



The Mobile Dog Grooming Business

A salon on wheels that charges \$95-145 a dog, rebooks itself every five weeks, and never pays rent. Capital-heavy going in, loyalty-rich forever after.

\$12,500-23,000

START LEAN

30-60 days

FIRST DOLLAR

60-75%

TYPICAL MARGIN

Is this your business?

Mobile grooming flips the salon model: the shop comes to the driveway, the dog never sits in a kennel, and the client pays a 40-80 percent premium for the privilege. The buy-in is the heaviest in this series because the van is the business, but the payoff is a route of standing appointments that rebooks itself every four to six weeks. This is less a sales business than a calendar you assemble once and then defend.

\$12,500-23,000

LEAN STARTUP COST

\$40,000-75,000

STANDARD BUILD

30-60 days

TIME TO FIRST DOLLAR

60-75%

TYPICAL GROSS MARGIN

Yes, fully

SOLO-FRIENDLY

Yes (van-based)

HOME-BASED

BUILT FOR THESE FOUNDER TYPES

THE CRAFTSMAN

THE OPERATOR

4/5 difficulty

THE HONEST FIT TEST

Grooming is a skilled trade: if you have never groomed, budget months of training or shop apprenticeship before the van earns. You will lift wet 70-pound dogs, work inches from teeth, and maintain a plumbing system in a parking lot. If that sounds grim, stop here. If craft plus a sold-out standing calendar sounds like freedom, few trades reward skill this directly.

Who pays, and why now.

Grooming is non-negotiable spending: a doodle's coat mats whether or not the economy cooperates, and the American doodle population alone has rewritten this industry's economics. Shops in most metros are booked out two to four weeks, charge \$60-90, and still kennel the dog for half a day. Mobile removes the kennel, the car ride, and the wait, and owners pay \$95-145 for exactly that. Convenience is the product; the haircut is the proof.

The mobile niche has a second, quieter market: dogs the shops fail. Seniors who cannot handle a kennel day, anxious and reactive dogs, giant breeds, dogs of owners with mobility limits. A patient groomer alone in a quiet van is the only good option these families have, and they pay comfort premiums gladly and rebook forever. Many mobile operators build half their book on the cases shops decline.

The economics run on the standing appointment. A coat grows on a schedule, so professionals book the next groom before pulling away from the curb: every four to six weeks, same day, same street. Eighty standing clients is a sold-out calendar with effectively zero marketing. The competition rarely thinks this way: shops wait for calls, and most mobile operators chase one-off bookings across a 40-minute radius until fuel and windshield time eat the premium.

WHO BUYS	WHAT THEY PAY	WHAT THEY ACTUALLY WANT
Busy professional households	\$95-145 per groom, every 4-6 weeks	Zero kennel time, zero drop-offs, a groomed dog by lunch
Doodle and heavy-coat owners	\$130-190 per groom	A groomer who actually understands the coat and prevents matting
Senior and anxious dog owners	\$100-160, patience included	One calm person, a quiet van, no kennels, no other dogs
Multi-dog homes and HOA clusters	\$180-300 per stop	Everyone done in one visit, one invoice, one trusted person

THE STANDING REBOOK CYCLE

Every 4-6 weeks

Coats grow on a schedule, which makes grooming a subscription wearing a bandana. Eighty standing clients at five-week intervals fills a calendar permanently: the entire game is converting first grooms into locked recurring slots before you leave the driveway.

Every dollar, before you spend it.

Two honest paths in: convert a used cargo van yourself, or buy a purpose-built rig. The lean numbers below assume the conversion. Either way, the skill comes first: a \$70,000 van cannot hold a pair of shears.

THE LEAN BUILD · START HERE	WHY IT EARNS ITS PLACE	COST
Used cargo van (Transit, ProMaster, 100-150k miles)	The bones of the business. A mechanic's inspection before purchase is the best \$200 you will spend	\$7,000-12,000
DIY conversion: tub, table, plumbing, cabinets	Plans and kits exist; a handy founder and a plumber friend can do this in two to four weekends	\$2,500-4,500
Water system: fresh + grey tanks, on-demand heater	Warm water is non-negotiable; the grey tank keeps you legal (see legal page)	\$500-900
Power: lithium battery bank or quiet generator	Dryers are the power hogs; quiet power keeps HOAs friendly	\$1,200-2,500
Clippers, blades, shears, force dryer, tools	Buy professional from the start; blades and shears are your livelihood	\$800-1,500
Training or certification program	If new to the trade: online programs plus supervised practice, or a shop apprenticeship	\$400-1,200
Insurance with animal bailee coverage (first month)	GL alone does not cover the dog in your care: bailee does. Non-negotiable	\$80-160
LLC + city license	Your liability wall. See the legal page	\$50-500
Lean total		\$12,530-23,260 all-in
THE STANDARD BUILD · ADD AFTER FIRST REVENUE	WHAT IT UNLOCKS	COST
Purpose-built grooming van, new or late-model	Turnkey, warrantied, beautiful: and best financed by route revenue, not hope	\$40,000-80,000
Electric lift table + premium dryer	Your back is the other major capital asset; protect it early	\$1,500-3,000
Full vehicle wrap	A grooming van parked on a street for an hour is the best ad in the niche	\$2,500-4,000
Booking software with automated rebooking	Texts the 4-week nudge and holds the card on file	\$50-150/mo

THE RULE

Skill first, van second, beauty last. The trade's most common headstone is a gorgeous financed rig owned by someone still learning to scissor a doodle. Get road-ready with a working tub and a cold dryer if you must; let standing clients buy the cabinets.

Clean from day one.

Almost no state licenses dog groomers, which surprises everyone. What is regulated is everything around the grooming: your vehicle, your water, your insurance, and the animal in your custody. Here is the clean setup.

- Form your LLC:** File in your home state, get the EIN free at irs.gov, open the business bank account. THE LAUNCHPAD Module Three walks every step.
- City license and state check:** A standard business license nearly everywhere. A couple of states have flirted with groomer regulation: one call to your state's licensing board confirms you are clear.
- Commercial auto insurance on the van:** A personal auto policy will deny a claim on a business-converted van, and the van is the business. Declare the conversion and the use honestly; expect \$150-300 a month.
- Animal bailee coverage on top of general liability:** GL covers the client's property and person. Bailee covers the dog itself: injury, escape, or death while in your care, custody, and control. Groomer-specific packages bundle both.
- Greywater rules:** Wash water cannot go down storm drains in most municipalities. Tank it and discharge to a sanitary sewer at your home base or an approved site. Some cities also have mobile-vendor water permits: ask once, in writing.
- Vaccination and vet release policy:** Rabies proof on file for every dog, plus a signed release naming their vet and authorizing emergency care with a spending cap. Protects the dog, you, and every client after them.
- Grooming service agreement:** Matting and shave-down policy, senior and health disclosures, behavior and muzzle policy, photo permission, late-cancel fee. Signed at booking, not in the driveway.
- Voluntary certification:** NDGAA, IPG, or ISCC certification is not required anywhere, but it answers the trust question on your website and can trim your insurance quote. Worth it once revenue starts.

INSURANCE, SPECIFICALLY

Three layers, all real: general liability for the world, animal bailee for the dog on your table, commercial auto for the rolling salon. Skipping any one of them works right up until it spectacularly does not. Once you hire a bather, workers' comp is mandatory nearly everywhere, and your premium math should assume it.

WATCH FOR

The matted-coat conversation. The most common one-star review in this trade is a shaved doodle the owner did not expect. Your policy is humanity over vanity, in writing: severe matting gets a shave, period, because dematting is painful and dangerous. Photograph the coat before you start, get a signed matting waiver before the clippers touch, and call the owner mid-groom if it is worse than scoped. Seniors get the same treatment: a vet release and an honest talk before, never an apology after.

Requirements vary by state and city. Verify with your state, city clerk, and a licensed professional. Education, not legal advice.

Three doors. Real numbers.

You are not a shop, so stop pricing like one. The premium is the driveway, the privacy, and the standing slot. Quote by size and coat, publish starting-at prices, and put every first-time dog through a quick photo consult before you commit to a number.

	RECOMMEND	
<p>DOOR ONE</p> <p>The Tidy</p> <p>\$65-85 small dogs, bath day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Bath, blow-dry, and brushout ◆ Nail trim and ear cleaning ◆ Sanitary trim and paw-pad tidy ◆ In and out of the van in under an hour 	<p>DOOR TWO</p> <p>The Full Groom</p> <p>\$95-145 most-booked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Everything in The Tidy ◆ Full haircut styled to breed or owner spec ◆ Nails ground smooth, not just clipped ◆ Seasonal scent and bandana finish ◆ Next slot booked before the van leaves 	<p>DOOR THREE</p> <p>The Standing Spa</p> <p>\$90-135 per visit, members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Locked recurring slot every 4-6 weeks ◆ Priority scheduling and rollover protection ◆ De-shed or conditioning treatment included ◆ 10% off add-ons, card on file ◆ Coat never reaches matting territory

PRICING NOTES FOR THIS BUSINESS

- Doodles and giant breeds carry a \$20-40 surcharge without apology: a standard doodle is a two-hour coat and should be priced like one.
- Matting fee posted and enforced: \$15-30 plus the waiver. It compensates blade wear, time, and risk, and it nudges owners toward the membership cadence.
- Comfort surcharge for seniors and anxious dogs, framed kindly: extra time, extra breaks, one-on-one patience. Families pay it with gratitude.
- Keep the radius tight: 15-20 minutes between stops, ideally clustered by neighborhood and weekday. Density is profit; mileage is a tax.
- Card on file with a posted late-cancel fee (50% inside 24 hours). A no-show in this business is an unfillable hole in a sold-out day.

THE UPSSELL THAT PAYS THE RENT

The rebook IS the upsell. Before you pull away: 'Same slot five weeks from Tuesday?' converts at extraordinary rates because the dog looks perfect and the owner is holding it. Layer add-ons onto members: de-shedding packages, teeth brushing, flea baths. A client booked at five-week intervals with two add-ons is worth \$1,400-1,900 a year, and they never once re-entered the market.

Names, not strategies.

Your first ten clients arrive while the van is still half-built, if you let them watch. Document the build, work your own streets, and target the owners the shops are failing: they are the most loyal clients in the trade.

1 Friends, family, and your own street

Founding-rate grooms in your driveway the week the water runs. Photograph every dog, before and after, same angles. You need twenty transformation photos more than you need twenty dollars.

2 Doodle and breed Facebook groups

Local doodle groups are the highest-intent audience in grooming. One honest post about matting prevention with your before-and-afters will out-pull any ad you could buy.

3 Shops booked out three weeks

Call the busiest salons and offer to take their overflow and their declines: seniors, anxious dogs, giants. They keep their best clients, you build a book from their waitlist, everyone wins.

4 Vets and daycares

Both are asked for grooming referrals weekly. Bring cards, your bailee certificate, and your vaccination policy: clinical professionalism is what gets you recommended by clinical professionals.

5 The neighborhood cluster play

Pitch one street at a time: 'the van is on Maple every third Tuesday; neighbors get \$15 off when three or more book the same day.' One parked, wrapped van grooming back-to-back is its own billboard.

6 Nextdoor introduction

Post the van build journey, then the finished rig, then the first transformations. Neighborhoods adopt a mobile groomer the way they adopt a food truck: publicly and possessively.

THE EXACT ASK

"Hi, I'm [name]: I run the mobile grooming van here in [neighborhood]. I park in your driveway, [dog's name] never sits in a kennel or rides in a car, and most dogs are done in about an hour. I'm filling my first standing routes this month: founding clients get \$20 off the first groom and a locked recurring slot before the calendar closes. Who does [dog's name] see for grooming right now?"

THE FOUNDING-CUSTOMER DEAL

First fifteen dogs: \$20 off the first groom plus founding pricing locked for a year, in exchange for a Google review and before-and-after photo rights. The real ask is the standing slot: founding pricing only applies on a recurring booking. You are not collecting grooms; you are assembling a route.

Owned, earned, then paid.

Grooming content is unfairly good: wet-dog chaos, transformation reveals, satisfying dryer footage. Pair the content engine with neighborhood clustering and an automated rebook nudge, and marketing becomes something you did once.

CHANNEL, RANKED	WHY IT WORKS HERE	THE FIRST MOVE
Instagram + TikTok transformations	Before-and-after doodles and dryer reels are algorithm catnip with local reach	Every dog, same angles; post three reels a week with the neighborhood tagged
Google Business Profile	'Mobile dog groomer near me' is high intent and thinly contested in most metros	Claim day one; photos weekly; every review answered within a day
Nextdoor + neighborhood Facebook	A wrapped van on a street generates 'who is that?' threads: be the answer	Post the cluster-day schedule monthly: 'we're in [neighborhood] Tuesdays'
Vet and daycare referrals	Trusted professionals asked weekly for groomer recommendations	Quarterly drop-ins with cards and your vaccination and bailee paperwork
Automated rebook SMS	The 4-week nudge protects the route from human forgetfulness	Software texts members at week four with one-tap confirmation

FIVE CONTENT PIECES THAT WIN THIS NICHE

- The doodle transformation reel: matted to magazine in 60 seconds
- What matting actually does under the coat (the post that converts skeptics to members)
- Van tour: where the water comes from, where it goes, and why the dryer is quiet
- Why anxious and senior dogs do better in a mobile van than any salon
- How often should your breed be groomed: the honest chart owners screenshot

THE REVIEW MACHINE

Ask at the reveal, when the owner is holding a transformed dog and reaching for their phone anyway: 'If you're happy, a review with that photo would mean everything: link's in your text.' Reviews with dog photos outperform every other kind of social proof in this niche. Forty of them and the shops start referring you their overflow without being asked.

One unit, one month, no fog.

Two honest snapshots: one full groom at the middle door, and a mature solo month at five dogs a day. The van overhead is real, which is why the margin runs below this catalog's lighter businesses and the loyalty runs far above them.

ONE UNIT: ONE FULL GROOM (\$115)	AMOUNT	A WORKING MONTH: SOLO, 5 DOGS A DAY, 22 DAYS	AMOUNT
Revenue	\$115	Revenue (110 grooms, \$108 avg)	\$11,880
Shampoo, products, blade wear	-\$8	Products, blades, consumables	-\$760
Fuel + generator	-\$10	Fuel + generator	-\$520
Payment processing (2.9%)	-\$3	Insurance (GL, bailee, auto), software, phone	-\$470
Insurance + van overhead share	-\$16	Van maintenance fund (5%)	-\$590
Gross profit (75-90 minutes)	\$78	Marketing	-\$140
Tax reserve (27%)	-\$21	Pre-tax profit	\$9,400
Yours, per groom	\$57	Tax reserve (27%)	-\$2,540
		Owner take-home	\$6,860

BREAK-EVEN

4-7 months

The heaviest buy-in in this series earns back at roughly \$78 gross per groom: 160-300 grooms covers the lean build. The standing-appointment model is what makes that math predictable instead of hopeful: sixty members at five-week intervals is a paid-off van inside two seasons.

Illustrative figures at typical market rates; your market, prices, and costs will differ. Run YOUR numbers in the One-Page P&L from THE LAUNCHPAD, Module Six. Remember the 25-30% tax reserve on every dollar of profit.

Pre-decided, so motivation is never consulted.

WEEK ONE: FOUNDATIONS

- LLC filed, EIN issued, business bank account open
- Insurance quoted: GL, animal bailee, commercial auto
- Van purchased with inspection, or build slot booked
- Equipment and conversion materials ordered
- Pricing menu, matting policy, service agreement drafted

WEEK TWO: DOORS OPEN

- Build-out: plumbing, power, tub, table installed
- Google Business Profile claimed; build journey posted
- Practice grooms on friends' dogs, documented
- Booking software configured with auto-rebook texts
- Greywater and water-permit questions settled in writing

WEEK THREE: MOMENTUM

- Van road-tested: water hot, power stable, dryer running
- Founding grooms at \$20 off in real driveways
- Before-and-after photos from every single dog
- First neighborhood cluster-day posted and pitched
- Every client rebooked before the van leaves the curb

WEEK FOUR: THE SYSTEM

- Standing slots locked for founding clients
- Posted rates live; founding offer counting down
- Vet, daycare, and overflow-shop visits with paperwork
- Service radius rule set: decline politely outside it
- Month-one P&L; build budget reconciled honestly

DAY 30 VERDICT

Green light: van road-ready, 15+ grooms completed, half converted to standing slots. Yellow: van ready but the calendar is thin: run the cluster play and the breed groups harder; this market is won on loyalty, not leads. Red: build-out stalled or 50 percent over budget: stop customizing and groom with what works: a functional tub earns, a perfect cabinet does not.

How this business fails, and how it grows.

THE FIVE KILLERS

- ✗ **Financing the dream van before mastering the craft**
A \$70,000 rig with a \$1,400 monthly payment and a half-trained groomer inside is the trade's most repeated tragedy. Skill, then van, then upgrades, in that order.

- ✗ **Skipping animal bailee coverage**
General liability does not cover the dog on your table, and the dog on your table is the entire business. One nicked ear without bailee coverage costs more than years of premiums.

- ✗ **Pricing against the shops**
Matching salon prices throws away the premium clients happily pay for the driveway. You are not a cheaper salon; you are a better experience that costs more.

- ✗ **Accepting every address**
A 40-minute drive for one groom converts your day into a delivery job. Tight radius, clustered days, polite waitlists for outliers: density is the margin.

- ✗ **Leaving without the rebook**
Every departure without a next appointment puts that client back into the open market. The rebook question takes nine seconds and is worth more than your entire ad budget.

THREE SCALE PATHS

- 1 **The second van**
An employed groomer in van two doubles capacity, and the route model makes their day predictable from week one. Your job shifts to quality control, routing, and keeping two calendars sold out instead of one.

- 2 **The sold-out membership book**
Stop at one van, convert the entire book to standing memberships, raise prices 10-15 percent annually, and run a waitlist. A solo groomer with 90 members and zero marketing spend is one of the best lifestyle businesses in this catalog.

- 3 **The add-on ladder**
De-shedding programs, teeth brushing, flea and tick baths, nail-only community clinics at apartment complexes, and cat grooming: a rare skill that commands fierce premiums. Same clients, same van, deeper invoices.

YOUR FIRST HIRE

A bather, part-time, riding along: they prep, bathe, and dry while you scissor, lifting throughput from five dogs a day toward eight without touching quality. It is also the trade's traditional apprenticeship: today's bather is van two's groomer in eighteen months, trained exactly to your standard.

THE STAIRCASE CONTINUES

The playbook is the map. The machine is waiting.

Everything this playbook describes, Epic Advisory Group can build with you: the brand, the cinematic website, the entity, the engine. Describe your idea to the Launch Engine and see your business real in about sixty seconds, free.

- The Launch Engine: your idea, built free, in about a minute
- THE ASCENT: Founder Edition: the eight-module course
- Launch-in-a-Box: entity, brand, site, and first campaign, one flat price
- Growth, capital readiness, and the path to the public markets

"There is no right age. There is only the decision."



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