



Heartland Animal Shelter
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Non-Shedding & Hypoallergenic Dogs: What You Need To Know

Visitors to Heartland's dog kennels frequently ask if we have any non-shedding dogs. Before we answer the question, it helps to know what the inquirers mean by the term and why they are asking. Some people are looking for a no or low-shedder because they don't want dog hair on their clothes/rugs/furniture, etc. Others have allergies – or family members with allergies – and are looking for what's commonly known as a “hypoallergenic dog.”

Contrary to popular belief, a dog's hair is not the primary problem for most people with dog allergies. Dog dander and saliva, which stick to the dog's hair and are shed into the home or transferred to human skin or clothing when the dog is touched, are the chief allergens for most people.

To help those with dog allergies, frequent baths will reduce the allergen problem for all types of dogs. Generally, a larger dog will produce more dander than a smaller one; and a constant barker may disperse more saliva and dander into the air than a quiet dog. But, there are also breed differences in the amounts of allergens produced and in the amount of hair the dog will shed. If you're concerned about dog allergies, there are several categories you can consider.

Hairless dogs. These dogs will still produce skin cells and saliva, but the lack of coat reduces allergy problems for most people. There are several hairless or nearly hairless breeds, including:

- Chinese Crested
- Mexican Hairless (Xoloitzcuintli)
- Peruvian Hairless (Inca Orchid)
- American Hairless Terrier (a modern specialty breed developed from a hairless rat terrier)

Non-shedding dogs. There are two types - long-coated dogs whose hair continues to grow and must be trimmed regularly and rough-coated dogs (generally terriers) whose coats don't shed and must be raked or stripped regularly. Examples of no-shed dogs are:

- Bichon Frise
- Havanese
- Maltese
- Poodle, all sizes (low dander breed)
- Portuguese Water Dog
- Shih Tzu
- Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier
- Welsh Terrier
- West Highland White Terrier
- Yorkshire Terrier (low dander breed)

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Low-shedding dogs. These breeds are generally single-coated, shorthaired dogs.

Examples are:

- Basenji
- Greyhound
- Kerry Blue Terrier
- Schnauzer, all sizes
- Whippet

No-dander dogs. These dogs shed hair but produce no dander.

- Samoyed

We should also note that some breeds are **notorious shedders and/or dander producers** that you may want to avoid if you have allergies – or an aversion to dog hair in the house.

Among these breeds are:

- Afghan Hound
- Basset Hound
- Chinese Shar-Pei
- Cocker Spaniel
- Dachshund
- Doberman Pinscher
- German Shepherd
- Irish Setter
- Springer Spaniel
- Welsh Corgi

Many, if not most, shelter dogs are mixed breeds. We cannot advertise dogs as purebreds unless we have papers or proof of origin. Again, in many/most cases, Heartland lists breeds based on our best (educated) guess, and thus we cannot guarantee the shedding characteristics of the dogs we have available at any point in time.

If you have a dog allergy or if a family member has a dog allergy, research *low dander breeds* before adopting. The Internet is a wonderful source of information on this subject – some of it conflicting, so visit multiple sites. An excellent web site devoted to human pet allergies is: Sweet Lucy's *Allergic to Dogs?* <http://sweet-lucys.com/allergictodogs.html>. The online encyclopedia Wikipedia also has a good discussion of the issues involved with so-called *hypoallergenic dog breeds*.

Many dog lovers will take allergy medication and live with the symptoms. But, if the allergy is severe and not controllable with medication, or if the allergic person is a young child, then a **low-dander dog – or no dog** – may be the solution. Be especially careful when allergies cause respiratory problems.

If you aren't successful immediately, be patient and keep looking. Heartland's kennel population is consistently changing and the perfect dog for you may arrive on our doorstep tomorrow. There are also breed rescue groups for virtually every breed imaginable, so don't give up. And, good luck in your search!

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