

Rubs: The Folly

By Ruthann Smith

©2010 Lucky Braids LLC, All Rights Reserved.

All Photos: LuckyBraids.com

You don't want rubs. They speak of poor care and discomfort. Despite their pervasiveness, boot and blanket rubs are avoidable. Ever wonder why you see rubs far more than ever before? Read on to learn the actual causes of rubs and how to avoid them.

Position

Rider position is one major cause of rubs. As a rider, you have a responsibility to learn proper alignment of your body as well as get strong enough to keep your leg still without bracing. Toes should face forward with the rotation starting from the hip. Achieving a correct and quiet leg should be a priority. Clear aids make a world of difference to a horse. Don't wear spurs if you can't control the position of your leg.

Grooming

Dry coats are the other major culprit. Think about it. Dry hair is brittle and breaks. Parched skin is neither supple nor resilient. It does not promote growth. Add in the fact that clipping coats leaves each strand open-ended. Abrasive friction on weak hair and skin can cause sores.

If you do not curry often and vigorous enough, natural protective oils do not come to the surface, nor do they get released. Curry in a circular motion, in the direction of hair growth with elbow grease. Move from your back.

Good grooming not only stimulates and exfoliates to bring oils to the surface, but it fortifies the skin and nourishes the roots to strengthen hair. Proper grooming, with rhythm and muscle, tones both of you as well as carries oils down the hair shaft to close the cuticle. Clipped coats have no shine when the cuticle is open. If horses are consistently well groomed, they often don't look clipped. The hair is finer. They shine, because the skin was really healthy and clean before being exposed. Then, grooming closes cuticles and the strands are sealed. This makes coats look



Healthy coats rarely sport bald spots like the one in this photo.



Rubs are saying something about your leg, care and products.

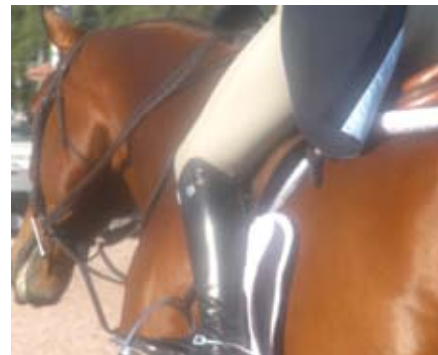
great. Winter grooming also defends horses against the elements. Oils help keep horses warm, dry and comfortable, so groom thoroughly daily and before and after work.

Traffic is not what wears out carpets. Dirt grinding into it does. If you put your horses away without grooming, it will deplete their coats. Salt dries it out. Impurities, including footing and bedding, can make blankets, riding and galloping boots rub, creating sores.

Usually treatments for rubs actually inhibit healing by clogging pores, parching the coat and damaging cells. A handy topical salve treatment should not only be antiseptic, but also anti-fungal, moisturizing, nourishing, and soothing. It should clean and fortify the area for rapid healing. Hair has been known to grow back in three days, even with a horse in work.

Cleanliness

Cold air holds less moisture, which leads to dry skin, static and scurf. Usually



You can cover a boot run with a baby pad, but a better idea is to avoid creating one in the first place.



Using a bib and leaving slack in the front of the blanket keep shoulders more comfortable.

products strip coats of natural protective oils or they coat hair, which suffocates it and leaves it brittle to break.

A proper equine enzyme will dissolve the bond with impurities, without coating or stripping the coat.

Horses will stay cleaner longer if coats are healthy. An all-in-one shampoo should not deplete, but instead should moisturize, nourish and condition coats. Only bathe when it is warm out. Don't let damp horses get chilled.

Fit

Blankets slide back. Gussets are designed for moving forward, not for lying down when shoulders come up. Pressure on the shoulders can cause soreness... and rubs. To avoid them I suggest the following tips:

- Clothe carefully. Layering is a great

HORSE CARE

system. Pick clothes that fit your horse's body type and size. Put night clothes on far forward so there is a lot of room between the chest and front fasteners. With slack, clothes can slide back into place rather than be too tight.

- Check stitching on fasteners. You do not want the buckles ripping off. If the front lets go, surcingles will slide back to become a bucking strap on the big part of the barrel. This is *very dangerous*. There is no warning before the horse explodes. If the clothes are carefully inspected, many claim leaving the bottom buckle undone minimizes the risk for shoulder rubs.

- Bibs are great. Recycle inner bandages by laying them over clothes at the chest. It keeps the fastener from rubbing, the chest cozy and releases some pressure that could cause rubbing. A bib folded back over the withers can offer relief, too.

- Brush the crest daily with a stiff brush. This exfoliates and brings oils to the surface and down the shaft to strengthen the mane.

- Galloping boots that do not fit well invite footing into the gaps to wreak havoc on skin. The skin gets rubbed raw, which creates discomfort and increases the risk of skin disease. Never put boots on a dirty leg. Keeping boots clean is pivotal. Proper fit is key.

Regardless of the kind of rub your horse has experienced, the objective is to avoid any rubbing. Be mindful. Groom well daily. You'll be amazed at the beneficial ripple effect for you and your horse.

World-class groom and braider, Ruthann Smith, developed Lucky Braids products to make it easier to take better care of horses.

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 version of Consumer Reports.

Lucky Braids Handy Salve has yielded unprecedented results.

Find more information and grooming tips at LuckyBraids.com and on Facebook.



This is not a stallion.

Lucky Braids ALL-IN-ONE SHAMPOO

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Horse Journal

Horse Journal's **TOP PICK**
for Greys & Whites

TOP TURNOUT
BY LUCKY BRAIDS

Use for: daily care, anti-fungal, anti-itch, whitening, rich color and big shine. No need for conditioners nor detanglers (comb tails wet). Rinses fast.

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

FREE SHIPPING and Grooming Tips at
LuckyBraids.com
Ph: 781/665-5988