



DEMO

First chapter only

The Mobile Groomer's Route & Revenue Engine

Stop Wasting Gas and Start Maximizing Per-Pup Profit With Zone Routing, Breed-Specific Pricing, and Ironclad Deposit Policies

The Mobile Groomer's Route & Revenue Engine

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1

The Mileage Trap

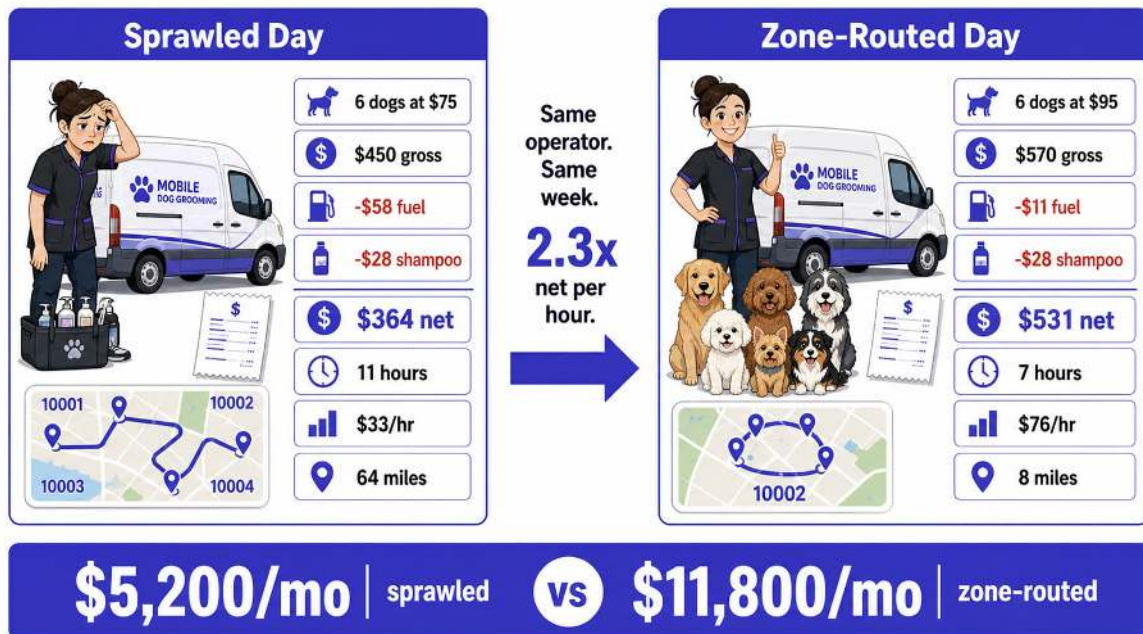


Figure 1. Same operator, same week: 6 sprawled dogs produce \$364 net after 11 hours (\$33/hr), while a 4-mile zone produces \$531 net after 7 hours (\$76/hr) and \$11,800/mo versus \$5,200/mo sprawled

1.1 The Math Most Groomers Refuse to Run

I spent my first nine months in mobile grooming driving 70 miles a day. I am not embarrassed to say that. Every starting solo groomer does it. You list on Booksy, you join a Facebook neighborhood group, you take whatever booking lands in your inbox. A standard poodle in Anthem at 9 AM. A husky de-shed in Mesa at 1 PM. A nervous shih tzu in San Tan Valley at 4 PM. On a map it looks like you are building a real route. On the bank statement it looks like you are funding the Chevron on the corner.

You can do that math in your head. Most mobile groomers refuse to. Because the moment you actually run it—real miles, real fuel, real on-paw time, real cancellations—the entire “\$60/hr mobile premium” story falls apart. A booking that pays \$75 with 24 miles of round-trip drive plus a no-show on the next stop is a \$28/hour day, not a \$60/hour day. The McDonald’s down the street pays more.

Here is the part most starting groomers do not see: while you are driving 70 miles for six dogs at \$75 each, the groomer two zip codes over is doing seven dogs in 22 miles at an average ticket of \$108 because she charges breed-specific pricing and enforces a 48-hour deposit policy. She nets \$700 on a 7-hour day. She bathed the same number of dogs you bathed. She drove a third of the miles. She has Saturdays off.

The difference is not luck. It is not territory. It is not even skill with a Wahl KM10. It is that she stopped treating her van as a delivery vehicle and started treating it as a route engine. That is what this book is about.

\$80–\$110/hr

the effective hourly rate of a solo mobile groomer who runs zone routing, breed-specific pricing, and a deposit policy, versus \$35–\$60/hr for a sprawled scheduler taking every booking from anywhere¹

¹NDGAA (National Dog Groomers Association of America) operator survey 2024; IBPSA member benchmarking data 2023–2024.

1.2 The True Per-Mile Cost Calculator

Run this for your last 20 appointments. You only need five numbers per job:

1. **Gross revenue** from the appointment (what the owner paid, including tip)
2. **Round-trip miles** from your previous job or home base
3. **Round-trip drive time** in minutes (use Google Maps history, not your guess)
4. **On-paw service time** in minutes (start of bath to handing back the dog)
5. **Supplies cost** for that dog (shampoo, conditioner, ear pads, water, generator fuel proportional)

Now compute:

- **Fuel + vehicle cost:** miles \times \$0.67 (IRS 2025 standard, conservative for a Promaster or Sprinter with a tank-water rig)
- **Net revenue:** gross – supplies – fuel
- **Total job-block minutes:** drive minutes + on-paw minutes
- **True hourly rate:** (net revenue \div total minutes) \times 60

Warning

The most expensive number on your invoice is the one you never write down: unpaid windshield time. A \$75 standard groom 18 miles away takes about 50 minutes of round-trip drive plus 75 minutes on paw. That is 125 minutes for \$75 gross, \$40 net after fuel and shampoo. Your true hourly rate is \$19.20. You would earn more bathing dogs at a PetSmart and you would not be paying \$1,400/mo on a van loan to do it. If you are not pricing for the drive, you are subsidizing the customer's choice to live far from your other customers.

1.3 Why “I’m Fully Booked” Does Not Equal “Profitable”

Walk through the comparison every groomer needs to face. Two solo mobile groomers, same Phoenix metro, same Wahl KM10 + Andis MBG kit, same one-van setup, same six-day work week:

Metric	Sprawled Groomer	Zone-Routed Groomer
Dogs per week	38	31
Average ticket	\$78	\$108
Gross weekly revenue	\$2,964	\$3,348
Supplies cost	\$182	\$148
Fuel + vehicle cost	\$295	\$92
No-show losses (no deposit)	\$240	\$45
Net weekly revenue	\$2,247	\$3,063
Hours worked weekly	56	42
True hourly rate	\$40.13	\$72.93

The zone-routed groomer bathes fewer dogs, charges more per dog, drives a third of the miles, loses 80% less to no-shows, and finishes her week 14 hours earlier. She is not a better groomer. She is a better router and a better priced one.

2.3x

the per-hour profit difference between a sprawled solo groomer and a zone-routed one working the same metro and the same kit on the same six-day week²

²MoeGo Mobile Groomer Benchmarking Report 2024, N=283 solo operators reporting Q2-Q3 financials.

1.4 The Three Lies the Sprawled-Groomer Brain Tells You

If you are sitting at \$5–7K/mo gross and you cannot break through, three lies are running on a loop in your head. They sound like wisdom. They are actually fear of saying no to a booking.

Lie 1: “I can’t turn away a paying customer.” You can. You already do—the customer who calls Friday for a Saturday slot when you are booked. The customer who wants a service you do not perform. The customer who lives 35 miles away in a zip you do not service. You say no all the time. The discipline this book installs is saying no on purpose, to the right customers, for math you can defend.

Lie 2: “More dogs equals more money.” It does not. More dogs at \$75 each across a 25-mile sprawl equals more gross revenue and less net revenue. The fuel and the drive time and the inevitable no-shows eat the marginal dog. Past about 5–6 dogs per day for a solo mobile groomer, every additional dog booked in a different zip is a slow-motion negative-margin decision.

Lie 3: “My market won’t pay premium prices.” Every metro in North America has dog owners paying \$120–\$180 for a doodle groom. They are buying it from somebody. If they are not buying it from you, that is not a market problem, that is a positioning problem. The \$140-doodle owner is not browsing Booksy looking for the lowest price. He is asking in the neighborhood Facebook group. He is reading Yelp reviews. He is invisible to a low-priced sprawled groomer and obvious to a premium zone-routed one. The market is not absent. You are.

Key Insight

Stop thinking in dogs per day. Start thinking in net dollars per hour your van is unlocked. A 5-dog day clustered inside a 4-mile radius at average ticket \$108 nets roughly \$425 in 6.5 hours. That is \$65/hr. A 7-dog day sprawled across a 22-mile radius at average ticket \$78 nets roughly \$330 in 10 hours. That is \$33/hr. Same operator. Same week. Same dogs of approximately the same

size. 2x the per-hour pay for fewer dogs and a shorter day. The decision to pivot from sprawl to zone discipline is the single highest-leverage decision you will make in your first three years.

1.5 What This Book Builds

Seven chapters. Each one is a piece of the engine.

- Chapter 2 installs zone routing: the 5-mile cluster rule and a weekday geographic split
- Chapter 3 builds the breed-specific pricing matrix: doodles, huskies, double-coats, aggressive-dog surcharges
- Chapter 4 installs the ironclad cancellation and deposit policy that ends 80% of your no-show losses
- Chapter 5 layers in the door-side upsells (teeth, glands, de-shed, nails, blueberry facial) that add \$25–\$45 to every ticket
- Chapter 6 builds the 6-week maintenance rebook lock that turns one-off jobs into 8-touch annual subscriptions
- Chapter 7 systematizes van maintenance so your most expensive asset does not eat your weekends

The end state for a solo groomer who runs this playbook for 6–9 months: \$9K–\$13K/mo gross, 42–46 hours per week, a 30+ member rebook base on auto-charge, zero Saturday no-shows, an effective rate north of \$80/hr, and a calendar that finally lets you turn down the work that does not pay.

Case Study**The Tucson Groomer Who Stopped Driving to San Tan Valley**

I had been mobile-grooming for 18 months when I made the switch. I was at \$5,400/mo gross, working 60 hours a week, driving an average 64 miles a day. I drew a 5-mile circle on a map around my house. I committed to declining anything outside it except aggressive-breed surcharge bookings on designated route days. My customer count dropped 22% in the first 60 days. The 78% who stayed were the customers I should have been serving from day one. By month 5 I was at \$8,100/mo. By month 11 I was at \$11,600/mo with a 28-dog rebook base on auto-charge through MoeGo. I work 44 hours a week. My van burns half the fuel it used to. I have not driven to San Tan Valley since.

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