

## How to Remove a Cat's Mats

**CatChannel veterinary expert, Arnold Plotnick, DVM, explains why mats form and how to prevent them.**

*By Arnold Plotnick, DVM*

**Q:** My 12-year-old, semi-longhaired calico cat, Simon, is an indoor cat and never goes outside. For the past several months, Simon's hair has matted up really badly in about a dozen spots, with the mats coming very close to the skin. The mats are on his sides and belly. I am afraid of cutting them below the mat with scissors for fear of catching the skin.

What has caused this, how can I remove or separate the mats without hurting him, and how can I prevent this from occurring again? Both Simon and I would appreciate your suggestions, as he is not thrilled about them. Feeling these mats when you hold him is not pleasant either.

**A:** When a cat's mats have managed to grow to a point where they are directly adjacent to the skin, it is almost impossible to comb them out, even in the most agreeable of cats.

You need to take him to a professional groomer or to your veterinarian, where the mats can be shaved off. Left untreated, the skin beneath the mats can become irritated and scaly, and a skin infection could develop.

Once the mats are shaved and your cat is free of them, the only way to prevent them from occurring in the future is to brush and comb your cat on a regular basis. Some cats enjoy this, while others don't. Do your best. If your cat won't allow you to brush very well or very often, you may need to bring your cat to a professional groomer on a somewhat regular basis. Most longhaired cats are a bit higher maintenance than shorthaired cats, as you've discovered.