

PROFESSIONAL

Grooming Tips

FROM DANA BOYD-MILLER



andis®

Grooming Methods

For a professional body clipper, the ideal horse to work on is one that is clean, dry and stands quietly. "Body clipping" can help make your grooming process easier and can help avoid health issues. "Trimming" helps keep your horse or pony looking tidy.

Begin with Currying

A proper grooming should begin with a good currying, which is best done with a rubber curry comb or a long nylon mane comb if the hair is extremely long. Metal curry combs should be used only to clean bristled brushes and should not be used on horses. The metal teeth are sharp and can scratch or cut the skin. Once you have loosened the dirt and dander by currying, use a stiff or hard brush to remove the rising dirt. Next, use a medium bristle brush. Some people like to use a soft brush instead, or at the same time, in a two-handed brushing technique. This process removes more dirt. More importantly, it helps stimulate the oil in the coat and brings out that shine we are all trying to achieve. Finally, use a clean towel for a final wipe down. The more time spent with these "hands on" techniques, the more satisfying the final result will be.

Manes, Tails & Hooves

Manes should be combed and pulled, if necessary. Tails should be hand picked to avoid breaking as few hairs as possible. Finish your daily grooming process by picking the horse's hooves, if you haven't already. Your horse should now be clean enough to clip if you can't give him a bath.



Dana Boyd-Miller has been a professional horse woman in South Florida for more than 35 years. Her roots sprang from field and show hunters, to having a forte for starting young stock and thoroughbred race horses. She has been exclusively body clipping for the past 20 years and has helped represent the Andis Company since 1998. Although she works primarily on show horses, she loves to change things up and use her quarter horse as a canvas to clip different pictures and scenes.

Bathing

When bathing your horse, first gather everything you will need: a bucket for soap (or shampoo) and water, a large sponge, a rubber curry comb or stiff brush, a sweat scraper, towels and a nozzle-ended hose. Start by soaking your horse. He will probably not like getting his head wet, but by using a light spray, you can avoid getting water into his ears and up his nose. A better method is to squeeze fresh water from the sponge over his head. If your horse is really nervous about having his head bathed, you may want to use your hand and rub water on his face. Soap can sting horses' eyes and reinforce their fears.

Mix your soap with water in the bucket instead of putting it directly on the skin. You will get more mileage out of your product with this technique and there is less chance for causing dry or irritated skin. In fact, an old leg remedy was to use soap as a blistering agent.

After soaping and scrubbing thoroughly, rinse completely. Be sure to rinse off all of the soap. Use your sweat scraper to remove excess water from the body and use your towels on the face and legs to accelerate the drying process. ShowSheen® can be used on thicker, longer-haired coats, but it will make a short-haired coat lay down, which can be harder to remove.

I try to limit the number of soap baths to once a week on a general grooming basis. Use a stiff brush or rubber curry comb along with a nozzle-ended hose to clean your horse thoroughly. By using less soap or shampoo, you can avoid drying the skin and hair out because the product can remove oils from the skin.

Vacuuming

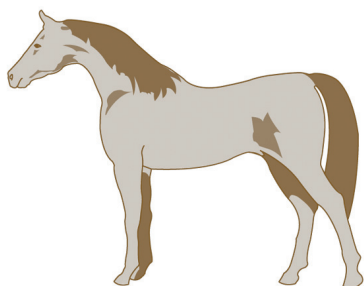
Another method of grooming involves vacuuming. Horse vacuums are an excellent way to remove the deep dirt. Although your horse will most likely need to be acclimated to the vacuum, the good news is that he or she will probably stand to be clipped after being vacuumed.

Professional Grooming Tips

FROM DANA BOYD-MILLER

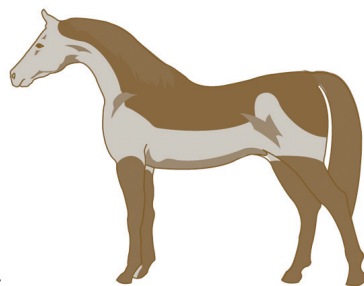
Types of Clips

It is very common for show horses to be fully body clipped. On the flipside, if you have a pleasure horse, and he never gets hot enough to sweat when he has his winter coat, you may only want to keep him trimmed up. The areas to trim include the jawline, muzzle, bridle bath, ears and longer leg hair, particularly around the tendons, fetlock and pastern area, as well as the hairline or coronet band around the hoof. By trimming these areas it is easier to remove mud and dirt, and they will dry faster, which reduces the chance for fungus growth.



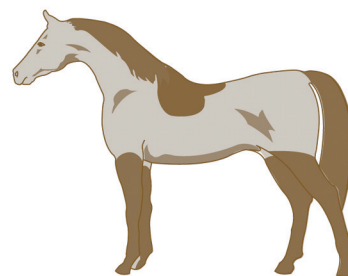
Full Body Clip

A full body clip includes everything from the inside of the ear to the tip of the back foot, excluding the forelock, mane and tail. It is a personal preference whether to include the bridle path and saddle pad. With this clip the horse must be blanketed when not in work once the weather is colder.



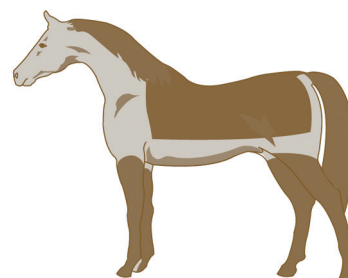
Trace Clip

A trace clip is a good choice for a horse that is in light work and may or may not live outside. The hair is removed from the front of the neck or the coat, chest and underside of the stomach. A strip runs from the front of the chest, just above the forearm, low across the barrel, tying the stomach in and across the hind leg. Also take off the hair on the inside of the upper legs both front and back. Basically, clip any area where he sweats heavily and any vascular area. It is not necessary to blanket with a trace clip unless the weather is severe and he would normally be blanketed anyway.



Hunter Clip

With a hunter clip, the entire body is clipped, while the legs are left on, as in the trace and blanket clips. You may or may not leave a saddle pad. The same choice applies to clipping the head. The front of the face is usually left on. The areas on the side and under the jaw are clipped off. Some people prefer to clip the entire head and others leave everything on the head and stop at the top of the neck behind the ears. The legs are left unclipped to provide protection from brambles and stickers, as well as for warmth. This clip is appropriate for field hunters and young horses in training, primarily in racing and occasionally for endurance horses. The endurance group, however, usually sports a trace or blanket clip. With the hunter clip, the horse must be blanketed.



Blanket Clip

A blanket clip looks like a 3/4 or exercise blanket and is excellent for a horse in heavier work living in a cold climate. It allows the sweat to evaporate more freely, but at the same time retains some of the body heat, particularly across the back and hindquarters. It helps to keep them from getting a chill between exercise or training routines. The neck, chest and shoulder areas should be clipped. The legs are left long as in the trace clip.

The blanket pattern starts just behind the shoulder and is clipped 8" to 10" higher than the trace clip on the barrel. It continues at the same level across the hindquarter and up the butt cheek. A runner needs to wear warm gear for the winter and would experience leg and body cramps if he were outside in shorts and no shirt when the temperature drops. It's a similar concept with the blanket pattern for the horse; this cut will keep him warmer in the winter.

Working on the Nervous Horse

If I am working on a tough horse or one that has never been clipped before, I will ask to have it ridden, lunged or turned out before I start. Sometimes I use earplugs on the horse to block out some of the noise. Then, after it is groomed I will attempt to clip it. Quite often, by exercising the horse first, he is a lot more willing to try to understand what we are doing.

It is good to imprint a horse when he is young. You can turn on and rub the clippers all over the body and don't clip, just get him used to the vibration, noise and feeling of the clippers.

It may be safer to work on first-timers with cordless clippers because there is no need for an extension cord. For the same reason, difficult horses may be easier to handle with a cordless clipper as well.

If your horse is not territorial, you may want to clip him in the stall where it is quieter and there are few distractions. If you choose to work in the aisle way, make sure your horse ties or crossties safely before beginning. It is a good idea to work on rubber mats to prevent slipping on concrete or asphalt.

If he is acting like he could be dangerous, or if he is more nervous than you are comfortable with, call the vet about giving him a sedative. Don't do it yourself - **let the vet do it!** Regardless of the animal's monetary value, whether it is \$100 or \$1,000,000 you will never be able to replace someone's best friend if there is a problem while administering a sedative.



Grooming Frequency

General grooming is recommended on a daily basis, or at least a few times a week. Horses' hair, like people's hair, can grow at different rates. Many factors affect hair growth. Horses with certain health conditions like Cushing's or non-sweaters (horses that cannot sweat) may require more frequent clipping. Supplements, certain types of wormer, cold water baths, dark stalls or a power failure (for those who have their horses under lights) can all affect hair growth.



General grooming is recommended on a daily basis, or at least a few times a week. Horses' hair, like people's hair, can grow at different rates.

Avoiding Health Problems

We have a huge problem with fungus on our horses because of the humid climate and the sandy soil conditions in Florida. The bathing and grooming suggestions given here will help avoid fungus growth in any climate. Remember, the average body temperature for a horse is 100°F. When your horse has long hair and he rolls, which is his job, the dirt gets into the coat. If you add moisture, whether it is sweat or water and the dirt is left in the coat, the conditions are perfect for fungus to grow. The problem can escalate during the rainy season.

In a colder climate, a horse with a full winter coat has grown his coat for insulation against the cold. When he can't release body heat after he has worked or been ridden, he is vulnerable to health problems. He will appear and feel cool to the touch but can reheat when he is put back into his stall. If he is wet because of sweat or water, it can take a long time for the hair to dry, making it easier for him to become chilled or sick with a cold, or even colic.

Clipper Preferences

The noise and vibration of the clipper sometimes bothers the horse. Some clippers are very loud, but just because they are loud doesn't mean they are more powerful. After I switched to the Andis AGC2 Super 2-Speed clipper with the T-84 blade, my tranquilizing rate went down by 85-90%. Andis clippers are quieter and in many cases more powerful than other brands I have used. The same horses that had to be sedated in the past now stand quietly with my Andis clipper. In many cases, the horses will appear sedated when they are just relaxed enough to be enjoying their haircut and massage!

Cordless clippers are great at horse shows where there are lots of horses being prepped in tents. They're great for touch-ups. They're also good to use with young horses.

I clip an average of four to five horses a day, sometimes six when the season is in full swing. I had gotten tendonitis from using the large animal clippers, so I switched to the Andis AGC2 Super 2-Speed Clipper. I didn't really think it would last or be able to do the job because it is so much smaller than the ones I had been using. I have added to my collection of clippers, but I still have my first AGC2 Super 2-Speed clipper that I purchased in 1997. It is still in good working condition. The clipper is very user friendly. Andis entered the equine market after many years in the barber and beauty, small animal and cattle markets.



Words of Encouragement

Remember, clipping is like anything else – the more you do it, the better you become. Clipping isn't difficult. If it doesn't look so good, don't worry. It's hair. It will grow back. With body clipping, we say, "If you don't like the way it looks, back up another ten feet or wait two weeks, it will look better." You can always call a professional to come and fix it, but it may cost you more than it would have if you had called them in the first place! Some of the worst clip jobs I have been asked to fix have come out of some of the top barns in the country.

One of the funniest and most needed clips I've seen was for a friend's grandson's new pony. He had so much hair that you couldn't see his feet. He looked more like a cross between a sheep and a cow than a pony!

My best advice is to use patience and common sense. It's okay to ask questions and to ask for help. And, it's okay to walk away and take a break. Overall, clipping can relieve stress and is rewarding when you see the finished result. Keep clipping and have fun!



The super-quiet Andis AGC2 Super 2-Speed clipper is a favorite of Dana's. Andis clippers are powerful, yet run cool even after multiple clips. The extra-wide T-84 blade glides through hair without leaving tracks for a faster, smoother clip.