

An Approach to Preparing a Great Summer Coat for Your Horse

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
THOMAS N. TWEETEN, PH.D.

SPRING HAS FINALLY ARRIVED — TIME TO SHED those heavy winter coats. Our indoor horses felt spring was coming early, and slowly began shedding in February. Many of our outdoor horses have shed out a bit slower as they have compensated for the colder, wet spring weather.

Before beginning to groom, find a specific place where the horse knows it will be groomed. It will then associate that place with a pleasant experience. It will be easier to keep horses' attention focused on the groomer and what is going on between the groomer and the horse. Begin by using your hands to completely go over the horse. Use a soft massage motion, being careful not



to force the hair in the wrong direction. This initial step will help find any areas of the body that may be sore or sensitive. These areas should be groomed lightly at first or avoided completely if extremely bothersome to the horse. A veterinarian, chiropractor or massage therapist may need to be consulted if these issues persist.

Be sure to alternate on which side of the horse you start grooming. For various reasons, the whole horse may not always get groomed thoroughly. This will help ensure that the horse will be well groomed over the entire body over time. Use both hands, changing them as you to groom. Many of us are definitely left or right-handed. By alternating hands, the less dominate side will become stronger, helping to develop you into a more balanced rider.

A non-traditional curry comb (commercially known as a mane-and-tail comb) is an extremely effective tool for grooming the coat. Use short, firm, lifting strokes, similar to the way a dandy brush is used. The coat consists of a down-type undercoat of rather fine hair and an outer coat of longer hair. The curry comb technique can gently lift the down undercoat away from the body without damage to the longer outer hair. This technique also helps work the natural oils of the skin up onto the horse's newly forming summer coat. The process of removing layers is similar to what we humans do as the day warms — that is, we remove our under-layers and leave our lighter outer clothing to protect ourselves from wind and rain. This grooming process will also lift filth and dander embedded in the coat as well as massage muscle tissue.

Another advantage of the curry comb is that it can easily be cleaned. The back side of the comb can double quite nicely as a sweat/water scraper. The coat can then be quickly brushed off to remove filth on the surface using a dandy brush. Use a brush with natural bristles to avoid static-charge buildup. The curry comb technique also leaves less hair to get caught up in the brush, which can take considerable time to remove.

The coat should then be lightly sprayed with a natural moisturizer. The moisturizer will soften the hair and reduce static change. It can be worked in with your fingers, a soft brush or a towel. Avoid using moisturizers that contain waxes and oils; rather, select products that contain only humectants such as glyc-

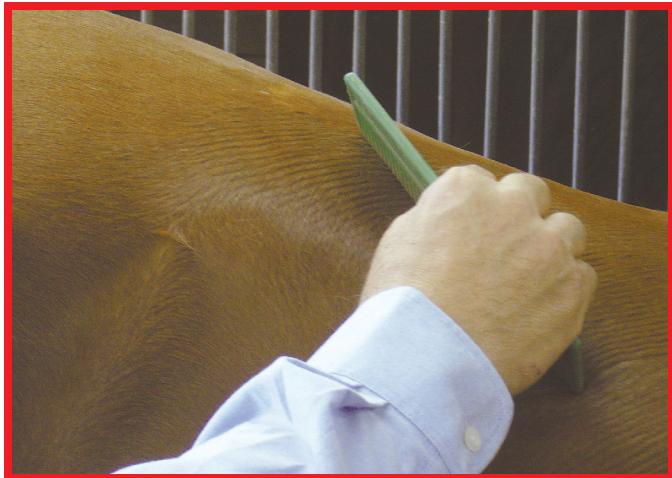
SADDLE UP FOR SAVINGS

New Tack Shop!

We carry everything!
Hats and boots for riders,
blankets and tack for horses.
And everything in between!
Clip this ad & present this coupon.
Receive 20% off any one item.

320-632-1008
ENGLISH WESTERN PET SUPPLIES & GIFTS

Select Dealer of Kieffer Saddles -
Now 10% OFF! Located in Little Falls.



erol. Waxes and oils tend to form moisture barriers and collect dust and filth.

Using a soft rubber curry, again work the entire coat. Use strong, short strokes, lifting dirt, dander and hair to the coat's surface. This curry motion will create a massage feeling as well. Always work the curry in the same direction as the hair. Circular motion on the coat lifts the hair in the wrong direction, causing irritation to some horses. This is different than using your hand in a circular motion to calm an excited horse. There you most likely are not raising the hair in an irritating manner.

A smaller tooth, soft rubber curry can be used on the face and

leg areas. Care should be taken not to push too hard on the bony surfaces of the head and legs. Again, use a natural fiber dandy brush to remove excess filth and hair using short, lifting strokes.

A vacuum may be an effective alternative to shampooing, especially in the cooler weather of spring (or fall). It works well to remove any filth still remaining on the horse, especially after using the curry comb technique. Do take time to introduce the horse to the sound and feel of the vacuum. Have someone hold the horse with a lead rope rather than tying it or using cross ties.

Finally, lightly spray the coat with the coat moisturizer. This can be worked into the coat with a body brush. The finer bristles of the body brush will more effectively remove any fine dust or filth, leaving the coat feeling soft and looking natural. Lightly use a coat polish or coat finisher to give the coat a higher shine. Avoid using polishes that dry the coat or leave it feeling oily or plastic-like.

Effective grooming techniques are indeed an important part of horse care that will then contribute to the comfort of the horse. A horse that is comfortable will be more trusting and more easily collected when ridden or driven. 

Author's note: This article celebrates my first anniversary of contributing articles to *Horse & Family*. Thank you for the opportunity to share my ideas on horse care with you.

From "Horse Care for Comfort and Collection" Clinics presented by Dr. Tom Tweeten, ATH Science, Prior Lake, Minn., www.equisentials.com.

Joe Simon Horse Company

We buy and sell all classes of horses

Horses bought daily, 7 days a week, 9a.m.-6p.m.

952-469-3901

612-963-0712

Fax: 952-469-5986

