

Tips for Thicker Tails

No matter what type of tail your horse was born with, maximize it with these thicker tail tips.

By Cindy Hale

August 2007

There's something appealing about a horse with a long, thick tail. But what if your horse is a bit sparse in the tail department? Is there any hope? Maybe.

It's difficult to wage war against genetics. If your horse inherited a wispy, thin tail, then you might have to focus on preserving what tail your horse has. The tactics that work for more endowed horses can work for yours, too.

First, no tail should be brushed on a daily basis. Repetitive brushing loosens tail hair and plucks a few strands with each stroke of the brush. Instead, a once-a-month grooming session that tackles the tail will do. Make these salon sessions special by using a shampoo and conditioner specifically for horses. Non-equine shampoos can dry out the natural oils secreted by the sebaceous glands, which makes the hair more liable to break and shed. If your horse is stabled outside, choose hair products that include a sunscreen.

Next, allow your horse's tail to dry thoroughly. Then apply a detangler and tame the snarls with your fingers. Once the worst of the knots are gone, grasp the tail with one hand and brush just the end with the other. That's right: Start at the bottom and work up, attacking any remaining snags as you go. Again, this prevents ripping out tail hairs due to over-aggressive grooming.

Finally, once your horse's tail is clean, dry and detangled, put it in a tail bag. While tail bags aren't in vogue everywhere (such as hunter or dressage barns) their advantage can not be denied. Tail bags prevent breakage, especially if the horse is prone to getting his tail caught on fencing or if he has a nosey neighbor who likes to nibble on tail hair. Applying a tail bag is simple. Just plait the hair into one long braid, secure it with a coated elastic band, and tuck it inside the bag. A tab looped through the top of the braid holds it all in place. (Never fasten a tail bag around the tail bone, which could compromise circulation.)

Although all this attention protects the long, flowing hair of the tail, other problems can create havoc. If your horse has a patch of short hairs on the top half of his tail, you need to investigate what's causing the stubble. Accumulated dirt, manure residue or smegma can invoke a horse to attempt to scratch himself by rubbing his tail. Check the underside of your horse's tail, your mare's teats and your gelding's sheath for any signs of grime or irritation. Pinworms, which exit the horse's anus and linger there, can also incite tail rubbing. Regular deworming can alleviate that. But the biggest cause of tail rubbing is a hypersensitivity to biting insects such as gnats. These winged, nearly invisible pests are most prevalent in the summer months. If the judicious use of fly sprays doesn't help, then consult with your veterinarian to see if an injection of a long-acting steroid might calm the constant itch. For more tail rubbing solutions, [click here >>](#)

Whether the care of your horse's tail requires veterinary intervention or just common sense care, your horse can have a tail worthy of envy. Then you can have a happy ending to the tale of the tail!