

CoatCare in the Bergamasco

By Maria Andreoli



(Foto Embrione)

Who for the first time has to do with the Bergamasco and very worried about the care of the coat. E' 'harassed by doubts and uncertainties: true that the Bergamasco should never be brushed? How should I behave when making bundles of fur? etc,

In reality, things are not as complicated as they seem when the experience is lacking and the mind is full of preconceived ideas, few of which are right or sufficiently clear. So I think it is worthwhile to talk a bit 'to clarify the many doubts. In practice, the mantle of the Bergamasco needs a little care brought at the right time. To make things clearer we will talk about the interventions that are necessary from time to time by dividing them in different periods depending on the dog's age.

We must however premise that such subdivisions are only indicative and must be modulated from case to case. Not all subjects begin the formation of the adult coat in the same period of life, but there are variations that depend both on the different hereditary predispositions, both from environmental and regional conditions.

However, in principle we can divide the coat interventions in three different periods.

Of the birth to 10-12 months. In this period the fur from puppy, soft and short.

This type of hair does not tend to pile up or ruffle, so it is sufficient to brush with brush with iron teeth and rubber bottom to keep it tidy and remove Tango or other foreign bodies that have fallen into the hair.

Second year of life. Starting from the tenth, twelfth month (the individual variations also influenced by seasonal conditions are considerable) there is the formation of hairs of different weaving and the simultaneous fall of the soft puppy hair. Initially, it is known to swell, almost the leavening of the mantle (photo 1) due to the growth



Foto 1

of the abundant and fine undercoat which is mixed with the existing hair gradually graded by elimination. So starting from the back of the body, the rump and the limbs begin the growth of the woolly coat, while on the tail before and afterwards in the area of the withers the formation of the goat's hair occurs. From here the latter will then be subsequently expanded to the whole saddle and in smaller proportion also on the other parts of the body where it mixes with the woolly fur (photo 2).



Foto 2

This is the period in which the care of the mantle must be more assiduous and more centered.

The soft puppy fur coat is mixed with the undercoat and with the woolly fur and goat growing. This leads to the formation of informal bundles, often very intricate, that must be warned not to let felting to make the work of covering the mantle much more difficult (photo 3).



Foto 3

On the other hand against any instinctive desire, in this period the work with the brush must be reduced to a minimum, replaced instead with the opening with the hands of the clusters. Such openings must not however be complete because this period coincides with the formation of the base of those that will have to become the piping.

In this annual operation it is necessary to have the warning to open the bundles up to reach the skin, but also not to divide them too much so as not to strain too much the base of the future bioccolo which must on the contrary be wide and consistent. We must therefore divide the coat into tufts of 5-7 cm. of width (photo 4).



Foto 4

Only at this point, is it possible to intervene with the brush but only in such a way as to revive the protruding hairs that would otherwise be re-united with the surrounding pegs making our work useless.

If it was too late to intervene and there was already a felting it could be difficult and sometimes impossible to open the clusters only with the hands. In this case the scissors could be used, but always in the direction of the bioccolo, that is, from the top towards the bottom. This intervention must however be reduced to the minimum necessary (photo 5).



Foto 5

All this must be done on the whole surface of the body except on the saddle where the presence of only goat hair and undercoat requires complete re-routing. Also here it may happen that the hair of puppies mingling with the undercoat and the growing goat hair gives rise to clusters (photo 6),



Foto 6

but the absence of woolly fur makes these formations different from those that are formed in the other parts of the body and easier to disentangle, using both the hands and the brush (photo 7-8)



Foto 7



Foto 8

and eventually the comb. In any case, in this zone the openings must be total so as to completely surface the goat's hair that must be smooth and ravished. (photo 9)



Foto 9

When all this work will be accomplished we will not have to be disappointed by the appearance of our dog. in this period the Bergamaschi have an unattractive aspect. All those stubs of formation that shoot in all directions give them a clumsy and messy appearance (photo 10). It is necessary to be patient and wait for the spikes to lengthen so as to assume their final appearance.



Foto 10

It is only around 3 years that the coat will be formed and even if the stems are still relatively short they will already be able to form a dignified "petticoat". After 3 years.

After this period of settlement, the care of the coat requires very good care.

The saddle must always be combed, in particular at the end of the spring suit, when it is easy for the fall of the abundant winter undercoat to form bundles with goat hair.

The rest of the body must be periodically checked so that it does not become too large (photo 11). In this case they must be divided (photo 12), so that the coat is always kept tidy (photo 13).



Foto 11



Foto 12



Foto 13

As we have said, speaking of the mantle it is not homogeneous in the various parts of the body, but due to the presence of the three hair weaves and their different distribution in the various regions it presents some splits. For greater clarity, we illustrate the various regions of the body in order to be able to notice their characteristics. (photo Rena made in Cortina)

In the saddle area and in the part upper part of the neck where there is, in addition to the undercoat, the exclusive presence of the goat hair, the coat must be smooth. Here, periodically brushed sections should be carried out, removing any undercoat fallen, it is put in evidence it smooth and ravished goat hair (photo 14).



Foto 14

Below the saddle, from height of the shoulder down, on the lower back of the neck and on the chest the presence of the woolly hair is reported by the formation of bioccoli. (photo 15)



Foto 15

The woolly coat here is not as abundant as in the back of the body, but is mixed with the goat hair still massively present. This means that the coils that are present in these areas are more dull and less large (photo 16). Thus along the forelegs there is the formation of long, thin and soft hair agglomerates. But they are so abundant to do appear the limbs as large hairy columns emerging from the thick hair of the chest and hips that hides the attachment.

In the back of the trunk, along the hips and on the hind limbs there is a clear preponderance of the woolly hair and this means that the coils become thicker, stiff because of the felting to which the hair is subjected unlike the goat hair (photo 17). They also have a longer length, length which tends to increase progressively during the dog's life. From the croup they descend abundantly into the hind limbs, both laterally and posteriorly, forming an abundant "petticoat".



Foto 17

In addition to the saddle re-routing and the division of the overhanging coils, to keep the mantle in order, it is necessary to make regular brushes in all the regions of the body, even in those with the formation of bioccoli. This operation must be carried out with a fine, curved and repeated tooth brush with a frequency of twice a month. It is one of the many erroneous ideas to believe that the Bergamasco must never be brushed in order not to dispel the stems. Once these are properly formed, no brush will ever alter the structure of hell,

On the contrary, these interventions will serve to keep the surface ravished and clean by removing any mud or other dirt that has been deposited on them.

Another false belief and that the Bergamasco should never be washed. Frequent baths damage the mantle of the Bergamasco no more than those of any other dog. The use of shampoo causes the natural secretion of the skin to be dissolved in order to create a protective film around the hair, not only to make it impermeable to water, but also to protect it from contact with any external agent. without this protection, it becomes more dirty and dries more easily, increasing the risk of breaking and thus depleting the entire coat. This risk is even greater in the Bergamasco as if this negative effect involved the hairs that hold the body together to the body they would fall and given the slowness with which they formed would delay the resumption of the normal appearance of the dog for many months.

Good rule therefore for the Bergamasco and to limit the complete baths, that is of all body, only to one or at most two a year. They must be made in abundant water and with very little detergent. In the case of necessity, the distal parts of the mantle can be washed more frequently, which are more likely to become dirty, such as the blobs and the breast for the deposit of food residues or the parts towards the ground that may become muddy. This operation also where to be made with plenty of water, limiting the use of soap to the maximum

Another warning is to evict, as far as possible, the use of the hairdryer. This type of drying makes the hair very dry incurring the risks mentioned above. The best thing is to wash the dog on a sunny and possibly windy day and then let it dry naturally, that is not possible and use the hair dryer and It is essential to have the warning to emulsify to the last rinsing water a correct quantity of a cosmetic oil that avoids the inconvenience of the excessive drying of the hair.



Foto 16

As I hope it appears evident from as far as shown here, the mantle of the Bergamasco, despite its complexity and abundance, does not require urgent and tiring care unlike many other breeds, which constitute a constant commitment for the owner.

The Bergamasco is a simple dog, genuine and natural and this is also reflected on its mantle, which is formed and develops naturally. All that we have to do and follow its development, intervening as little as possible and only, and with a lot of prudence, on special occasions.

The Bergamasco also for his coat as for everything that concerns him and able to make do, finding only the most simple and natural solution.



Foto 18