

Barn Basics: On the Go Shampoo

Swish, Spritz and Sponge Away the Daily Grime

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A thorough, sudsy shampoo tends to be a major production when you're bathing a horse. Much of the time, you end up getting almost as wet as your horse. While there are admitted benefits to these full-on shampoo sessions, such as preparing for competition or simply pampering your horse with an equine spa day, they can take up far too much time when you have a busy schedule. Plus, as the days get shorter and cooler, there's little opportunity to bathe a horse in the afternoon before the temps get brisk and the sun goes down. So how about a short cut?

We tried an idea: putting diluted horse shampoo in a recycled fly spray bottle. Our goal was have a cleaning solution handy that was tough enough to remove a manure spot here, a saddle mark there, yet not be so labor intensive that we felt like we gearing up for a complete rub-a-dub-dub.

First we selected a fly spray bottle that we knew was reliable. We've all had those sprayers that dripped or leaked continuously, along with those that stopped functioning altogether. We made sure to eliminate those. After we carefully rinsed the bottle and spraying apparatus so that they no longer bore the scent of fly repellent, we experimented with a couple of popular equine shampoos. The really luxurious, creamy ones tended to produce too thick of a lather for our purposes. Instead, we decided a more transparent product (yet one that was also brewed to remove yellow stains and brighten white markings) worked best. It didn't glom up the sprayer. Next we poured the shampoo directly into the spray bottle until it was about 1/3 full. We added water to the top, which made the shampoo more diluted than typical, but correct for our plans. Then we screwed on the lid and sprayer, and gently tilted the bottle back and forth to mix.

The question was, just how would our concoction work in practice? And, would it still be useful in its watered down state?

The results were rewarding. We used it on several horses, including a dapple gray and an overo Paint, both of which needed a light shower after a schooling session, and both of which sported sweat marks and vague manure stains. After the horses were damp from their showers, we sprayed the diluted shampoo on the dirty areas. With our bare hands, we rubbed a bit and then rinsed. Voila! Instant cleanliness!

Granted, this still required a hose and getting our hands wet. But we ended up with horses that were quite a bit cleaner than if they'd just been routinely groomed and hosed off. We'll gladly save the industrial strength baths for special days. In the meantime, we'll be reaching for our spray bottles of shampoo on the go.