

Blade Cutting Lengths By Tim Love of Love's Sharpening  
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Have you ever experienced or heard the following:

- 1) Had a customer say the hair is shorter this time than it was last time you did the groom?
- 2) Changed blades during a groom and noticed the hair was either shorter or longer than the other blade?
- 3) This blade must be dull because it just won't "dig" into the fur like it should?
- 4) Have you ever been looked at or looked at customer like they were crazy for saying any of the above?

Well I am here to tell you that you are not crazy, at least about this subject. These are very common problems with blades today. I will discuss why this is happening and give you a better understanding of how to use your blades better.

Blades do vary in length of cut between brands and even in the same brand. Most blades have this information on them or at least on the packages they came in. Ever wonder what that 1 ½ or 1.5 meant on a #10 blade? It is the length of hair the manufacturer says will be left and is usually in millimeters (mm). Now this is the average length, because when the blades are produced some may have to have more metal taken off the comb to finish it and this is why even blades of the same brand cut different lengths. Also each time you sharpen a blade the length starts to get shorter too.

Let's compare an Oster Andis and Wahl #10 to see how they relate to one another in length. An Oster 10 length is 1.0 mm, Andis is 1.5mm and a Wahl 10 is 1.8mm, which is not much mathematically, but looks really different on a coat. Now this can actually work in your favor. If you are roughing in a coat, then use the longer Wahl blade and then come back to the Andis or Oster to finish it. If you started with the Oster 10 and had to redo it, you might have to use a 15 because the Oster is the shortest.

So is Oster always the shortest and Wahl the longest? No, it does vary between sizes so this is why it is important to not only know what number blade, but also what brand of blade you used on a particular animal. If possible number your blades so you know exactly what blade it was, this way you keep everything the same on that animal.

The cutting length numbers on the blades are not etched in stone so you still have to do some of comparisons on your own equipment to figure out the cut length. You can get a piece of faux fur from a fabric store and start testing each blade to see what length of hair it leaves. Once you determine what length of cut each blade has, mark them in some way so you can easily see it when grooming. This is time consuming the first time, but can save lots of aggravation and time having to blend in the coat later because of different lengths of cut left on it. I have added a blade comparison chart below and it is also available on the [www.bladeguyz.com](http://www.bladeguyz.com) site too. This chart is a guideline and will have more brands added as I can get the information for them. Most

of the newer brands go by the Andis lengths, so if the blade is not marked this would be a general guideline to follow. Better would be to do the fur test to make sure of the cut.

Now why is a blade that would “dig” in create a problem in the length of cut? Hair needs to feed into the comb teeth to be cut at a certain length established by the thickness of the comb. If the teeth are “blunt” for whatever reason, only so much of the hair can be fed into the comb teeth and the rest will be pushed down causing the blade to ride on top of the hair making the cut length longer.

So what causes this problem? There are 3 main things that will cause this: 1) the coating on the blades sometimes pools on the tips of the comb teeth creating a flat surface that pushes the hair down instead of letting it feed through the comb teeth. This is why a groomer may think the blade might be dull because it won't dig into the fur, even if it is a new blade. 2) Normal wear on the teeth from long term use. Normally takes a few years for this to happen. 3) The comb teeth are full of hair, etc. not allowing the hair to feed into the comb. Your sharpener should be able to fix the first 2 problems in just a minute or two, by buffing out the teeth on the comb to give it a more pointed shape to help it feed in the hair. Now the last problem is up to you to fix. This “gunk” in between the comb teeth needs to be removed immediately for a few reasons: 1) cutting performance, 2) disinfection and prevent cross contamination between animals, and 3) it will damage the inside cutting edge of the blade, shortening the blade life and cutting performance. The sides of each tooth become pitted instead of being smooth, so the cutting edge is not as sharp as when new. This is why many say a blade doesn't cut like it did when it was new or after being sharpened.

Now you have a better understanding of why blades cut differently, which is great knowledge to have because it will help you “shave off “ time on your grooming and make your grooms look even more perfect with less work.