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Invasion of white fleece everywhere brings shedding's reality home

Julie Slack, Mountain

(Aug 3, 2007)

The sentiments expressed by various people about having a collie as a pet have finally sunk in.

First, most people, gasp in astonishment because Star is a sable-headed, white collie, meaning she looks like "a Lassie dog", as they say, in the face, but she has a totally white body.

They gaze in wonderment, then pet her, feeling her thick gorgeous coat. Usually then acknowledge what a lovely coat she has, clean, thick and sparkling. Then, their voices tone down a notch as they say, "she must shed a lot." or they assume it's a lot of work grooming her coat, and bathing her.

I kind of laughed it off for the first three months. Actually, I'd say, she doesn't shed that much. I'd brush her occasionally, including at least one thorough grooming session each week.

Other than that, she wasn't much work at all, and she didn't shed more than a couple of hairs here and there.

This past week, I discovered what shedding is all about. As I write this, I pluck a few more four-inch long white hairs off my beige skirt, and wonder when I'll ever be able to wear black or navy again.

I think this is what you might call coat blowing season, though most people I've talked to say it's a weird time of year to be shedding.

Nevertheless, it looks like snow in my house. Every time I turn around there's another clump of white fur somewhere - mostly all over my bed, all over the couch, ummm, pretty much all over everything. And that's after having vacuumed just five minutes ago.

To keep up with this shed, you'd need one of those portable hand-vacs to follow Star around.

And I'm not fussy!

I've owned long-haired cats, still own a grey Persian, own a double-coated black-and




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white short hair, whose fur weaves its way into every fibre possible. I know fur. Believe me.

This, is something you really do need to experience first-hand to understand. Obviously, I did research prior to choosing a Collie, and one of the few negatives to Collie ownership spelled out that owners must be willing to assume they will have hair on their rugs and on their furniture and on their clothes...

They said to be prepared to vacuum daily. I'd vacuum hourly were it not for the fact Star hates the sound. She barks incessantly at the vacuum cleaner and when she's not barking, she's whining, the saddest thing you've ever heard. So I can only vacuum when she's out in the back yard.

Still, I surged ahead. The positives of Collie ownership clearly outweighed anything negative such as fur. I forged ahead in my quest with confidence. Dog shedding can't be any worse than cat hair!

And, I'm not saying it's worse (yet, as I've only been facing it like this for a week), but it certainly is different and something like you've never seen before! These aren't just little hairs. Some of them are five and six inches long. It's serious white patches. It looks like a bunny fight took place everywhere in my house - even my backyard.

Suffice to say, I have Star hairs in my nose, in my food, and, since it's white, it's even visible in my son's hair.

I have buckets of it saved; people tell me to save it, you can have it spun into yarn and then you can make yourself a pair of mittens or a nice sweater, so there are benefits to shedding. See, the glass is half full.

And, indeed, the benefits of this gorgeous dog of ours far outweigh any inconvenience of her shedding.

So yes, I acknowledge it is, in fact, a lot of hair and a lot of vacuuming. It's also a lot of smiles, kisses, hugs, loyalty that knows no bounds, faithfulness, devotion and a bond between Luke, myself and Star that has only increased our harmony as a family.

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