



## **TIPS FOR GROOMING ANGORAS**

*Contributed by Pat Glenn*

Many times I have had people tell me how much they love to look at Angora Rabbits and how soft they feel, but they wouldn't want to go to all the trouble of grooming one. I think they're missing out on a beautiful, personable bunny and grooming can be as much trouble as you make it.

Hopefully, I'll be able to give you some suggestions that will help you get the most from your bunny with the easiest care.

As far as tool, a soft slicker brush such as Evergentle or ones used for cats, a metal comb and, in case of tough mats or for shearing, a pair of sharp short blade scissors. Also, strange as this may sound, a hair blow dryer with a high cool air setting, or as I use, a Shop-Vac on exhaust can really cut grooming time as I will explain later.

From my experience, the French Angoras are possibly easiest to groom, because they don't have the facial wool nor do they have the woolly feet. Their senior wool has more guard hairs and helps them be less matting.

The English Angora has softer wool and that adorable fluffy face and those woolly feet. The muffs (side face wool) and bangs and tassels (long hair on the ears) probably will need gentle grooming with your slicker and comb two or more times a week depending on how heavily furnished your bunny is. It's easier to keep the pesky mats out than get them out once they start.

The Satin Angora, in my brief experience with them, can be tricky to groom. They have beautiful intense color, but the hair is fine and seems to attract mats, especially in the young coat. Several long-time Satin breeders tell me they clip the coats the young when they are 6-8 weeks old to help encourage a more groomable growth. Because of the fine hair shaft, the Satins don't look as "fluffy" or appear to have as much density.

I have had several Satins, that when you are done grooming them, they start licking themselves all over. This pretty much undoes a lot of your grooming.

I haven't had a great deal of experience with Giant, but their massive coats can be gorgeous. In ease of grooming they would probably be between the French and the English.

The following suggestions will work for all four breeds and you can make adjustments according to your bunny and what works best for you.

Make sure you have a bag, paper sack or some kind of container to put the wool you clean from your grooming brush. If you spin, this gives you more wool, if not, it helps keep the place clean.

Start with the underside of the rabbit. If you're a one person groomer, (I'm lucky enough to have my husband help), this can be accomplished easily the help of a chair for you to sit on. Remember gentleness and firmness works best on all critters. Take the rabbit's ears with your hand and take hold of the back of the neck area, then gently turn the rabbit over supporting its back with your other hand. Sit down and place the upside down rabbit's head between your knees with the feet facing you. Do take care because those feet can pack a punch if they kick out. Place the head far enough between your knees that you can comfortably hold him snugly. Practice make this easier for you and the rabbit, and usually when they feel secure they are not upset and jumpy. Now you can groom the tummy, the feet and legs.

Now on to the top half. It helps to have some kind of small table near, waist-high so it saves your back. If you have too large a space, the bunny may want to hop away and explore, making it take longer to groom, and more frustrating.

This is where the blow dryer or Shop-Vac comes in. There are also pet blowers like are used in dog grooming shops. These are smaller than a Shop-Vac, making them easier to transport, and maybe a little quieter. They can be ordered from pet or rabbit supply catalogs and usually start at \$90.

Angoras are wool bearing animals and you want to keep that wool on the rabbit and as unbroken and mat-free as possible. By "blowing" the rabbit with the above mentioned items, it helps to get rid of any dust or dander and help blow out the shedding hair before it can get caught in start making mats. This is also healthy for the bunny's scalp; it lets air get down in, particularly if the rabbit has a very dense coat. I think blowing is gentler on the rabbit and cuts down on grooming time. I do use the slicker to help lift the wool as I blow; this also helps "capture" the shedding hairs. Make sure when blowing that you give the bunny a good going over, especially in problem areas behind the front legs and around the rump. If you notice mats developing, you can work on those specific spots with brush or comb. The rabbits don't mind the blowing and it has helped me keep those nice show coats longer.

Of course, don't forget the faces on those English and Giants. Don't use the blower here much; it irritates the eyes, and avoid blowing it into the ears.

Get in the good grooming habit and you'll enjoy your lovable, exotic Angora, and may all your bunnies be mat free.

(c) 1997 Pat Glenn - [pglenn151@attbi.com](mailto:pglenn151@attbi.com)