



EVALUATION GUIDE

Grooming Evaluation Guide

A toolkit to help you evaluate grooming facilities and mobile groomers for your **silly goose**'s upcoming spaw-day.





BEFORE THEIR FIRST SPAW DAY

Grooming is one of the most routine and loving things you can do for your dog; keeping them comfortable, healthy, and looking like the ridiculous little cutie they are. **Most dogs are groomed regularly throughout their lives, which means the relationship you build with a groomer can be one of the more consistent care relationships your dog will have.**

Because grooming involves physical handling, specialized tools, and close quarters, **it's worth taking a moment to find a provider you genuinely trust.** This guide is designed to help you do exactly that - whether you're evaluating a full-service salon, a small home-based groomer, or a mobile groomer who comes right to your driveway.

Mobile grooming in particular has grown in popularity for good reason: it's convenient, lower-stimulation, and gives your dog one-on-one attention. It also comes with its own set of considerations around the grooming environment, ventilation, and setup - all things worth understanding before you book. This guide is not here to make grooming feel scary. It's here to help you ask the right questions, know what good looks like, and **feel confident in whoever you choose to trust with your silly goose.**



GROOMER QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

What training or certifications does the groomer have?

Example: Fear Free Certified through the Groomer Certification Program, National Dog Groomers Association of America (NDGAA), International Professional Groomers (IPG), or similar certifications.

How long have they been grooming professionally?

Do they have experience with your dog's breed, coat type, or size?

Are they trained in canine first aid or CPR?

How do they handle dogs that are anxious, fearful, or reactive during grooming?

Their answer should reflect patience, positive techniques, and willingness to stop if the dog is too stressed. They should never describe physical force or punishment.

Will they do a meet and greet with your dog before their first appointment?

This could be especially valuable for nervous dogs or dogs who have never been to a groomer before. Familiarizing your dog with the groomer and the facility could help them feel more comfortable during their first "real" appointment.

Do they have references or a portfolio of their work?



HANDLING & RESTRAINT PRACTICES

What restraint methods do they use on the grooming table?

Grooming loops (neck restraints) are standard but must be used with constant supervision. Ask how they prevent strangulation if a dog jumps or slips.

Is a dog ever left unattended on a grooming table, in a crate, or in a drying cage?

The answer should be an unequivocal no. Dogs should never be left unattended while restrained or in a heated drying cage.

What type of dryers do they use?

Cage dryers (heated box dryers) can be riskier. Force dryers (handheld, high-velocity) are generally safer when used properly. Ask specifically.

How do they handle matting, tangles, or coat conditions that make grooming difficult or painful?

Will they stop the grooming session if your dog becomes too stressed?



COMMUNICATION & TRANSPARENCY

Will they notify you of any injuries, no matter how minor, that occur during grooming?

| Nicks, cuts, and brush burns can happen. What matters is whether they tell you about them honestly.

Will they call you during the session if your dog is too stressed to continue?

Can you provide specific instructions about your dog's grooming preferences and sensitivities?

How do they communicate pricing, especially for add-on services or matting fees?

What is their policy if you are unhappy with the groom?

Can they accommodate senior dogs, puppies, or dogs with health conditions?

If your dog takes medication or has skin conditions, can the groomer work around these needs?

Will they share if a dog has died or been seriously injured in their care?

| How did they handle the situation and communication with the owners?



SALON & SHOP GROOMING SAFETY

Can you tour the grooming area before your appointment?

Is the facility clean, well-lit, and free of hazards?

How many dogs are in the facility at one time? Are they separated?

Where is your dog kept before and after grooming? In a crate, a kennel, or a holding area?

| How long might your dog wait before and after their grooming session?

Is the grooming area visible to you through windows or cameras?

Are grooming tools cleaned and sanitized between dogs?



MOBILE GROOMER SAFETY

Is the mobile grooming van/trailer properly ventilated and climate-controlled?

| In Texas heat, this is **critical**. Ask about AC capacity and what happens if the power or AC fails mid-groom.

Does the mobile unit have adequate water supply and drainage?

Is the unit equipped with a first aid kit and fire extinguisher?

How is the unit secured during grooming? Can your dog escape through an open door?

How do they handle emergencies in the mobile unit (dog injury, equipment malfunction, vehicle issue)?

Is the groomer the only person in the van with your dog? Will they be supervised?



A note on certifications: In an industry with little to no regulatory requirements, certifications mean something. They reflect a provider who chose to pursue formal training and professional standards when nobody required them to. But they're not a performance guarantee. Some certified providers will fall short; some uncertified providers will exceed your expectations. **Use certifications as one input in your evaluation, not a substitute for it.**



Remember: This guide is not a checklist. It's a tool. Not every question will apply to every situation. Focus on the factors most important to you and your silly goose.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

*Asking questions is an act of love. This guide exists to help you ask the ones that matter most for the care of your **silly goose**.*

ABOUT ROLAND'S SILLY GOOSE CREW

Roland's Silly Goose Crew is an Austin, Texas 501c3 nonprofit founded after our dog Roland was killed at a local dog daycare in October 2022. He escaped through an unsecured door and was hit by a car. There were no consequences, no required reporting, and no required proactive disclosures to other families.

We started RSGC so no other family would face what we did without information, resources, or recourse. Through free evaluation guides, community partnerships, and legislative advocacy, we're working to bring transparency and accountability to the dog care industry.

Support Our Mission

Every guide we create and distribute is free. Your tax-deductible donation helps us reach more families, develop new resources, and advocate for stronger protections for dogs in Texas.

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