

Grooming

Why Groom?

Regular grooming improves a horse's appearance, helps increase circulation and stimulates the oil glands which make the horse's coat look shiny. Grooming also provides an opportunity to check for injuries, skin irritations or other health problems. The amount of grooming a horse needs will depend on how much you ride and where the horse is kept. A horse that is in a barn and/or blanketed needs to be groomed every day.

Constant handling, grooming and patient care will work wonders to develop trust and confidence between a horse and handler. You will develop a positive relationship and your horse will stand more quietly and safely the more you work with it.

Pasture horses do not need thorough daily grooming because they self groom. However, every horse should be groomed before and after each ride.

The Grooming Kit

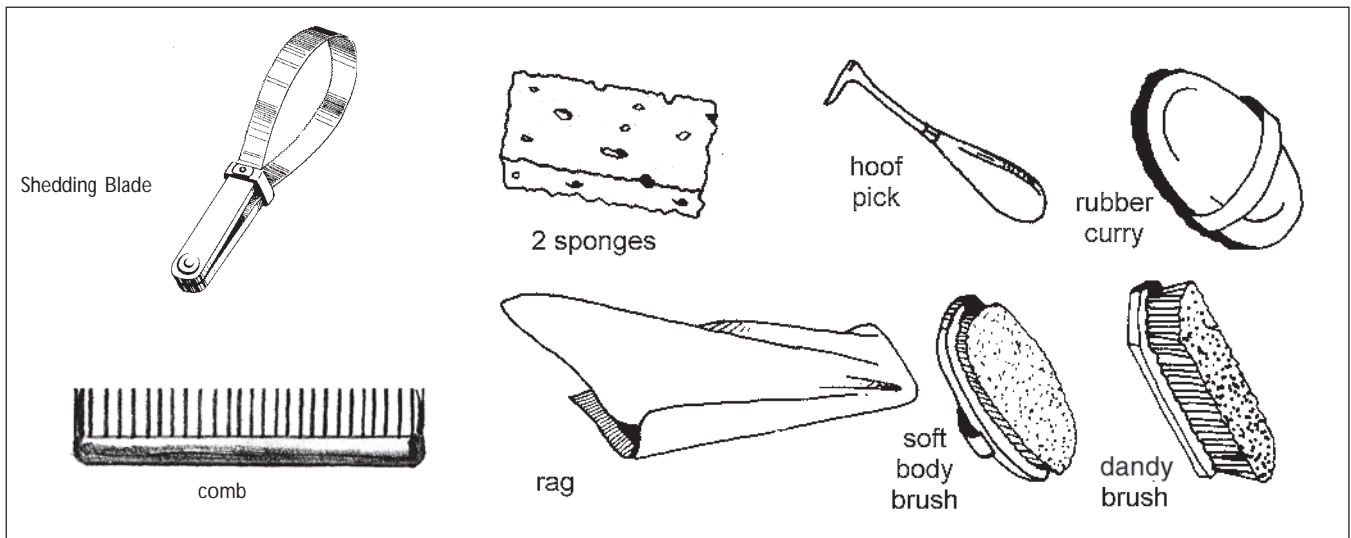
Every horse owner should have a grooming kit. The amount of equipment you need will vary, but for a basic grooming kit you will need:

- 🐾 A hoof pick.
- 🐾 A plastic or rubber curry comb.
- 🐾 A dandy brush (has fairly long stiff bristles).
- 🐾 A body brush (has softer bristles).
- 🐾 Two sponges or two washing rags (different colours) for the different ends of the horse.
- 🐾 A long comb (metal is not recommended).
- 🐾 A shedding blade (used to help remove winter hair or use the backside to scrape away water after bathing a horse).
- 🐾 Grooming cloth.

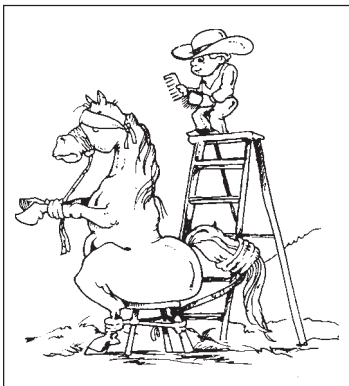
Grooming Your Horse

When you are grooming a horse before riding, take care to brush the withers, back and girth areas well. Bedding and dirt left in these areas can be irritating to the horse's skin when saddled or being ridden.

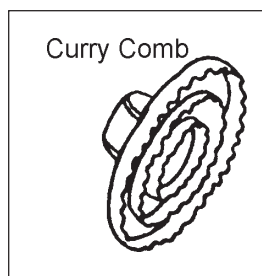
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The results of a good grooming job are worth the effort. Any horse can have the shiny, healthy looking coat that we like to see.



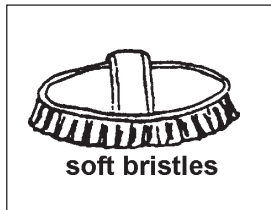
1. Tie your horse securely using cross-ties or a lead shank with a quick release knot. Make sure your horse is standing at a 90 degree angle to where it is tied, allowing a safe space for you to work. If your horse doesn't stand still, you will need to put in some extra hours working with it until it learns to stand calmly and safely while you work with it.
2. Place your grooming kit nearby, but not so near that it gets in the way. Do not place it where the horse will step on it.
3. Before you begin grooming, run your hands quietly and gently over your horse's entire body and look for lumps, scrapes or insect bites that may need attention. Feel the lower legs and hooves, looking for any differences in temperature or swelling.
4. Begin with the rubber or plastic **curry comb**, at the neck and back area. Rub the curry comb over the horse's coat, using small circular motions. The circular motion loosens dirt and mud and stimulates circulation and oil production. Only use the curry comb on the body of the horse, not on the head area, nor below the forearm and gaskin. The curry comb can be cleaned by banging it on a solid, stationary object.



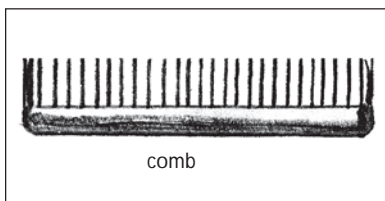
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5. Next, use the **dandy brush** (the hard bristled brush) in short flicking motions over the entire body except the head and legs. This removes mud, sweat and dirt. As you get to the end of each short stroke, flick the brush up and out, throwing off the dirt. This gets the bristles deep into the hair to remove dirt and dandruff, and also stimulates circulation. To clean the dandy brush as you use it, you can hold the curry comb in one hand and the dandy brush in the other. Then, as you flick off the dirt and before your next stroke, rub the curry comb's teeth against those of the dandy brush to brush any dirt off the bristles of your dandy brush.

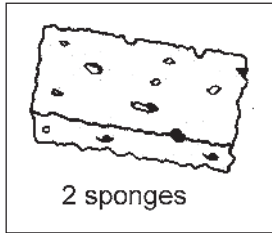


6. Now that you have removed the dirt from your horse, the **body brush** (soft brush) is used to bring out the shine of your horse's coat and for removing the scurf (dead dry flakes of skin) that lies near the skin. This is the only brush that may be used on the whole body. Throw the mane over to the opposite side of which it normally lies. Use the body brush to brush the roots clear of scurf. Over the entire body of your horse, brush with the body brush, using long smooth strokes and pressure on the brush. This cleans off surface dust and spreads oils over the whole coat. Clean the body brush as you use it, using the curry comb held in the opposite hand to rub the bristles of the body brush clear of dirt. Once the body is cleaned, clean the legs of your horse. Then clean your horse's head by untying your horse, removing the halter and fastening it around the neck, near the poll. Use your free hand to steady your horse, placing it just above the nostrils. Brush the head, taking care not to bang the bony projections with the wooden edge of the brush. Replace the halter and retie your horse.



7. Next, use the **comb** to comb out the mane and tail. It takes months and years to replace the longer hairs which might be accidentally pulled out or broken. Work carefully to prevent hair loss. Take a small lock of hair at a time. Separate the hairs first with your fingers. Begin untangling from the bottom and work your way up to the base of the mane and to the tail bone. To groom the tail, stand to the side of your horse and pull the tail around to the side to get the tough knots out. Comb through the tail as it lies against the hip (to support it). Conditioner helps to comb out badly tangled hair.

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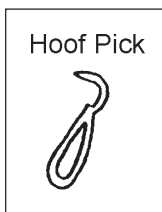


8. Now, using one of your **sponges** or washing rags (designated for washing around the head), clean the eyes and nostrils. Wet the sponge in warm water and wring it out. Untie and hold your horse, and back it away from the fence. Using one corner of the sponge, wipe the near eye and then use another corner to clean the far eye. Using the other end of the sponge, use one corner to clean the near nostril and use the final corner to clean the far nostril. Using a different spot on the sponge or rag for each part of the face will help to avoid contamination from one eye to the other or from one nostril to the other. Retie your horse.

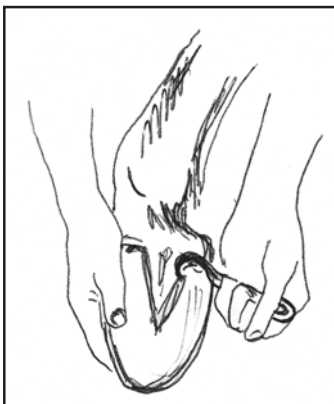
9. Wet and wring out your other **sponge** or rag (designated for cleaning the dock area) and wipe the dock area under the tail. Remember to stand at the horse's side, not behind it.



10. Now use your **grooming cloth**, and beginning at the face, wipe the whole body with this clean, soft cloth.



11. Clean out the hooves of your horse. When you are picking up the feet of your horse, carry your **hoof pick** in a safe place that you can easily reach. Begin cleaning each hoof at the back of the hoof on each side of the frog where there is a groove. Push the pick down into the corners of the cleft and bars to pick out any mud or dirt. Scrape down and away from the heel, right to the tip of the frog. Scrape away any debris found elsewhere on the hoof, always cleaning from heel to toe. If you clean from the toe towards the heel and your horse jerks its foot from your hand, it may get a puncture if it steps on the hoof pick in this position. Continue picking in this way until there are no stones or dirt left in the grooves of the hoof.



While you are cleaning the feet, inspect for loose shoes, foreign objects and thrush. When you are finished, gently set the hoof on the ground with your hand and return your hoof pick to your pocket, ready to move on to the next hoof.



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Picking Up the Feet

When holding the hooves, always keep your knees bent in order to avoid undue stress on your back. Keep your body and your feet parallel to your horse.

Front

When you are picking up the feet of a strange or young horse start with the front left foot. Most horses are used to being handled from this side and are not as sensitive about the front as the back. Make sure the horse is standing with its weight evenly distributed.

Pick up the front foot by rubbing the leg up high and by gently working down to the fetlock. Lean into your horse's shoulder to shift its weight off the leg you want to pick up. If the horse will not lift its foot, squeeze the tendon behind the cannon bone with your thumb and forefinger, or pinch the chestnuts or press on the coronet band at the outside quarter with your hoof pick. Once the foot is up, grasp the pastern with your left hand and place your right hand on the hoof, just below the coronet band. Then switch your left hand to where your right hand is, making sure your left hand is to the inside of the hoof and your left arm is behind the knee joint, not in front of it. Reach back with your right hand for your hoof pick and you're ready to clean the hoof.

Hind

To pick up the left hind foot, approach the horse from the front and place your left hand on its hip. In this way you can feel for tenseness of muscles as you move your hand to the inside of the cannon bone. Proceed as above, leaning your shoulder into the horse's thigh. Make sure your left arm is behind the hock. Stand as close to the leg as possible. If you stand very close and the horse strikes out at you, the kick will merely push you away.

To pick up the feet on the far side use these same procedures but reverse hand positions.

Remember to be considerate of the horse when you have the foot up. Don't hold it too far away, too long a period of time, nor too high, making it uncomfortable. Pick it up for short periods, keeping the leg close to the horse and don't forget to reward your horse.

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The Importance of Hoof Care

The value and lifespan of the horse depends on its ability to perform work. Without four sound feet it will be unable to do the things you want it to do. The most important details in the care of horse's feet are to:

1. Clean them frequently.
2. Trim them so they retain a proper shape and length.

Ideally, the feet of a horse should get daily care. Each day, clean the feet of horses that are shod, stabled or used.

Hoof Moisture

Hooves can become dry and brittle which can lead to splitting and lameness. In dry hooves, the frog loses its elasticity and loses some of its effect as a shock absorber. If it isn't corrected, the frog may shrink and the heel contracts. Dry hooves can be prevented by keeping the ground wet around the watering tank. If you do use a hoof dressing, rub it well into the coronary band, bulbs of the heel and liberally onto the frog and the clean sole of the foot. The most effective way to improve the condition of the hoof is through the horse's diet, by providing it with proper nutrition and supplements.

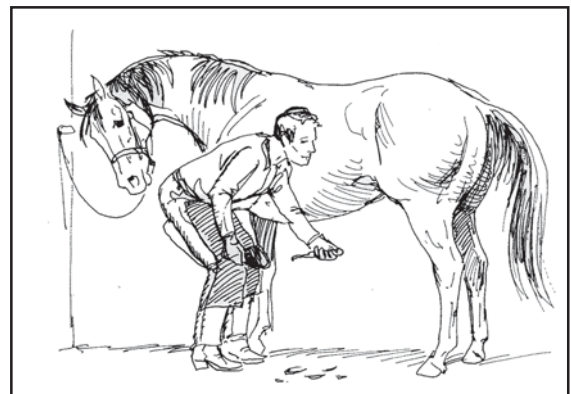
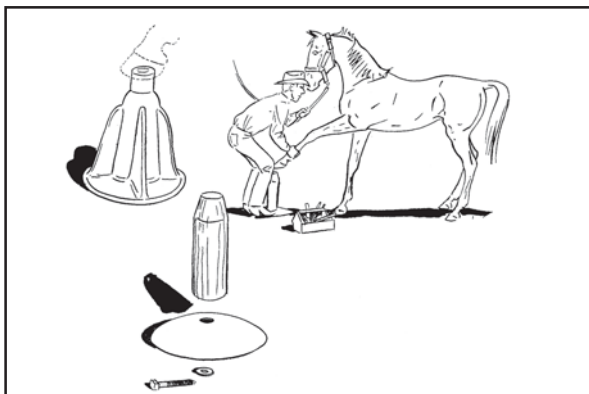
Hoof Length

A healthy hoof grows from $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch ($\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cm) per month. If you do not care for the hoof and keep it trimmed it will either break away as it grows or it may grow disproportionately in the heel and toe and alter the horse's way of going.

Trimming

The frequency of trimming depends upon how the horses are used and on what footing they are worked or kept. Usually from six to ten weeks is about the appropriate interval for trimming. All horsemen should be able to recognize a properly trimmed hoof.

If you have never trimmed a horse's hoof, seek help from someone with experience. A poor trimming job can cause stress, lameness and deformities. Your farrier or veterinarian may be willing to assist you.



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Common Faults Corrected by Trimming

Regular trimming will alleviate strain on the tendons and help prevent deformity, improper action and unsoundness. Some minor conformation faults such as **splayfoot** or **pigeon toe** may be corrected through proper trimming at an early age. Hoof problems such as **quarter crack** and **contracted heels** may be helped with proper trimming and hoof care.

Thrush Thrush is a degenerative condition of the frog of the hoof, characterized by a pungent odour. There is usually a blackish discharge in or along the frog. Thrush is caused by a bacterial infection which can be brought on by unclean conditions such as standing in manure. It decays the tissues of the frog. The main reason horses get thrush is because of poor management. It is easy to prevent by cleaning your horse's feet daily and by keeping the stalls clean and dry.

In cases that are recognized early, treatment is simple. First, eliminate the cause by cleaning and drying the horse's pen. Clean the foot well and apply a thrush remedy to the frog and sole. There are numerous remedies available. If the condition persists, lameness and permanent damage to the elasticity of the frog can result. If you see these problems, consult your veterinarian.

Shoeing Shoeing is not for every horse. If you are working horses on a sandy loam, free of stones, or they are spending a good bit of time in the pasture and their feet are in good shape, there is no reason for incurring the additional expense of shoeing. The foot and leg are designed to minimize shock and road concussion, without shoes.

Horses that are used on hard surfaces, such as roads or rocky terrain, should be shod to prevent the wall from wearing down to the sensitive tissues beneath. Some equine activities require shoeing for safety or to perform to a satisfactory level.

Shoeing always should be done by an experienced farrier. Shoes should be made to fit the foot, not the foot to fit the shoe. Reshoe or reset at four to eight week intervals. Shoes left on too long cause the hooves to grow out of proportion or cause lameness. Mark shoeing dates on your calendar.



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Reasons for Shoeing

Shoes protect the hoof from wear when a great amount of work or traction is required. Shoes may be used to correct hoof problems and change the gaits and action of a horse. They can be used to help cure disease and correct defective hooves. They also may be used to relieve pain from injured parts such as hoof-wall cracks and bruised soles, making it possible to ride an otherwise unsound horse.

To Remove a Shoe

Wearing the same shoes too long can cause problems. Since the hoof wall grows perpendicular to the coronary band, the horse's base of support actually grows out from under him (the legs become set too far in front) if shoes are left on too long. This puts more strain on the tendons. If a horse loses one shoe, either front or back the other front or back shoe should be removed.

- ⌘ First, remove all the clenches (the turned down part of the horseshoe nail visible on the hoof wall. These can be removed by clench (nail) cutters, a chisel and hammer, or with a rasp.
- ⌘ Next, lift the foot and support it with your knees.
- ⌘ Place a large pair of pliers, shoe puller or a clench cutter under the heel of the shoe, beginning on the side that is most loose.
- ⌘ Use a downward prying motion aiming toward the toe to raise the shoe off the wall.
- ⌘ Work on alternate sides of the shoe until you have only the toe nails remaining.
- ⌘ To remove the final toe nails, use a sideways rocking action.
- ⌘ Check to see that no nails are remaining in the hoof.

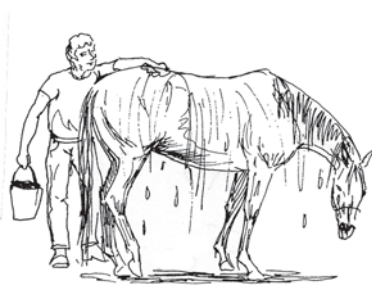


Bathing Horses

Washing horses, either with or without soap, removes dirt, stains and sweat that cannot as easily be removed by grooming. Shampooing too often, however, can remove protective oils from the skin. Use a livestock shampoo or a mild non-detergent soap to avoid removing natural oils.

Wet the animal thoroughly all over. If your horse spooks at a hose, use a bucket and a sponge to wet and wash one section at a time. Use a sponge on the head, pinching the ears shut to keep water out. Shampoo may be applied directly to a stain but is best mixed in a bucket, before applying to the horse. Scrub with a sponge, soft brush or wash mitt.

It is important to rinse the horse thoroughly to remove all the soap. Wipe off excess water with a scraper or the smooth side of a shedding blade. Do not scrape the head or legs. Dry with towels or a cool air dryer. You can put on a fleece cooler. Do not bathe a horse in cold weather.



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Grooming Problems

My horse rubs its mane. First check the feed area to make sure the fence or feeder is not rubbing the mane. Check the hair roots to find possible dermatitis or external parasites and treat the area accordingly if they are found. Some horses are very sensitive in the mane area to dead skin or hair. Thoroughly wash the horse with a recommended shampoo, being sure to rinse the horse well. Apply a lanolin product to the afflicted area to help prevent dry skin. Applying a mild disinfectant may also help.

My horse rubs its tail. Check the dock or anal area for signs of pinworms and then worm your horse if you suspect that this is causing the tail rubbing. Check for lice or other external parasites and treat accordingly. Keep the dock area as clean as possible. It may be necessary to apply a mild disinfectant.

My horse tears at its blankets and bandages. Check for fit or irritation. Make sure the horse is not too hot. Painting a foul tasting and/or smelling paste onto the bandages, like hot peppers and Tabasco sauce (if the skin is not chaffed or broken) may help stop the tearing. Be sure to regularly clean and rinse bandages and blankets.

My horse's mane won't fall to one side. The shorter you make the mane the thinner it needs to be to lie flat. To help train the mane to all lay on one side try the following methods:

- U Braid it and place it over to the desired side. Wet the mane and keep the braids in for two days then remove them. Keeping braids in a mane for a prolonged period will tend to damage the mane hair.
- U Dampen the mane with diluted hair conditioner.
- U Place a hood over dampened mane, with the mane all lying on the desired side, but inspect daily.
- U Place an old pair of pantyhose (with the legs removed) over the head and around the neck or crest area with the mane all lying on the desired side.
- U Use hair spray or gel on the mane as it lays on the correct side.

Clipping

The pleasure horse owner will do some clipping, but less is needed than if you are planning to show your horse. Most people like to have the bridle path cut to make bridling and haltering easier.



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Clipping (continued)

To clip a horse you can use scissors, hand clippers, or electric clippers. Electric clippers work best, but they are expensive. Unless you do a lot of trimming you do not need them. Some horses will not tolerate the sound of electric clippers. Be careful when you are trimming. It is easy to cut a horse if it moves while you are working.

Give yourself lots of time and use a lot of patience.

- A. Let your horse smell the clippers.
- B. Without turning clippers on rub them all over the horse's body.
- C. To get the horse used to the sound of the clippers turn them on and slowly approach the horse.
- D. Using the back of the clippers, move the clippers slowly to an area where the horse is least sensitive, for example the shoulder and touch the animal until the horse is comfortable with the vibration.
- E. Slowly advance to more sensitive areas making sure the animal is relaxed.
- F. Once your horse is relaxed clip from the least sensitive (legs) to most sensitive areas (ears & muzzle).

If you have difficulty clipping your horse get experienced help.

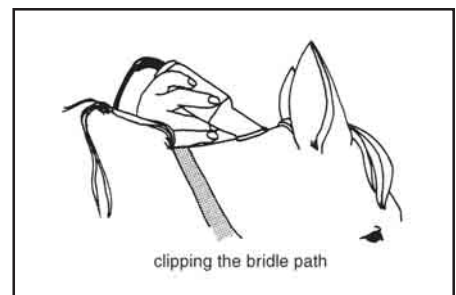
Clipping the Bridle Path

The area of the mane that lies directly behind the ears where the bridle or halter lies is the area that is trimmed to create a bridle path. This is done to make haltering and bridling easier and make the throat latch look thinner. The length of the bridle path depends on why you are doing it, the breed of horse, the length of the horse's neck and the thickness of the throat latch.

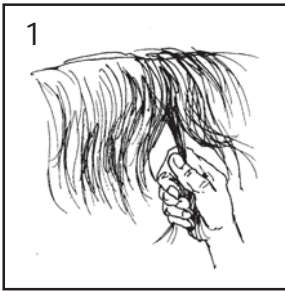


Procedure

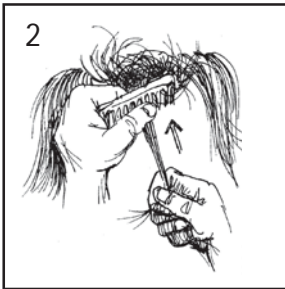
- U Comb the forelock forward, and comb the mane to the side out of the way.
- U Using scissors trim the section you want as the bridle path down to 1 cm (1/2 inch) or less starting behind the poll.
- U Clip the hair in the bridle path down to nearly skin level with scissors or clippers.
- U To make the area smoother, clip the hair vertically along the sides of the bridle path.



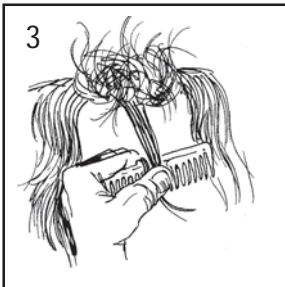
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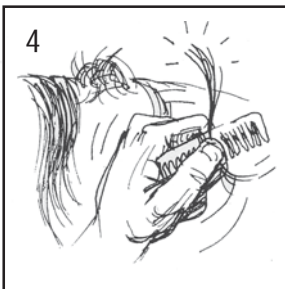
1. After combing the mane out, grasp the longest hairs at the underside of the mane firmly between the fingers and thumb of one hand.



2. With the fingers of the other hand or with a small metal pulling comb, push the other hairs toward the neck - like teasing hair.



3. Wind the **few** long hairs around your fingers or around the pulling comb.



4. Pull out the long hairs with a swift, downward and outward jerk. The hairs should pull out, not be broken off, as this thins the mane as it shortens it.

Pulling Mane

The mane should not be clipped or trimmed with scissors. If you want to shorten the length or thin your horse's mane, you should pull the mane. This will prevent it from becoming thicker and unmanageable. If you need to shorten an already thin mane, use thinning shears.

If you pull only a few hairs at a time, you will not hurt the horse. Horses do not have a nerve ending in each hair root, as people do. If too many hairs are pulled at once, the horse may become irritated.

Roaching the Mane (Hogging): Roaching the mane means that you completely shave the mane except for the wither area and forelock. If you plan to roach or shave your horse's mane, consider that if you grow it out again, it will probably grow back thicker and more disoriented than ever. It may take you up to two years to train the mane to lie correctly.

Clipping the Face

For showing, your horse will look neater if its face is trimmed. Remove the long hairs under the throat and jaw by running the clippers (with the grain of the hair) down the sides of the jaw, cheek and throat. Clip against the grain under the jaw, cheek and throat. Try to make the job look as natural as possible. Careful consideration must be given before you trim the eyes, ears and muzzle. Only trim as much as necessary, as these are used as "feelers" to judge distances and keep them from bumping into things. They also help protect your horse from insects and dirt particles.

Clipping the Legs

Fetlock hairs and heel areas should be trimmed in the spring to keep them from collecting mud and remaining damp which may lead to scratches (greasy heel). Trimming legs also gives your horse a better appearance for showing. Run the clippers (with the grain of the hair) down the sides of the horse's lower legs and under the fetlock. Use a comb to hold long fetlock hairs away from the leg as you run the clippers up the leg. For an extra neat look, trim the hairs that cover the coronet band at the top of the hoof.