

How to Clean Your Horse's Brushes and Other Grooming Tools

Keep your horse's coat and skin healthy and maximize the life and usefulness of your grooming tools.

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Cleaning brushes and other grooming tools is not a chore most horse owners think about often. It's all too easy to use them and toss them back in the grooming tote without giving them another thought. But dirty brushes are less effective and won't last as long as those kept clean and stored properly. **Cleaning Brushes**

During everyday use, you can remove some of the excess dirt in your brushes by scraping the bristles against your curry comb. This will get much of the dust out of the bristles and off of the curry comb. However, you should still periodically give your grooming kit a thorough cleaning, especially when your brushes are working overtime during muddy seasons.

Step 1: Empty your grooming tote or bucket and set your brushes aside. Get rid of empty containers, broken tools, hair and any other debris that has accumulated in the bottom of your tote. Using a mild dish detergent, scrub out the tote with hot, soapy water, then rinse it and let it dry. If you find a sticky mess in the bottom of your tote, such as a hoof dressing spill, let it soak while you tackle your brushes.

Step 2: Fill a bucket with hot water and a mild dish detergent. If you are concerned about fungus or other skin ailments traveling through your barn, you can add a splash of bleach or anti-fungal horse shampoo to the solution. Toss in any of your synthetic-bristled brushes, as well as your curry comb, hoof pick and shedding blade. Let them soak for several minutes.

Step 3: Natural-fiber brushes and brushes with wooden or leather handles shouldn't be left to soak. Clean only the bristles by dunking them in soapy water and dry the handles with a clean rag or towel immediately after rinsing. Let them dry bristles-side down so that water doesn't soak into the handle.

Step 4: While they are still soapy, scrub your brushes against each other just as you would during a regular grooming session. Check to make sure that they are clean down to the base of the bristles.

Step 5: Move your brushes to a bucket full of clean water as you finish scrubbing them. Make sure all the soap is rinsed out. You may need to change the clean water during this process to ensure all of your brushes are thoroughly rinsed.

Step 6: Put your brushes out in the sun to dry. Leave plastic-handled brushes to dry bristles-side up to take advantage of sunlight's antiseptic effects.

Storing Grooming Tools

There are several options for organizing and storing your grooming tools. A plastic or wooden grooming tote can hold all of your standard brushes and is easy to carry. Fabric totes are a good option for traveling as some have zipper closures that keep everything together. Some riders choose to repurpose a basic bucket or plastic container from a discount department store to hold their grooming tools.

Grooming totes are preferred by many riders because they are portable and conveniently store everything you need for day-to-day grooming. Their biggest pitfall is that they provide little protection from dirt, moisture and other hazards around the barn.

If you have a tack room that is kept relatively clean and closed off from the rest of the barn, simply storing your tote on a shelf in there is probably enough to protect your gear. If you have a tack trunk or locker that remains closed, those are also good options. Otherwise, you may want to invest in a grooming tote cover, which is simply a piece of fabric with an elasticized bottom, like a fitted sheet, that fits over standard grooming totes. If you use a round bucket for your brushes, there are bucket covers that serve the same purpose.

If you keep any liquids in your grooming kit, make sure you don't have leaking containers or dripping spray bottles. These minor issues will turn into a sticky mess at the bottom of your tote if left unaddressed. Clippers

In order for clippers to work properly, they need to be clean, lubricated and have sharp blades. Dull or dirty blades will be less effective and may even leave lines in your horse's coat. Read the manual that came with your clippers to get care instructions for your specific brand and model. Here are some general tips that are important for all clippers.

Oil: Clipper blades are made up of two separate pieces. The clipper moves the smaller blade back and forth rapidly so that the teeth of the two blades function as a small army of tiny, fast scissors. Clipper oil is a lubricant that keeps the blades moving smoothly and effectively and prevents friction that could cause the blades to overheat. Oil your blades before and after each use, and every 10 to 20 minutes when body clipping. While the clippers are running, apply a few drops to the teeth of the blades, then let them run so that the oil spreads between the blades. Wipe off any dripping oil before continuing to prevent it from getting in your horse's hair.

Blade cleaner: You'll want to clean your blades after each use and periodically during big jobs. Turn off the clippers and use a small brush or a rag to clear off any excess hair that builds up around the blades. Turn the clippers on and dip the teeth into a blade cleaning solution or use a cleaning spray. Allow the clippers to run for a few seconds afterward, then oil them before continuing.

Storage: Oil your blades before storing them, and keep removable blades in an airtight container where they won't be exposed to dust and moisture. Keep your clippers tucked away safely in your tack trunk or another location where they won't be exposed to ambient barn dust.

Blade sharpening: Take good care of your clipper blades, and they will last a long time. However, you will occasionally need to have them sharpened to keep them working properly. In most cases, you can send the blades to the manufacturer to have them do it, or use a local service center.

Take good care of your grooming tools, and they will keep your horse looking his best for many years.

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