

HORSE CARE MYTHS & TIPS

Mane Taming

By Ruthann Smith

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Unruly manes? They just need direction. When you wake up with bed head, do you use a wet brush? If you want to style your hair, do you dry it in that direction? Manes don't need to be tamed. A little love does wonders. Regardless of the style, a crisp topline is stunning. Here are easy pointers for that painted-on look.

Save Money

First off, forget about gadgets. I don't even use a metal comb. They sound awful when they hit the ground and they are hard on my hands. Most tools actually make manes difficult to manage. If you cut hair at the base of the crest, that short hair pushes the other hair out of place. Easy effective and relaxing ways to thin manes are detailed at TopTurnout.com. If you cut the bottom of the mane blunt, it will fall in unnatural and amateur-looking clumps. To shorten or clean the bottom line of a mane so it falls naturally, I often use an old clipper blade to tease and cut. I find it the only implement that effectively tapers the mane, leaving it most attractive and easiest to braid, too.



Which mane do you want to bring to the ring? Read on for easy practices that make all the difference.

get brittle. After taking the braids out, wet the hair to straighten it.

Wet Brush

Before and after riding, wet brush the mane over. You'll want to dampen and organize hair from both edges of the crest. The direction, moisture and its weight does the trick.

First, pick a large stiff or medium dandy brush. Dip the tips into a bucket of water. Drips of water feel like flies. So, remove excess water with a flick of the brush. Always start under the mane. Wet the base, moving the brush upward from the crest.

Once the underside is in order, reach over the mane to flick all hair flat over the top of the crest. I make a series of short strokes just along the hairline. Then, go back and bush over the top and down the length of shortened manes. With natural manes, just brush the crest, not the long length.

Wet Comb

A bath is not complete without combing the mane. You want it to dry in the proper direction. Otherwise, even if the

horse is braided to show several times a week, it will be a mess. Wet comb the mane to avoid wildness. Hair actually stretches when wet. So, it is more forgiving and less apt to break.

Like tails, with long manes you want to start at the bottom and comb up to your grip until you get to the base of the crest. To best protect the roots and length, first twist a section of hair. Hold it near the bottom. Comb from the end up to your hand. When that is organized, move your grip up and work from the bottom up to your hand. Do this all the way to the crest for each section. A good all-in-one shampoo conditions, so that combing will be easy. Then, when it dries, hair will be very full and will resist tangling. If you use an all-in-one shampoo rich in aloe vera and organize the hair wet, it will dry wanting to separate instead of making ringlets or dreads. So, daily care is quick.



Sliding a towel over the crest makes for a magnificent mane.

Use a Towel

Towel usage distinguishes great groomers. Simple gestures make very dramatic differences. Here are three pivotal techniques:

- Lay. While your horse is waiting on the ties, put a bath towel over the length of the neck. The weight will flatten wisps of hair. A moist towel is even better.

- Clip. If your horse shakes his head or is grazing after a bath, clamp the towel under his neck. As a sleeve of sorts, the towel will assure the mane dries falling in the right direction.

- Slide. Whether you secure the towel or not, the way you take it off is key: slide

Photo: TopTurnout.com



Kira Johnson puts on the finishing touches at a WEF Parade of Champions. Her charge's mane sported a perfectly clean topline.

Train

If your mane needs a leg up to lie over well, put in training braids. Wet hair and put in big braids to get hair moving in the right direction. They don't need to be too tight. In fact, it's better if they are not. Leave them in a day or two. Then wet brush hair thoroughly to get kinks out. Straightening hair promotes its strength and suppleness. Natural oils can more easily slide down hair shafts to fortify it. So, never leave your horse's hair kinky. It will

Photo: TopTurnout.com

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it off one side, in the direction you want the hair to lie. For best results, put pressure on the towel as you slide it off the side. Do this quickly, a few times in a row, for the ultimate finishing touch.

Turn Heads

Manes are the icing on the cake of your horse's turnout. If your horse is well presented, you stand for quality. People will pay mind. Plus, a sound daily grooming program offers your horse a sense of predictability and preparedness. Consistent proper care, with quiet handling, builds a horse's confidence. So, with these relaxing mane care routines, you not only look, but also feel like winners. ■

Braiding and shortening hundreds of thousands of manes, Ruthann Smith had plenty of time to consider best care practices. She shares lots of world-class grooms' tips at TopTurnout.com, as well her award-winning Lucky Braids coat care and braiding products. Easier, faster and most cost-effective, Lucky Braids™ All-In-One Shampoo and Enzymatic Spray, were awarded Product of the Year and Top Pick for Greys & Whites by Horse Journal, the equine Consumer Reports. Lucky Braids Handy Salve treats the worst tail rubbing and hot spots. For more information, visit LuckyBraids.com and Facebook.

This is not a stallion.

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Ruthann Smith, world-class groom + pro braider, developed Lucky Braids grooming products + Top Turnout Clinics to make quality care easier.

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