irritate their skin. Cocker coats typically respond well to shampoo containing Colloidal Oatmeal. Regardless of the type you choose, never use people hair products on your dog and completely rinse out the conditioner.
- The first step in bathing a dog is similar to the first step in grooming-- teach him to stand and to accept hands all over his body. Baths are also easier if the dog trusts the owner and willingly climbs into the tub... and remains there until he is done. Use lukewarm water, never very hot or very cold.
- Use a washcloth to clean the dog's face and never spray water into his ear canal. Moisture inside the ear provides the right conditions for infections. Towel-dry your dog and use a hand-held hair dryer to make drying faster. If his coat is not thoroughly dried, don't let him go outside in cold weather or the rain.



Diet

- Cockers are very sensitive dogs and changes in their environment are stressful, which may cause loose stools. This can easily be fixed with canned pumpkin (not pumpkin pie mix). Mix a few spoonfuls of pure canned pumpkin into their daily meal for a few days.
- If possible, keep them on the same food they had at their foster home and transition them slowly to your new food by mixing half the old and half the new food over a period of 5-7 days.
- Recommended dog food brands are included in this adoption packet.
- Feed your dog only grain-free kibble and treats because wheat can cause ear infections. Recommended treats include dried beef liver or jerky made from duck, lamb or chicken. Be sure the treats are made in the U.S.A. due to recent recalls of pet food and treats made in China, which also has a relatively high rate of salmonella in their products.



- The best diet you can feed your dog is either homemade or raw. There are a variety of frozen, high-quality, well-balanced, raw meals that include organs, muscles, bones and vegetables. You can purchase these raw, blended meals at a variety of pet food stores in the freezer section. To learn more, search the internet for "raw dog food diet". Several 'raw dog food' recipes & cookbooks also exist. If you choose either of these diets, be sure they are well balanced so your dog gets all the necessary nutrients for good health. As always, consult your veterinarian.
- Just as household cleaners are toxic to dogs, so are grapes, raisins, macadamia nuts, chocolate, chewing gum, avocado, garlic, onions, tomatoes, rhubarb, mushroom, raw eggs... just to mention a few. But the weight of the dog and the amount digested matters whether it's a matter of life or death. You can contact the ASPCA Poison Control Center at 888-426-4435.

For additional information, check out our website: www.RockyMountainCockerRescue.org.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us by phone (303-617-1939) or e-mail at Inquiries@RockyMountainCockerRescue.org. We will always be available to help you make the relationship lasting and mutually beneficial.

For more information, please click on any blue weblinks below:

[About Cocker Spaniels](#)

[Basic Feeding Guide](#)

[Dog Adoption Bible](#)

[Ear Cleaning](#)

[Hale Rescue Rewards Program](#)

[How To Greet a Dog](#)

[Mouthing, Nipping and Play Biting](#)

[PACFA-Rabies Prevention](#)

[Potty Training your Adult Dog](#)

[Training Tips](#)

[AVMA Pet Ownership](#)

[Body Language: Fear in Dogs](#)

[Dog Food Ratings](#)

[Grades of Dog Food](#)

[Help Your Dog Adjust](#)

[Is This the Right Breed For You](#)

[Outdoor Dogs](#)

[Pet Care Assistance](#)

[Rescue Dog Guidelines](#)

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