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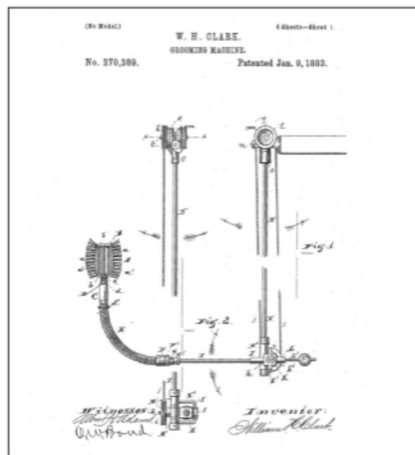
# A History of Dog Grooming Inventions

*Some deserve our thanks. Others were not so influential.*

**A** search for the oldest U.S. patent for pet grooming inventions uncovers a [grooming machine patent awarded to W.H. Clark in 1883](#). The inventor describes it as a “means of which the grooming operation can be effectually and efficiently performed over the entire surface of the animal without any inconvenience or difficulty for the operator.” The device features a motorized, rotating brush.

The United States started awarding patents for all inventions in 1790. Patents for animal grooming devices, however, don’t surface until the late 1850s. Those focus entirely on horses. Then, in the

early 1920s, items for grooming dogs appear in earnest.



Wading through the legalese, complicated engineering jargon, and painfully passive grammar found in patent applications borders on comical. The details outline problems the invention aims to solve in sometimes obtuse ways. Many patents mention dog grooming difficulties, especially for Poodles and terriers. A surprising number use vacuums to suck up removed hair. Some of them feel seriously bizarre, especially variations on inventions for restraining dogs during grooming.

From items today’s dog lovers recognize and still use to others that, perhaps thankfully, didn’t catch on, a patent

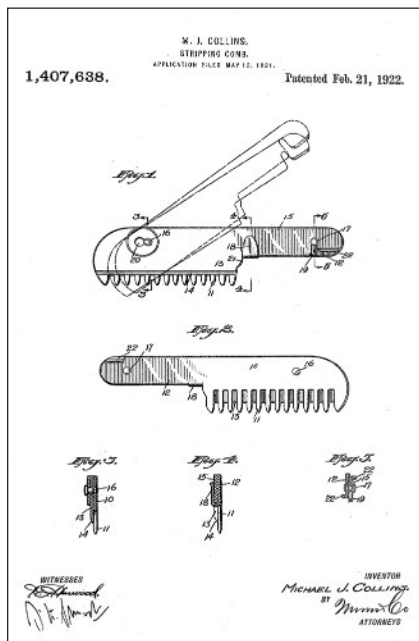
search finds all kinds of dog grooming devices:

- Flea combs and parasite protection collars
- Bathtubs and tub inserts
- Stainless steel grooming sinks for veterinary hospitals
- Precursors to undercoat rakes and other famous deshedding tools
- Many versions of scrubby gloves and mittens
- What we now often call “the cone of shame” (though it seems like that must have existed before 1993)

Here, we present some notable innovations over the years.

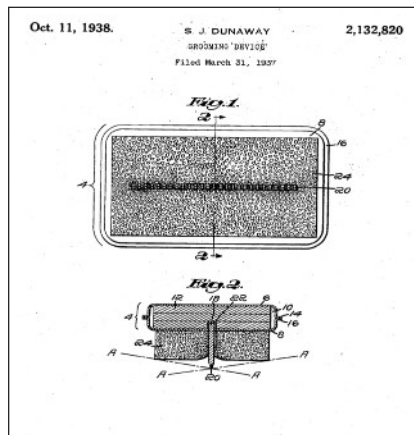
### STRIPPING COMB (1922)

The patent explains, “It is well appreciated in connection with such combs as are utilized for currying the coats of dogs such as terriers, preparatory to exhibiting them in a show[,] that considerable difficulty has been experienced.”



### SLICKER BRUSH (1938)

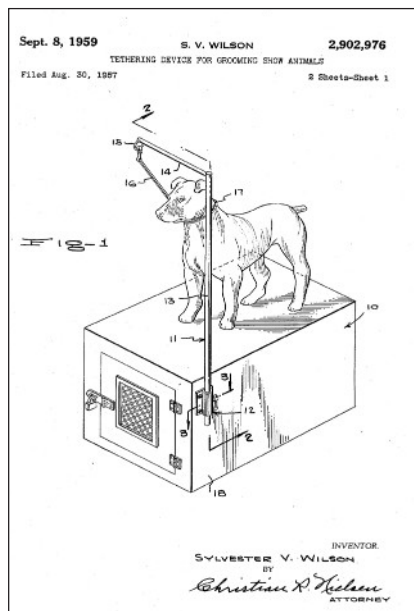
Patent records show many variations of dog brushes, but this one appears to be an early slicker-like brush. The inventor says, “The mode of application



will naturally vary somewhat according to the nature of the dog’s coat. On a short-haired dog only a light pressure is exerted[,] and the pad is but little compressed, so that the teeth do not penetrate the dog’s coat too deeply, but in the case of a long-haired dog, the pad is compressed to a greater extent and the teeth penetrate to a correspondingly greater distance.”

### TETHERING DEVICE (1959)

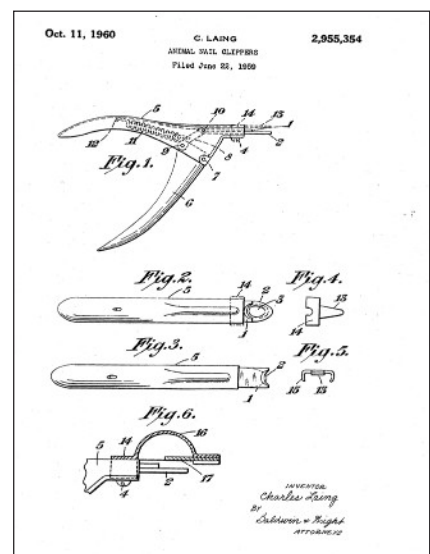
Patent archives include several types of dog tethers. Many focus on the head and neck. Others feature both neck and belly slings. This early one appears to attach to a dog’s crate, which is also



used as a grooming table, and is one of the first patent records to mention competitive show dogs.

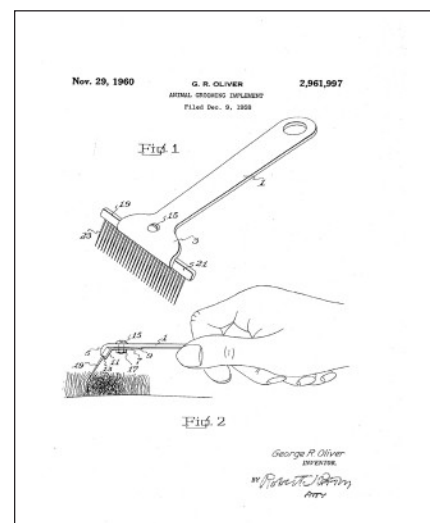
### GUILLOTINE-STYLE NAIL CLIPPERS (1960)

A patent search found these guillotine-style nail clippers. While many now use scissor-styled ones, finding the first of that type of nail trimmer proved impossible because of the weirdness of many patent illustrations.



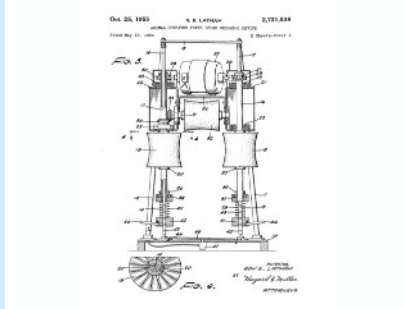
### MAT PICK (1960)

It’s hard to imagine people weren’t already using small, pointy things to break



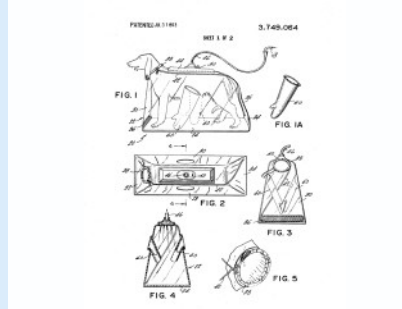
# Inventions That Didn't Catch On

*These inventors got creative—for better or worse.*



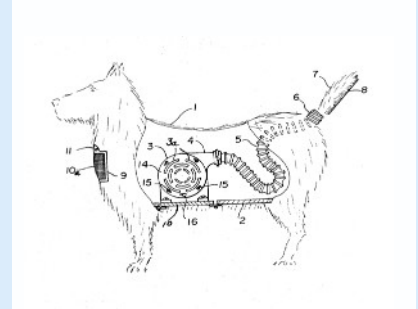
### Animal Powered Brush (1955)

This device features brushes placed to reach both sides and the back of a dog. According to the patent application, “Intelligent dogs familiar with the brush can thus walk between the brushes whenever they desire to be brushed, and by means of their own weight depress the platform to energize the electric motor.”



### See-Through, Full-Body, Bathing Enclosure (1973)

This bathing invention completely encloses the dog’s entire body. It features built-in mittens for people to soap up and rinse without getting themselves wet. It’s akin to laboratory setups you see in sci-fi movies or in infectious disease research.



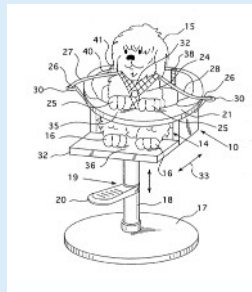
### Combination Toy Dog and Vacuum (1973)

Designed to muffle vacuum sounds inside a housing that looks like a terrier, the inventor believed the device could suck up or blow away excess hair with less stress for dogs than the sight and sound of a traditional vacuum. The tail of the dog-shaped invention is retractable and usable as a nozzle.



### Dog Foot Restraint (1987)

Do some dogs wiggle during grooming? Yes. Do some of them pull their feet away when it’s time to trim their nails? Also, yes. Does it seem like a good idea to strap all four feet of a fully awake dog to a board during grooming? Emphatically not.



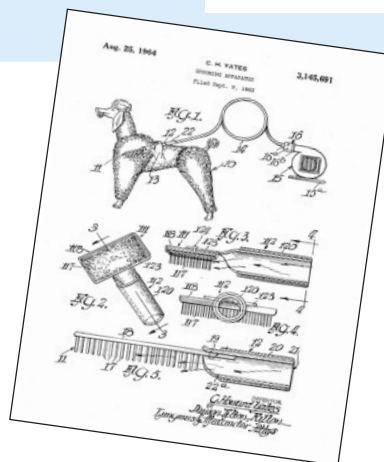
### Dog Grooming Salon Chair (2012)

This dog grooming chair mimics a child’s high chair, with the option to raise or lower it based on the groomer’s preferred height. It features canine back and rump support, spots for giving access to paws for coat trimming and nail clipping or grinding, and tethers intended to connect to a dog’s harness.

up mats in long-haired dog coats, but this early mat pick-comb shows up in the early 1960s. Its inventor poses the need for the new tool: “Particularly when combing has been neglected for a while, the hair tends to ball and tangle and snarl to the point that it cannot be straightened with conventional tools now available.”

### BLOW DRYER CONNECTED TO BRUSHES & COMBS (1964)

This patent refers to dog grooming challenges, especially “in less than

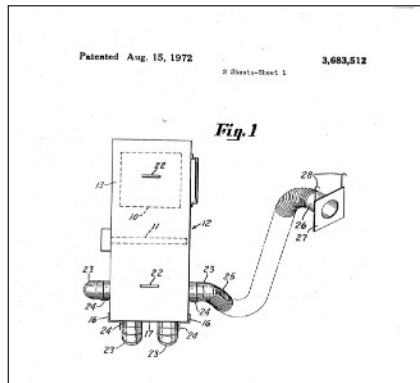
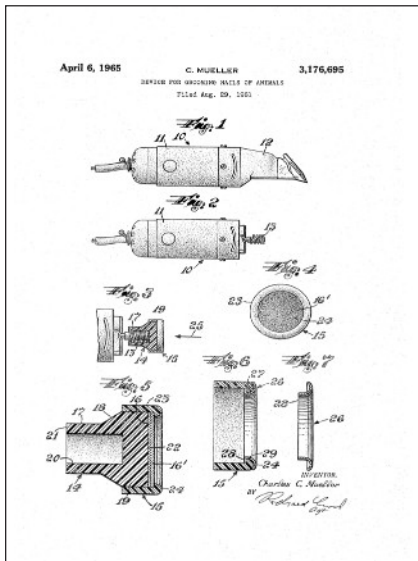


expert hands.” That means us non-pro, family dog lovers. It combines

brushing and drying tasks into one invention “for the purpose of undertaking a complete program of dog grooming in a relatively short time.”

### NAIL GRINDER (1965)

The inventor basically created a nail-grinding head that attaches to an existing electric trimmer. The patent describes it as “a device for grooming nails of animals, comprising a revoluble worm.”



outside, several devices that use ultrasonic or ionic cleaning, finger mittens to clean teeth or ears, and early versions of gritty boards that wear down dogs' nails.

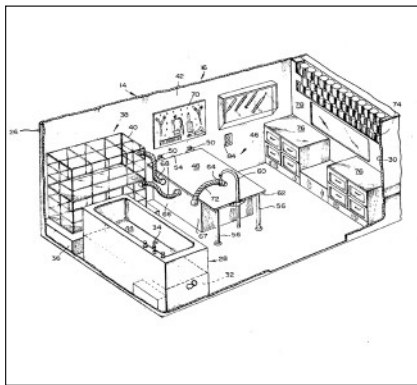
One last look at dog grooming patents since 2020 reveal much of the same—brushes, vacuums, dryers, grooming tool storage systems, and the like. Useful, perhaps, but not revolutionary. Who knows what the next big thing will be? **FD**

The patent search also found dog doors with brushes around the opening so that dogs get groomed as they go

*Roxanne Hawn is a journalist and an award-winning dog blogger. She is the author of Heart Dog: Surviving the Loss of Your Canine Soul Mate.*

### MOBILE GROOMING SALON (1971)

The patent describes the placement and setup of equipment for each stage that permits “the groomer to wash, dry, fluff, cut and groom the animal in one continuous sequential operation.”



### CAGE DRYER (1972)

This patent bemoans the time required to fully bathe, dry, and groom dogs with longer or denser coats. It focuses on efficiency. The inventor’s goals include providing a “means for drying a dog and the like subsequent to a bathing operation thereby permitting veterinarians or kennel personnel to attend to other duties while the animal is being dried.”

Patent 7726495B1

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