

Currying makes horses happy. They feel good and healing juices flow. I am not saying it makes them wild. But, I have seen currying transform a dull-coated, numb horse. He was totally disconnected and distant in his eye. After one great currying, his coat was glistening! He was bright-eyed and playful! The old school horse was cracking jokes! It was love and thanks manifested.



Photo Courtesy of Sherri Taylor and Pride of Place Gypsies



the Grooming kit Curry, Curry, Curry

Currying is one of the best things you can do to assess and promote your Gypsy horse's wellbeing. Benefits even ripple into preventative measures. So, let's consider why and how currying should be pivotal to your daily routine, especially during wet and cold months.

Listen

Currying is listening. It is a platform for your horse to tell you what hurts. While currying, notice if your horse looks at the area you are working on or flinches. It's your flag. There is likely discomfort, which gives you an opportunity. If you catch heat, soreness, swelling, or a cut early, you can save lots of time and money. Addressing those conditions are much easier and have less impact than if they continue to get exasperated, requiring a veterinarian for lameness or infection.

Promote

Currying is not just a way to loosen mud before a thorough brushing. It promotes soundness, good muscle tone and comfort. Done properly, currying increases circulation. Bringing blood into the muscles allows it to carry out toxins, including lactic acid. This natural byproduct of anaerobic exercise makes muscles sore. Stiffness can lead to injury. Currying helps move toxins out of muscles to promote suppleness. Currying also stimulates natural protective oils, while exfoliating dead skin to release them. This not only increases shine, but also aids the coat in repelling water. By boosting the horse's natural defenses, currying helps the animal stay drier and warmer. Natural oils leave skin more resistant as well. It is less apt to get irritated, skin disease or scurf.

Gypsy horses typically have lots of particularly thick hair. If the hair is dry, it is more porous. So, it readily absorbs stains. Plus, I am not partial to wire

coats. A sound currying routine can actually refine hair. This distinction is undeniable and particularly apparent with clipped horses. The ones with great grooming routines have hair that is less coarse, more supple and super shiny. Proper currying carries oils down the shafts to seal them. So, hair is finer and softer.

Proscribe

Choose a curry that is not too gel-like. You want to get through all that hair to the skin. How you use the currycomb is most important. Repeat a circular motion, always in the direction the hair grows. Lean into it. Your power comes from your back, not your arm or wrist. Just pushing hair around does nothing. Pressure and rhythm do wonders. The process should be relaxed, yet vigorous. It puts me out of breath. At clinics, people are often astounded to realize what great exercise a good currying can be. Use it to loosen yourself up as well as your mount.



This nubbed curry does a good job pulling impurities away from the skin. Whichever style curry comb you choose, the important thing is that you use it often and with elbow grease.



Photos Courtesy of Ruthann Smith and Lucky Braids

For thick, wooly coats, this curry works well. Remember, circle in the direction of hair growth... not against the grain. Smaller circles are well suited to longer hair.

Start gently. Get the blood into the muscles before massaging them. If your horse is not used to vigorous currying, work up to more pressure and time every day. Just like a deep muscle massage can make you sore, don't do too much at once if your horse is not accustomed. Once he is, the more the better.

On bony areas of the face, legs and shins, use a rubber mitt or curry gently. Avoid currying heels, they warrant softer treatment. However, be sure to keep them clean and dry to avoid scratches.

Comb feather when it is clean and wet. On a daily basis, be sure to feel the legs for heat and cuts. Pick hooves and check for heat at the same time.

It is best to curry well before and after work, on a daily basis. This assures both you and your charge's muscles will be warmed up. After riding or driving, it will help move lactic acid and other toxins out of muscles. Good circulation is key to soundness. Finish with a medium brush, then a soft brush. I like to really catch a strong rhythm, using a brush in each hand. Putting your horse to bed clean also makes it easier to keep him clean. Otherwise, salt from sweat parches the coat, leaving the skin prone to irritation and disease, while the hair attracts more dirt. Plus, the well-groomed coat is finer. So, everything feels better and is more resilient!

Benefit

Your currycomb is a silent giant. It is a simple yet powerful tool help your horse be: protected against the elements, free of skin disease, gorgeous, and sound. All the while, currying can reduce your costs and improve your fitness. So, curry, curry, curry, and enjoy.



Ruthann Smith shares best care practices of top horsemen on Twitter @ TopTurnout and Facebook. com/ShinyHappyHorses. Find more grooming and braiding tips as well as award-winning products to make quality care easier at: LuckyBraids.com.