



FEATURE

Hypoallergenic Dogs & Low-shedding Dog Breeds

Article by Maria Arnold, Perfect Pets - The Ethical Pet Directory

Probably the most famous “hypoallergenic” dog is the labradoodle, a cross between a Labrador and a Poodle that was specifically developed as a guide dog for a woman whose husband was allergic to dog hair.

Since that first cross 30 years ago, ‘oodles’ of all sorts have become incredibly popular, for the most part because pet lovers associate them with being “hypoallergenic”. However, with the oodles there is also little to no guarantee of what sort of dog your puppy will actually grow into either - the size, coat type and temperament can be quite variable, even amongst litter mates.

Most people are very surprised when they learn how many pure bred dog breeds that are considered “hypoallergenic” or low shedding. As pure bred dogs come in all sorts of shapes, sizes and coat types, seek out a responsible breeder, where the health, coat and temperament of your puppy will be assured.



The truth about Hypoallergenic dogs

Most allergies to dogs are actually caused by a reaction to dander (dead skin cells) or saliva, not fur or hair, and in truth, there’s no such thing as a hypoallergenic dog. The reason dogs that shed a lot are more troublesome to people with allergies is because they are thought to bring more allergens into their environment, and leave more lying around. On the other hand, hairless dogs and low-shedding breeds do not carry and drop as much dander or fur. This is why choosing a dog that doesn’t lose fur may mean a more comfortable co-existence for dog lovers prone to allergies. While the small low-shedding oodles are particularly popular, there are plenty of purebred dogs of all shapes and sizes that don’t shed (or at least don’t shed very much).

Size Matters

If you suffer from allergies but would really like to have a dog, then remember that size can make a difference. The bigger the dog, the more dander and saliva you will be exposed to. Larger dogs are also much more effort to bathe and groom, which are important tasks to reduce allergens in the home.

It’s important to note here that one of the great advantages of choosing a pure bred dog is that as long as it comes from a registered and responsible breeder, the size of the adult dog (as well as the health, coat and temperament) will be assured. With the cross bred dogs these characteristics can be quite variable, even amongst litter mates, and when a puppy that was expected to grow to Miniature Poodle size turns out to be Labrador size, problems and heartache can follow.



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What makes a dog non-shedding?

Dog breeds that are considered to be non-shedding are typically described as having hair rather than fur. While there is no chemical difference between fur and hair (they are both made of keratin), there are significant differences in appearance and growth behaviour. Hair is usually much longer than fur and has a longer growth cycle. The longer the growth cycle, the less frequently hair is shed.

Hair can be straight, wavy, or curly, and is much finer and softer to touch. Curly hair also traps any hair that is shed, which leads to the perception that hair is not shedding. It also leads to matts without sufficient attention to grooming! Hair also grows in a single layer. Most dogs with fur usually have short, dense, double coats with short growth cycles, so that it can change with the seasons, growing noticeably thicker during winter. Dogs with double coats have a coarse outer layer and a fine undercoat which helps to regulate temperature. Not all furred dogs have a double coat.



Is there such a thing as a truly non-shedding dog?

All mammals, including humans, shed some hair and dander in quantities that vary with the seasons. So a 100% non-shedding dog doesn't actually exist, but the particularly low shedding breeds are usually referred to as non-shedding. Furred dogs tend to shed copious amounts of coat, dropping fur all over the place, so that it ends up on the floor, on clothes, furniture and bedding. Non or low shedding breeds (typically with hair) usually drop very little, to the point that there is no hair noticeable at all, and clothes, furniture, etc. stay clean and dog hair free.

Low Shedding Dog Breeds

The following breeds are low shedding and are often referred to as non-shedding dogs. For further information on all of these breeds, please go to DOGS NSW website: <https://www.dogsnew.org.au/breeds/browse-all-breeds/>

- **Schnauzer**
- **Portuguese Water Dog**
- **Bichon Frise**
- **Poodle**
- **Maltese**
- **Puli**
- **Havanese**
- **Kerry Blue Terrier**
- **Lhasa Apso**
- **Afghan Hound**



Low Shedding Dog Breeds (continued)

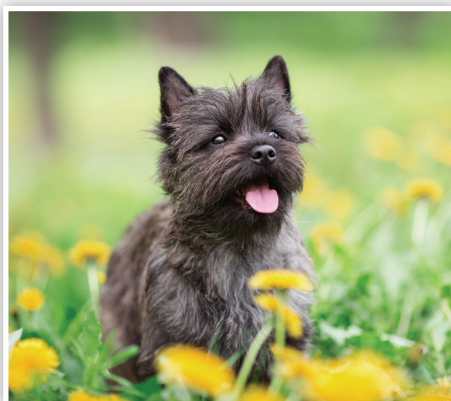
- Australian Silky Terrier
- Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier
- American Hairless Terrier*
- Tibetan Terrier
- Shih Tzu
- Lagotto Romagolo
- Chinese Crested Dog
- Yorkshire Terrier
- Griffon Bruxellois
- Airedale Terrier
- Cairn Terrier
- Scottish Terrier
- West Highland White Terrier
- Basenji
- Irish Water Spaniel
- Spanish Water Dog
- Peruvian Hairless Dog*
- Xoloitzcuintle*

One thing to remember is that most low shedding dogs have higher grooming requirements than other dogs. They will need their coat clipped approximately every six to eight weeks. And even the *hairless breeds still shed dander which can cause allergies in sensitive people.

Non & low shedding dogs come in all shapes and sizes

For medium sized dogs that are non/low shedding, look at: Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, Lagotto Romagnolo, Spanish Water Dogs, Standard Schnauzer, Tibetan Terriers, Xoloitzcuintle, Irish Water Spaniels, Kerry Blue Terriers.

If you love big dogs, some of the large hypoallergenic / low shedding dog breeds are: Giant Schnauzers, Standard Poodle, Afghan Hounds, Airedale Terriers, Bouvier des Flandres, Russian Black Terriers.



Images

Page 23: Chinese Crested Dog
 Thinkstock image
 Page 24: Lagotto Romagnolo images
 Shutterstock image
 Page 25: Top left: Cairn Terrier
 Shutterstock image
 Above centre: Soft Coated Wheaten
 Terrier image supplied by the Soft
 Coated Wheaten Terrier Club of NSW
 Top right: Miniature Schnauzers
 supplied by Deidree Anderson.
 Left: West Highland White Terrier
 Right: Afghan Hound
 Nagfha Images.

