

30 Grooming Tips to Transform Your Horse

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1. Ask your vet about adding vegetable oil or an essential Omega-3 fatty acid supplement to your horse's well-balanced diet for added shine.
2. Sponging your horse's face clean after exercise helps prevent fungal hair loss.
3. Keep different sized sponges for different duties (face, body, dock) and remember which is used for each task.
4. Hoof picks are cheap. Always use a sharp one to remove rocks and debris, and replace the pick when it no longer does the job easily.
5. Use a tail bag to keep your horse's tail thick, long and protected. Make sure to wash, condition, detangle and rebraid once a week, securing the tail bag below the tailbone.
6. Spend two minutes every two weeks running your clippers over your horse's bridlepath and whiskers.
7. Hoof oils and dressings for health or show are available. If you have a particular concern in mind, such as hooves that crack easily, ask your farrier for product suggestions.
8. Use a detangler and a wide-toothed comb (or your fingers) to remove any large snarls from mane and tail.
9. Dark coats often fade or bleach in the sunlight, so provide plenty of shade and consider adding a sheet. Sweat in the coat accelerates the fade, so rinse a sweaty horse before allowing him to bask in the sunshine.
10. Bathe your horse but don't overdo it—frequent shampooing may actually dull his coat.
11. An equine squeegee, rather than a hard sweat scraper, makes removing water from equine legs and hips easier and kinder.
12. For extra shine on special occasions, spritz your horse's coat with a sheen product.
13. Regular use of coat polish sprays right after bathing has the added bonus of deterring dust—it slides right off.
14. Horses with pink skin need extra sun protection—use sunscreen on susceptible pink noses!
15. To help protect against skin infections, regularly disinfect grooming brushes and combs.
16. Keep brushes clean as you go: After every few strokes with your body brush, clean the bristles on a metal or rubber curry held in your other hand.
17. Brush from front to back, top to bottom, for the most efficient effort.
18. Curry first in a circular motion to loosen dirt and hair; then use your stiff dandy brush to remove it. A flick of the wrist at the end of your long flat brush stroke helps lift the dust off.
19. Multi-task: use a brush in each hand!
20. Show-ring veterans have long known that grooming wipes are ever so handy.
21. If you have a gray horse or one with a lot of chrome, keep some spray-on equine stain remover—created to deal with manure and grass stains—at the ready.
22. As you groom, inspect your horse for injuries, skin irritations or areas of sensitivity. Run your bare hands down his legs to check for heat or swelling.

23. Keep up with routine grooming chores, such as mane pulling, trimming fetlocks, et cetera. That way you're not overwhelmed with last minute clean-up before a show.
24. If your horse objects to having his mane pulled, try doing a little each day after exercise, while his pores are open.
25. Check your horse's stall or paddock fencing for protruding objects: Wounds lead to blemishes and worse.
26. Let sweat and mud dry before attempting to brush it out. Or, hose your horse off.
27. When braiding, banding, or even training a mane over to one side, use a mane mousse to help get wayward hairs under control.
28. Color enhancing shampoos accentuate your horse's natural tones and bring out the highlights of his coat.
29. Using oil specifically designed for your horse's face, rather than baby oil, will collect less dust at the show.
30. Let your horse roll—dirt isn't permanent.

Read on for more grooming advice.

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