



ACF Riding Club

Grooming Your Horse



Image courtesy of evolutionhorsetraining.com

Grooming is a special bonding time between you and your horse. It's a good time to listen to what he's telling you. The condition of his coat is a good indicator of how he's feeling. Your horse should be groomed or at least checked over every day, whether he is ridden or not. It's essential that you check his body for injuries or skin problems. By grooming him you stimulate blood circulation, condition his skin and make him proud of his shiny coat. He must be cleaned before he is saddled to prevent dirt from causing saddle and girth sores, and he should be brushed smooth after he has been ridden. The best time to groom a horse thoroughly is after he has been ridden, when his skin is warm.

Grooming Tools



Your grooming tools should be kept together in a grooming tote. You might also want to keep disposable cotton balls for cleaning the eyes and nose, a Styrofoam scraper block for removing bot-fly eggs, hoof dressing and a brush to paint it on with, products for removing stains and fly repellent. You can buy shampoo, conditioner, de-tangler, and other products that will help maintain your horse's beauty.

Basic Grooming Tools Include:



Body or Finishing Brush: A brush with soft bristles for use on sensitive areas like the face and legs and for giving your horse's body a final polish.



Face Brush: Smaller soft brush used on sensitive areas to loosen dirt & hair.



Curry Comb (rubber or plastic): For loosening caked mud and dirt and rubbing the horse's skin. It should be flexible, not too hard and sharp. (Metal currycombs should only be used for cleaning the body brush they are too sharp to use on a horse's skin.)



Dandy or Stiff Brush: A brush to loosen dirt, hair, and caked mud from the coat. Use a stiffer brush in the winter, when your horse will have a thicker coat and one with softer bristles in the summer, when he will have a thinner coat.



Hoof Pick: An item used to remove rocks and other debris from the hooves.



Hoof Brush: Small stiff brush for cleaning the hooves. Some hoof picks have a hoof brush at one end.



Mane Comb: For untangling the mane and tail (after picking out tangles with your fingers). Metal mane combs are not recommended, because they break off too many hairs.



Tail Brush: This can be either a brush made specifically for a horse or one for human hair. Soft, natural fibers are best.



Shedding Blade: A serrated metal blade for loosening hair from your horse's coat.



Sponges: Two smaller ones, for cleaning eyes, nose, lips and dock. A larger sponge is used for washing the horse.

Towel: A towel is used to bring out the shine of the coat. Bear down and rub firmly across and with the direction the hair grows. Firm rubbing warms up the skin and spreads the skin oils over the hair, making the coat sleek and shiny.

Clean brushes: Keep your brushes clean by washing & letting them dry completely. Use a metal curry comb to clean the dirt & hair out of the body brush.



Before You Start

Remove your horse from his stall and bring him to the grooming area, which should either be a separate stall or designated section of the barn. Tie him up so that he doesn't wander away.

Body Care



Start with the rubber or plastic currycomb to rub the skin in circles or side to side, starting at the top the neck and working back down. Go easy on sensitive places. This tool breaks up caked mud, loosens scurf, and rubs and stimulates the skin, but it can be too harsh for some horses. Don't use a curry comb on the head, lower legs or anyplace that is especially sensitive.

Next, use your dandy or stiff brush. Starting at the top of the neck, brush the coat with the dandy brush, in the direction the hair grows. Use short, snappy strokes to get down to the skin and flick the dirt out. The dandy brush takes away the larger bits of dirt loosened by the curry comb. You can use this brush on the body, neck and legs and on the head if your horse doesn't mind. If your horse is very sensitive or he has been clipped, the dandy brush may be too harsh for him.

The body brush is used to clean away dirt, dust and scurf from the skin. Use short, firm strokes the way the hair grows, with firm pressure to get between the hairs, right down to the skin.

After every few strokes, clean the body brush by scraping it across the teeth of a metal curry comb, or use the dandy brush to clean it. This way, the dirt goes into the brush and then out into the air, not back on the horse. You can use the body brush all over your horse's body, head and legs. It is the best brush for getting the coat really clean and shiny. Because it is soft, it can be used on clipped horses or those with sensitive skin.



Face Care

Use your brushes to gently clean your horse's face. Use a damp sponge or a disposable cotton ball to clean the eyelids, nostrils and muzzle. You can also gently clean inside the ears.

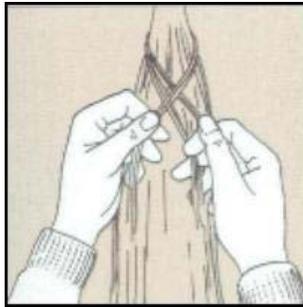
Mane and Tail Care



The mane and tail should be carefully picked free from tangles, taking just a few hairs at a time so you don't break off or pull out hairs. Part the hair and use the body brush to clean the skin and the roots of the hair, one section at a time.

Your horse's mane and tail need to be washed and cleaned. Use shampoo and conditioner to create a rich lather, then wash it out with water. Use a sponge to clean underneath the tail. Allow the hair to dry then brush the mane and tail. Do this at least once a week. If you notice knots, use de-tangler. Spray it in, and once dry, brush out the knots.

Tail Braiding



Hoof Care



Clean feet are important to your horse's health, so keep them free of dirt and rocks. Pick out his feet with the hoof pick starting with a front leg while standing next to his shoulder. Gently lift it and wrap a hand around his lower leg to support its weight.

Use the hoof pick to remove debris working from heel to toe, so you won't accidentally dig it into the frog (the softer center part of the hoof). Clean the cleft of the frog (the groove down the middle), and the spaces on each side of the frog. Use a hoof brush to brush the foot clean, so you can check it thoroughly. Check that each shoe is

tight and the clinches (the bent-over ends of the nails) are smooth.

For the hind feet, stand to the side toward the tail. Gently pinch him between the hock and ankle to get him to lift his foot. Support his hoof and clean as before. After finishing a foot, slowly place it back on the ground—don't allow your horse to break free of your hold and do this himself.

Clipping

Clip your horse for quick drying, easier grooming, better conditioning, and reduced chance of overheating. In general, horses grow a long, thick coat during the winter and a new, shorter and cooler coat for summer. This served horses well when they lived outside year round and were subjected to all the elements. Leaving a thick winter coat on your horse, however, may be doing more harm than good, especially if he spends most of the season stabled. Thick coats heat up quickly, causing excessive sweating, and they dry slowly, making the horse damp and chilled.



Bathing



To give your horse a bath, you'll need a hose that provides both hot and warm water, shampoo and conditioner, a large sponge, a curry comb, a sweat scraper, a mane comb and some clean dry towels.

Put your shampoo in a bucket of water. Hose down your horse, then sponge in the shampoo. Next, start at the head, and using your curry comb, work the shampoo into your horse's coat in gentle circles. Rinse the shampoo out of the horse's coat then apply conditioner, then rinse. When the water washes away clear, use the sweat comb to wipe off as much water as possible. Use the towels to dry your horse.



Contents of bathing kit: Top, left to right: shampoo, conditioner, coat shine, whitener. Bottom, left to right: plastic curry, scrub wash mitt, mane comb, sponge brush, sweat scraper, natural sea sponge.

GROOMING