

HORSE CARE MYTHS & TIPS

By Ruthann Smith
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Clipping Pivot Points

Does your horse look like a mouse or the great pumpkin? Is he wearing corduroy? No, that's not in this season, either.

Good news: It is easier to clip horses so they come out glassy-looking. To optimize, simply take the principles outlined here into account.

Primary Tenant: Dirt, dander, scurf and residue make blades heat up, wear out quickly and leave lines. Hot blades teach horses to disagree with trimming and clipping. Invariably this slows you down. A dirty coat and dull blades yield clip lines.

Preparation

Curry Frequently

Vigorous currying before and after riding: increases circulation, promotes soundness, increases shine, exfoliates skin and draws out natural protective oils to fortify coats.

Healthy coats are easier to clip and really shine. Sometimes you can't even tell they are clipped.

Curry in a circular motion, in the direction of hair growth. Give it some elbow grease by moving from your back. If your horse is not used to much pressure, work into and up to it. Ticklish horses will learn to like or tolerate what is important for their health. Though, you don't want to make a horse sore by initially doing too much at once. Accustomed to good grooming, many horses are vigorously curried 40 minutes daily. Before work it brings blood into muscles, promoting soundness and suppleness. Currying after exercise helps move lactic acid out of muscles. This reduces soreness while keeping salt and dirt from parching the coat. Currying also disperses natural oils to create shine and protect the coat from the elements.

Clean Horse

Some shampoos leave a residue that makes hair stick together, slows down clippers, wears them out faster and makes them hot. Horses that shun clipping or trimming usually got burned by blades at one time. An oil rinse only creates drag and heat.

An all-in-one shampoo should leave hair clean and smooth, with no dander or scurf. It will let blades stay cooler and last longer.

Oil Blades

Oil blades before and periodically while in use by running drops along the base of the blades or spraying them. It is very important to stop every few minutes to keep the blades lubricated. Blades should be cleaned before you put them away.

Like with shoe studs, if they are not oiled and put away clean, they will rust. If this is the case, soaking them in Coca-Cola eats off the rust. Think about that.

Trimming and Clipping Principles are the Same

Blades need to be:

Cool. Keep down friction with clean, uncoated, healthy hair. When blades get hot to touch, turn them off. For this reason, many professional clippers have two sets of clippers. A cool one is always available so they can keep going on relaxed horses.

Clean. You'll need to oil blades periodically, but first clean them. Brush out the hair by stroking parallel to the teeth, or even better, blow them out with a dry aerosol. Either way, get the hair out of blades before reapplying oil.

Oiled. If blades get dry they burn up and wear out quickly. So, be sure to



This horse is half clipped. Can you tell? Healthy, well-maintained coats stay shiny.

keep blades clean and oiled before, during and after trimming and clipping.

Sharp. They need to cut smoothly. Clipping dirty hair wears them out quickly. If horses are bathed with a quality shampoo before clipping, blades can last three times longer.

Continued Care

This is very important. Groom a lot to seal the hair shaft after it is cut. This will promote comfort and pull oils down the shaft to cover the end. This not only promotes shine and protects from the elements, it also keeps the horse more comfortable. People never seem to talk about this, but I have seen the wrath of not sealing the hair shaft.

A horse I loved was body clipped but not groomed enough. With a coat

HORSE CARE

still coarse, they put him in a truck for 26 hours to Florida. He was playful until it got up to speed. Then, one of my all-time favorite horses put his head down and became numb. After the trip he was very unresponsive. For weeks you could wave your arms at his face and he would not flinch. The great and willing jumper was crashing and burning. I think he was over-sensitized. Think about it: the hair ends were open, so the roots were essentially exposed while hair was sticking up and fluttering. I would bet big money he would have been fine if repeatedly groomed well after clipping.

Regardless, hair stands up until oils are drawn down the shaft. So, whether it is for the inside or the outside of the horse, groom a lot. Vigorous daily currying and brushing yields finer hair that is easier to maintain and more attractive all around.

Proper coat and clipper care can yield clip jobs that are almost imperceptible. May you be privy to that moment when someone asks, "Is that horse clipped?" Start with a great coat, keep blades clean and cool, and your horse will shine on. He'll stay warmer and dryer, too!

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