

Barn Basics: Take Your Tack from Ick to Slick

Master Mud and Sweat with These Quick Tips

By Cindy Hale

February 19, 2009

Unfortunately, when we purchase items from tack stores and catalogs we're often left wondering, "How do I clean this once it gets dirty?" That's an important question, because anything made to go on or near a horse is destined to become encrusted with mud and grime. Though the laundry list of dirty horse care items seems endless, here are just three that deserve some attention, with quick tips on how to get them clean.

Splint Boots: Whether they're constructed of neoprene, heavy-duty vinyl or PVC, splint boots end up spackled with mud whenever they're used during inclement conditions. If the mud is allowed to dry, especially on the inside of the boots, your horse's legs can become abraded and raw, making him susceptible to skin infections. To clean splint boots, use high pressure water from a hose to first blast away the worst of the mud. Follow up by briskly rubbing off any remaining clumps of mud with a stiff brush. Make sure you pay attention to any Velcro closures because sand and grit left behind will weaken its sticking capabilities. Then give the boots a final rinse. When you're finished, leave them hanging over the rail of your crossties or hitching post so they have a chance to drip dry overnight.

Fleece cinches: Though they are comfy for sensitive horses, western cinches made with fleece lining soon become brittle and matted if they aren't cleaned regularly. Luckily, the outside of a fleece cinch is constructed with denier nylon, which isn't harmed by water. To make your fleece cinch look nearly new, fill a bucket with water. Then hang the cinch from a tack hook and use a sponge to thoroughly wet the fleece side. Next, pour a dollop of horse shampoo into the bucket of water. Use just enough so that when you swish the water you create some suds. Dunk the sponge into the sudsy water and then rub it well into the fleece, as if you're bathing a dog. Then gently hose off the fleece until you've removed all soapy residue. Leave the cinch hanging up until it air dries. If you become impatient, you can use a hair blow dryer to hasten the process. To fluff up the fleece, use the bristles of a tail brush and work against the lay of the nap.

Bits, stirrup irons and spurs: While sterling silver and silver overlay require polishing, bits, spurs and English stirrup irons made from stainless steel can be safely washed expediently in the dishwasher. Since your mother or your husband might not appreciate having dinnerware commingled with stuff that's been slobbered on or tromped through muck, it might be wise to send these items through a wash cycle all on their own. Of course, first remove any spur straps and rubber stirrup pads. And just to make absolutely certain that no soapy residue remains, rinse with clear water and wipe dry with a clean cloth. You'll be amazed at the sparkle and shine!

Whether you're battling winter rains or a springtime thaw, bunches of stuff around the barn need to be kept clean and tidy. HorseChannel will continue to provide suggestions on how to save time and money while still keeping you and your horse looking spiffy.