

Grooming for Halter and Showmanship

Grooming and conditioning for halter and showmanship.

By Ronda Quaid

8-4-2003

One of the things that draws us to horses is their beauty. In halter classes, this attribute is center stage. Both grooming and health care play a role in creating an eye-pleasing picture. The single best thing you can do is grooming your horse from head to tail every day with a rubber curry. This promotes coat sheen, improves circulation for a long tail and mane, massages muscles and is a good way to check for sores, cuts and other problems needing attention.

Although not required, mane banding is still in fashion because it makes the mane lie still and pulls it down on the neck, giving the illusion of a longer, slender neck.

Over-shampooing dulls the coat. For an occasional wash, use your curry first to loosen dirt. Whatever product you use, the secret to success is using lots of water. If you think your horse is wet enough to shampoo, go over him one more time. Soap in a dry spot will cake there. Mix the soap with water rather than applying directly. Too much soap will wash out the natural oils. Rinse, rinse and rinse again, since soap residue is the dulling agent. Go over the coat with a towel in the direction of hair growth to finish up.

Clipping is a must—bridle path, ears, nose, under chin, around the fetlock and hoof area.

Too long a tail is detrimental, especially if it's false. If your horse steps on it when backing, he'll pull it out. Ankle length is a safe bet. If you bag your horse's tail, take it down and groom it once a week to prevent knotting. Braiding should be done loosely (too tight damages hair) and start below the dock so you don't interfere with circulation.

Check with your vet regarding any nutrients the hay in your area might lack and how to supplement accordingly. The best feed in the world is useless without routine deworming and teeth floating.

Use face shine products sparingly. After applying run a towel over it, especially when it's hot. If you overdo it, the excess product will run and create a mess.

Daily exercise will help your horse build muscle, so he'll look his very best come show day.

Rhonda Quaid is a freelance writer based in California.