

# Groom Room: Pamper parlor for dogs, cats

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Unlike most beauty shops, the customers at the Groom Room are relatively quiet. Occasionally you'll hear a grain of pleasure but most of the reaction is seen, not heard.

"Oh, does this feel good, one poodle says with his eyes while the blow dryer dries his freshly washed and trimmed curly locks. The sheep dog

being bathed smiles during the scrubbing and another poodle, hanging in the air from a swing, looks a little reluctant to be there, even though he's getting a haircut that other poodles will envy.

Four women are responsible for grooming the pets, mostly dogs and cats, that visit the Groom Room for a complete treatment. Barbara Squires and Wanda Roberts have worked for the shop now located at 2155 Crooks in

Avon Township for 10 years. Valerie Elmy and Karen Pillbury are newcomers; they've only been there five years.

"Each works with the animal from start to finish," Ms. Squires explained. "First we rough the dog or cat, taking off half of his hair that needs cutting. Then we bathe it, clean the anal glands, dry the hair and do the final grooming, finishing the hair cut, cutting around the pads of the feet and in the ears, and cutting the nails. They know when they're finished. They'll show off when we're done."

ALTHOUGH THE WOMEN have a lot of equipment to help them, most of the work requires manual skills, a talent for poodle and kitty cat cosmetology and a love of animals.

They have scissors, clippers, brushes, combs, electric blades and spacer guards so they don't cut the hair too short, but those won't guarantee a good grooming.

The atmosphere in the Groom Room is serious, while the groomers concen-

trate on their jobs. Yet the expressions of the dogs and cats often lighten up the place. "Puppy," the Groom Room's mascot, walks around at times greeting people or chasing the bubbles his owner, Ms. Pillbury, blows for him. Bathed dogs look comical with their hair so close to their bodies.

The place is filled with many sounds—the quiet humming of the electric blades, the clipping of the scissors, the squishing of the bath brush and the humming of the dryer.

The animals seem to ignore everything, though. They know something's happening to them and that it's something special.

"We groom every type of dog and cat here," said Ms. Elmy. Some of the unusual clients have been a skunk and a guinea pig. One dog owner brings a banana as a treat, but only if the dog behaves.

A PET NEEDS an appointment to be groomed by this experienced quartet. The Groom Room is open Tuesday through Saturday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and pets won't be bathed after 2:30 p.m.

Special treatment is given to older dogs who need to be groomed right away. One dog who visits regularly is diabetic and takes insulin. He has to be done on time so he can go home and eat.

There are other reasons other than just having a clean pet for owners to have their dogs and cats bathed and clipped.

If the women find anything they think is wrong with a pet, they'll have one of the veterinarians at the Rochester Veterinary Hospital, which is in the attached building of the Groom Room, inspect it.

The veterinarians are O.L. Smith and G. A. Vynke.

Having the veterinarians so close is valuable in case a dog or cat doesn't want to cooperate. The doctors can tranquilize the pet, for its safety and for has been given.

Ms. Roberts said it's a good idea for people to bring in pets when they're as young as six weeks so they'll get used to getting a bath and having its hair and nails cut.

"A dog or cat can be brought in in any kind of weather, but a pet must be dry when it leaves."

Groom Room clients aren't all area residents. Some live in Walled Lake, Boyne Mountain, Algonac and Metamora. If the dog needs a special hair cut, the groomers cut it at the owner's request.

"We do one cocker spaniel who's eyelashes we leave long because the owners think it makes her look sexy," said Ms. Squires.

Liberation of the sexes has always been the standard at the Groom Room. After the last hair has been put in place and each pet has been sprayed with a special pet cologne, the groomer adds a final touch—a ribbon.

It takes two to three hours to groom a dog or cat and the price varies according to the coat of each animal.

The pet grooming business also has a busy season. The busiest times are summer and Christmas. When school starts, business slows down, said to Ms. Roberts.

The Groom Room is designed for the comfort of the groomers and the pets. Noise from the veterinary clinic is minimal; the tile floor is easily cleaned after a spill or accident. The five grooming tables and one bathtub are waist-level for the working comfort of the groomers. The dogs, too, seem comfortable with the arrangement.



"I'm so relaxed I could go right to sleep," says this spaniel while being prepared for a bath.



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