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*An amazing
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*Managing mud
before and
after outings*

Meeting the breeds

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In the Mud

Tips for grooming your muddy dog

As dog owners know, spring is mud season. Before your dog gets gloopy, consider these ideas and products that will make grooming your muddy dog a bit less of an SOS situation.

BEFORE MUD

Before your dog goes out, try using the horse-grooming topical product called [ShowSheen](#). In addition to keeping mud from sticking quite so much, this product may prevent burrs and dangerous grass awns like foxtails from burrowing into your dog's coat or skin.

Kim Sykes, CPDT-KA, an AKC Breeder of Merit and owner of K9 Manners & More in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, says, "It's the best product for keeping coats from sticking. When they dry, the mud just falls off! I use this if my dogs are going herding, and it really helps. You can even get them wet, and most of the product stays on until you add soap."

Just one caution: ShowSheen makes floors and other surfaces slick, so Sykes says, "Be careful where you spray it. We've had some issues with overspray around our grooming table, and I have to use a mixture of dishwashing liquid

and vinegar to get it to come up easily."

Some owners also recommend Cowboy Magic, another line of horse and dog products. Along with shine and conditioning options, their [Curry on a Stik](#) brush features cone-shaped fingers that help pull mud—and whatever else your dog may pick up outside—off your dog's coat. It's similar to the [Kong Zoom Groom](#), but it has a handle that may keep your hands a little cleaner.

AFTER MUD

Let it dry first. It's much harder to deal with wet mud than dry mud. Claudia

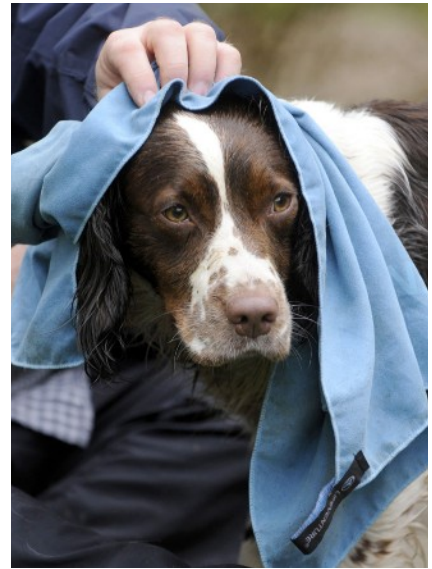
All photos: Alamy Stock, Golden and Labrador Retriever; Anetra Picture Library



Loomis, president and owner of several CB Pet Market stores and grooming salons in New Jersey, says, “Mud is fun for dogs! There are lots of products that can help, but for me and my Samoyeds, I usually just let it dry then brush it right out. If you have a heavily coated dog, you

do not want to deal with wet mud unless you want to stick the pup in the tub and give them a full bath, then dry them out.”

Still. Wet mud? Not fun or funny. Be patient and corral your dog in the mud room, if you have one, or crate them until the mud dries.



Prevent staining. If you’re worried about mud staining dogs with light-colored coats, Loomis recommends using a waterless bath product or conditioning spray after brushing out dried mud. She says, “Any coat conditioning spray, especially one with a little natural silicone, will lubricate the coat so mud has less of a chance of sticking or staining.”

Try a bathless bath. Sykes uses a waterless/no-rinse shampoo from [Pro-Line](#) on her Border Collies. She explains, “This is a spray that you rub into the coat and then rub off with a towel. I have gone from muddy herding fields to the conformation ring in just a few minutes with this product.”

Focus on paws. For smaller dogs or those with only a couple of dogs, look for paw plunger cups available from a variety of brands such as [Dexas MudBuster](#). Just put some warm, soapy water inside and plunge each paw for a bit and dry it off when it comes out.

But if you’ve got a whole pack, that could be tedious. Tonya Christiansen, who owns Must Love Dogs Boutique & Spa in Grand Haven, Michigan, says, “When you have multiple dogs, that’s like a 20- to 30-minute task, and who’s got time for that?”



Top left: Lelio Cutler; Top right: Rosemary Roberts; Paws: Philip Smith

Other Outdoor Hazards

Warmer and potentially wetter weather also ramps up outdoor risks beyond mud puddles. Check your dog after every outing for these hazards and remove them ASAP:

Grass awns: Grass seeds, including foxtails, with one-way barbs can work their way into dogs' skin, eyes, noses, and ears and cause real trouble.



Burrs: Small, spiked seeds from several types of wild plants and weeds often firmly attach to dogs' coats and your clothes.



Cactus needles: Sharper than you may think, these can put dogs' feet, skin, and maybe even eyes at risk.



If you haven't already applied a product to your dog's coat before heading outside, try using a little dry cornstarch as you carefully remove the awns and burrs by hand or with a metal comb.

Use a loop in your leash to remove cactus needles, rather than your hand, by wrapping the leash so that you can pull or flick the needles off your dog without getting poked yourself.

It's probably faster, Christiansen says, to use a microfiber towel just inside the door to get off as much mud as possible before letting your dog run around inside. "It's not 100 percent," she says, "but it's better than nothing."

Try these dog towels. Sykes is

particularly fond of [Enzo dog towels](#), which she calls the "best towel ever." Apparently, these microfiber towels hold a lot of moisture without that "sticky icky" feel of other microfiber towels. She adds, "I love them for dock diving. They will hold a gallon of water. Just wring it

out and keep drying! I used it with my 45-pound Border Collie at (the) North America Diving Dogs nationals, and it was awesome."

MUD: THE UPSIDES

Though it can be annoying, mud does offer some benefits to dogs:

- Stronger immunity and gut biome from exposure to beneficial microbiota
- Richer sensory and play experience—both how it smells and feels
- Autonomy during outdoor play, without our rules or objections

So, try not to freak out too much. In many cases, a muddy dog is a happy dog. **FD**



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Fotolia; Emanuel Tardila; Burdock burrs: John Keates; Cactus: Ken Gillespie Photography; Bottom: John Richmond