

## **Grooming Tips** *from Van Hargis*

- Start at the front and work your way toward the back.
- Brush or comb with the lay of the hair.
- Begin with clean grooming tools.
- Make sure your grooming tools are comfortable to both you and your horse. Then you are likely to use the tool more effectively and without any discomfort to your horse.
- Grooming your horse should be fun and quality time for both you and your horse.
- When grooming manes and tails always start at the tips and work your way to the base. This procedure detangles the hair efficiently and painlessly.
- Use your grooming time to examine your horse's hair and coat condition. Look for scrapes, bumps, blemishes and/or any skin abnormalities.
- Begin grooming your horse's coat with a rubber curry to loosen dirt, hair, and dead skin. On very dirty horses or horses with a thick winter coat, begin with a course rubber curry. On cleaner coats or on slick summer coats, use a fine rubber curry.
- To efficiently apply shampoo while bathing your horse, use a fine rubber curry. The small, soft, and close-positioned rubber teeth hold and evenly distribute the soapy solution.
- When using a rubber curry, groom in small circular motions covering the horse's entire body.
- Use a medium-bristled brush to remove loose hair and dirt, then follow up with a soft-bristle brush to remove the fine dust and polish the coat.
- To prepare your horse for clipping spend time handling the horse's ears with your hands, then a soft-bristled brush, then introduce the clippers slowly over time.
- Always clip with fresh, sharp, and finely oiled blades. Dull blades can pull and nick a horse's sensitive skin, thus causing future clipping problems.
- When clipping sensitive areas on your horse, be efficient and smooth.
- Match the blades and the clippers to fit the task. When body clipping, use clippers and blades designed to do the job. When clipping ears and sensitive areas, use a quieter, less cumbersome set of clippers with very sharp blades.
- Use a damp rag to clean around horse's eyes and nostrils. To highlight dark areas around the eyes to increase eye appeal, use a cloth with light baby oil or a moist towelette
- Towel over the coat to remove last minute dust and distribute oils over the surface of the coat.
- Pick your horse's feet every day.
- When picking your horse's hooves, use a comfortable and strong pick so that you can clean thoroughly around the frog on both sides.
- Use your time while picking your horses feet to inspect for any abnormalities, bruises, or abscesses.
- Use a well-designed mane and tail comb with teeth that are strong yet spaced well enough apart to comb the hair and tear or pull it.
- Use a well-designed mane and tail comb to assist in measuring just the right amount of hair for that perfect braided or banded mane.

- Always use a well-designed sweat scraper to remove excess water from your horse after bathing. In the summer this cools the horse faster by allowing quicker evaporation time. In the winter the horse will dry faster, leaving the horse less time to get chilled by the cooler winter air.
- Use your mane and tail comb to help in removing long hair from your mane and tail brush.
- Clean your grooming tools regularly with a gentle yet effective anti-bacterial and anti-fungal soap solution. Then let dry in the direct sunlight. Sunlight assists in killing many fungi.
- After grooming a horse with a skin irritation or fungus, thoroughly clean grooming tools before using them on another horse. This prevents a potentially contagious skin problem from spreading throughout your barn.
- Around sensitive or boney areas of a horse's leg use a soft fine tooth curry to loosen hair and clean the area.
- When washing your horse use a concentrated mild shampoo and mix in a bucket before applying to your horse. This saves shampoo and does not dry or irritate horse's hair and skin.
- When shampooing a horse's tail, mix shampoo in a deep bucket and completely submerge the tail in the warm soapy water. Massage and knead the hair around in the shampoo and water to get dirt off both the hair and the tailbone.
- For extra close clipping, use sharp blades and move against the natural lay of the hair.
- When clipping a horse that is nervous and anxious about being clipped, break the process down in to a few short sessions rather than trying to get from start to finish at one time. Over time the horse will tolerate longer sessions and become quiet and accepting of the entire process.
- Use a large sponge to both apply a mild soapy solution to a horse's face as well as rinse. This prevents the horse from having to protect its ears from water spray.
- For a natural looking shiny hoof, use a popular spray lubricant. Spray directly on the clean hoof and wipe with a cloth. The result is a moist, shiny, and natural looking hoof.