

## GROOMING AND PREPARATION FOR THE SHOW

Good grooming is essential to the health and appearance of all horses that are stabled or that are exercised or ridden. Grooming cleans the hair and the pores of the skin. This results in a cleaner and healthier skin which is less likely to become infested with skin parasites such as lice and mange mites. Good vigorous grooming massages the body muscles underneath the skin and thus improves their condition or fitness. However, no amount of grooming will make your horse look his best if he is thin and out of condition. Proper feeding must accompany regular grooming in order to present your horse looking his very best. Efficient grooming is possible only when you take personal pride in the appearance of your animal. The value of grooming depends upon the thoroughness and speed with which it is done. You should learn to work hard and rapidly and to do a thorough job in a minimum time.

### NECESSARY EQUIPMENT

Most good horsemen will use the following pieces of equipment to groom their animals:

1. Brushes. Two types of brushes are generally used - (a) a stiff-bristled cleaning brush (rice root or corn brush), and (b) a smooth fibered body brush which will pick up the fine dust and dirt particles missed by the cleaning brush.
2. Currycomb. A rubber currycomb is preferred to the metal type. A metal currycomb is used only to remove thick dry mud or heavy loose hair. For ordinary cleaning, a rubber currycomb is used since a metal currycomb is too severe for the thin skin of a horse.
3. Hoof pick. Several types of hoof picks or hooks are available for cleaning out the feet. If a commercial hoof pick is not available, an old screw driver will serve the purpose. Bend it over about an inch from the blade end.
4. Grooming cloth. Old Turkish towels or a woolen blanket can be cut into pieces of suitable size. These are used to wipe around the eyes, nostrils, ears, lips, dock and sheath. A grooming cloth is also used to give

a final polish to the haircoat and to aid in drying off the coat of a wet, sweating horse. Sometimes a clean, damp sponge is used to clean around the face.

5. Mane and tail comb. This small metal comb is sometimes used instead of the brush to keep the mane and tail free of tangles. The comb is also used to aid in thinning heavy, shaggy manes and tails by plucking or pulling out some of the excess hair.

6. Clippers and/or scissors. In order to have your horse presented in a neat, trim appearance, it is necessary to clip or trim the hair in certain areas of the body. An electric animal hair clipper with sharp blades is necessary to do a smooth clipping job on many areas such as the mane and legs. Sometimes scissors are used, but with them it is usually more difficult to do a smooth job.

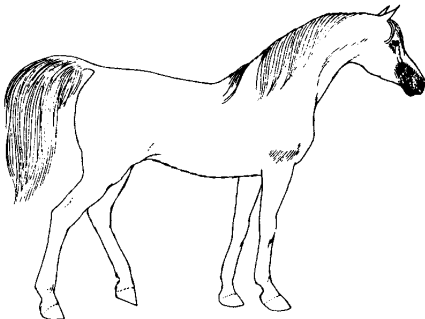
### STEPS IN ROUTINE GROOMING

Horses that are stabled should be groomed thoroughly every day. If they are exercised, they should be groomed both before leaving the stable and again on return.

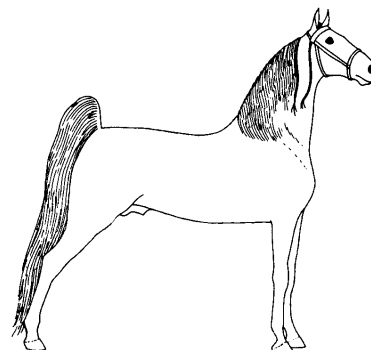
Most horsemen develop a procedure that they follow in grooming. The following steps are routine with many horsemen.

### COOLING OUT

If the horse has just returned from exercise, his tack should be removed and quickly put aside. If he is wet from sweating, his haircoat should be rubbed briskly with a grooming or drying cloth to partially dry the coat. Sponge the eyes, nostrils, lips and dock. He should then be blanketed and walked until he has "cooled out." A couple swallows of water every few minutes aids the cooling out. However, if you do not have time to walk your horse following a hot work-out, do not give him his fill of water until he has cooled out. A "cooled out" horse is neither hot to the touch nor breathing hard.



ARABIAN-FULL MANE AND TAIL



FIVE-GAITED SADDLE HORSE

## CLEANING THE FEET

Inspect your horse's underpinning and clean out his feet. This is usually the first step if the horse is just leaving the stable or being readied for the show ring. Daily inspection of the feet will give you an opportunity to check on injuries, loose shoes, small stones or other objects that may have become embedded in the foot, and thrush.

Follow a procedure when cleaning the feet so that your horse will know what to expect. Most horsemen work around the horse in a counter-clockwise direction starting with the near fore foot, then the near hind, the off hind, and off fore.

To pick up the fore foot, stand beside your horse's shoulder facing his rear. Place the hand nearest the horse on his shoulder and run your other hand gently but firmly down the back of the leg until the hand is just above the fetlock. Grasp the fetlock area with the fingers and at the same time press your other hand against the horse's shoulder, thus forcing his weight onto the opposite foreleg. Pick up the foot and support the weight of the horse's leg on your knee.

The hind foot is picked up in much the same fashion except the hind leg is usually grasped just above the fetlock on the cannon. As you press against the horse's hip with your inside hand, lift the foot directly toward you with the other hand so that the leg is bent at the hock. Then move to the rear placing your thigh underneath the fetlock so as to support his leg firmly. Once the underside of the foot is exposed, it is rather simple to clean out and inspect the foot. Work from the heel toward the toe with your hoof pick. Most important is a good cleaning of the bottom of the commissures or depressions between the frog and the

bars. The deepest part of each depression is near the heel. It is the part most often cleaned improperly, and is the usual seat of thrush.

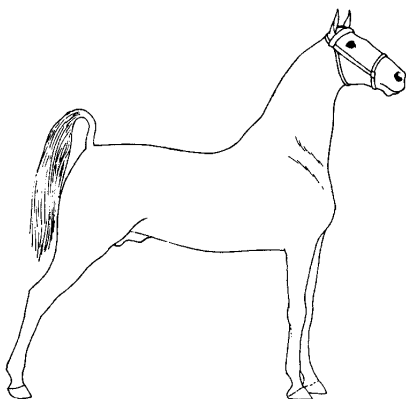
If the wall of the foot is dry, brittle and cracked, it is wise to use a hoof dressing on the feet occasionally. The frequency of this will depend on the condition of the feet. For most horses once a week is enough. Several good commercial hoof dressings are on the market. If your horse is going into the show ring, make sure the wall of the foot is clean. This may require washing with water and a stiff brush to remove caked mud or manure. Hoof dressing or light oil, such as neatsfoot oil, often improves the appearance of the feet for show.

## GROOMING THE BODY

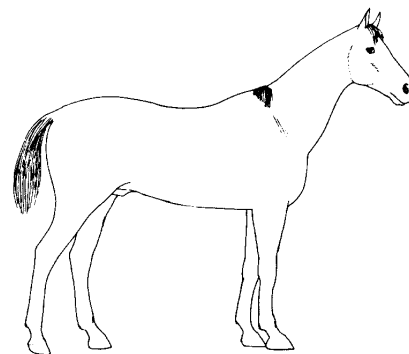
After the feet have been cleaned, the body is groomed. Some horsemen will go about this job differently than others; but regardless of the procedure, the idea is to remove dirt and dust from the haircoat and skin and bring out a sheen and gloss on your horse's body. Some horsemen will use the currycomb in one hand and the brush in the other - using both tools at the same time. Others feel they can do a more thorough job if they completely curry one side of the horse and then use the brush.

The usual procedure is to start on the left or near side, beginning on the neck, then the breast, shoulder, fore leg, back, side, belly, croup, and hind leg. Then move around to the right or off side and follow the same pattern. Then complete the brushing job with the head, mane and tail.

The currycomb is an excellent tool for removing excessive mud, dirt, loose hair, and saddle marks. Unless the horse is extremely dirty, a rubber currycomb is preferred over a metal currycomb. The currycomb is



THREE-GAITED HORSE  
CLIPPED OR ROACHED MANE AND CUT  
SET AND SHAVED TAIL



WESTERN OR STOCK HORSE  
CLIPPED MANE WITH FORETOP AND  
WITHER LOCK REMAINING  
TAIL SHORTENED AND SHAPED

never used over the bony areas - on the head and below the knees and hocks. A vigorous circular motion will prove most effective when currying. Clean the currycomb out frequently by striking it on the back of the brush or the heel of your boot.

Follow the currycomb with the stiff-bristled brush. Effective brushing requires plenty of "elbow grease" plus some "know-how". Short, strong strokes with outward action away from the horse's body removes more dirt than long, gliding strokes. A strong, stiffened arm backed up by the weight of your body and vigorous wrist action is necessary to get the hair coat clean. Brush the hair in the direction of its natural lay. Follow the same order as when the currycomb was used, except that in brushing the legs brush down to the hoof. Clean the brush every few strokes with the currycomb.

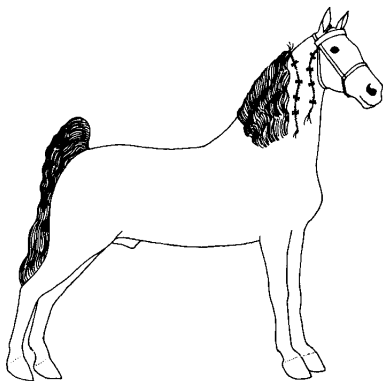
To pick up much of the fine dust out of the haircoat, follow the stiff-bristled brush with the fine, smooth-fibered body brush. Finish the job by brushing the head, mane and tail.

## MANE AND TAIL

When cleaning the mane and tail, begin brushing at the ends of the hair and gradually work up to the roots. On breeds, such as the Arabian and 5-gaited Saddle Horses, that are normally shown with a full mane and tail, be very careful that you do not pull out any hair. Washing the mane and tail two or three times during the week prior to the show will make this hair clean and soft. Be sure that all the soap is rinsed out or else your horse might start rubbing his mane and tail. After rinsing and shaking out the excess water, "pick" the mane and tail by separating the locks with your fingers. This will keep them from drying in tangles.

## REGULARITY

Of course, a horse that has not been groomed regularly



MANE-SMALL BRAIDS

will not be ready for the show ring with only one grooming. A well-groomed horse is cleaned faithfully every day for several weeks prior to the first show. He is certainly not clean if you can pick up scuff and dirt when passing the finger tips through the hair coat or leave gray lines on the coat where the fingers have passed.

Your show horse should be kept out of the sun most of the time in order to avoid a dull, sunburned appearance. If you are grazing your horse, turn him out to pasture at night or early in the morning and late in the evening.

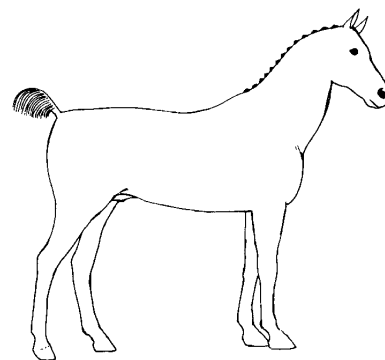
## WASHING

Washing your horse or pony all over is another method of getting him clean. However, washing is a poor substitute for regular grooming since it removes the protective oil of the hair and skin. But if you decide that washing is necessary, use lukewarm water and a mild soap. Rinse thoroughly with cool water and keep him out of drafts while being rubbed dry with a clean cloth. It is usually not advisable to wash your horse except the mane, tail and feet within two weeks of a show.

If you have a gelding, don't forget to clean the sheath occasionally. Some horses require it more often than others, especially those which urinate without protruding the penis. Use warm water, mild soap and remove the secretions, including the "bean" or ball of waxy secretion which sometimes develops in a depression in the head of the penis and which may interfere with urination.

## HAND RUBBING

In addition to the regular grooming procedures of currying and brushing, some horsemen will bring out the bloom on their horse by hand rubbing. Hand rubbing removes loose hair, stimulates the circulation,



TAIL-THINNED AND SHORTENED

and helps to produce a glossy coat. It is also restful to tired muscles after a long ride.

## THE FINAL TOUCH

Before exhibiting your horse, the final touch consists of going over the horse's body with the grooming cloth. This should be done just before entering the ring if you are at a show, since the cloth will pick up any dust which may have accumulated since brushing. Avoid using an excessively oily rub rag for this final grooming because oil on the surface of the haircoat will cause dust to stick to your animal. With a clean cloth or damp sponge wipe about the ears, eyes, nostrils, lips, sheath, and dock.

A good showman will carry a small rag concealed in his pocket just in case it is needed in the show ring. Of course, it is used to "touch up" your horse only when the judge is occupied elsewhere in the ring.

## CLIPPING and TRIMMING

As a rule, the program of most 4-H club members does not necessitate clipping the horse's entire haircoat for winter. Clipping is usually practiced when the horse is worked regularly during the winter and only when the horse receives very careful attention. When not actually at work, clipped animals should be stabled and blanketed during cold weather.

During severe weather it is not advisable to clip the legs. Where animals are to receive considerable work under the saddle, it is advisable to leave a saddle patch the size of a folded blanket. This will give protection from abrasions and infections and from wearing away the hair on the back under the saddle.

Clipping must not be used as a substitute for proper grooming. Clipping reduces the labor of grooming, but the clipped animal needs the same thorough and

vigorous grooming as an animal in full coat.

Practically all horses being prepared for the show ring require some trimming - about the feet and legs, the head, the mane and tail.

## FEET and LEGS

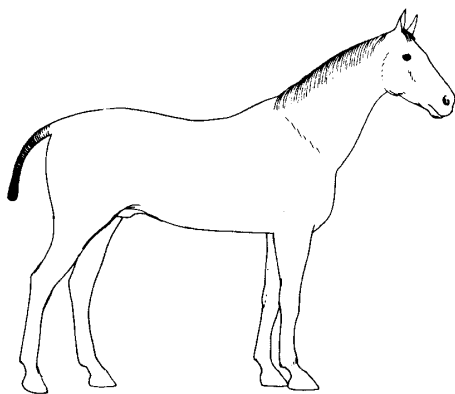
The hair around the fetlock joint is trimmed to give the legs a neater, cleaner appearance. Some exhibitors clip the legs from just below the knees and hocks down to the hoof head. Run the clippers with the natural lay of the hair. Clipping a couple of weeks before show time will allow the hair to grow enough to eliminate clipper marks and contrasting shades of color.

## THE HEAD

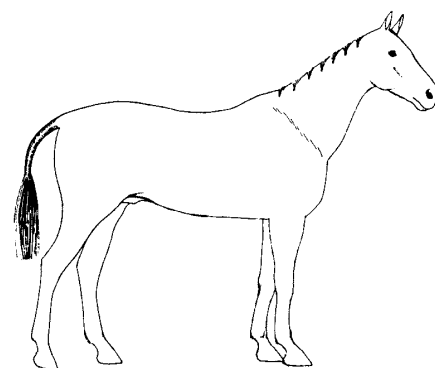
The long hair on the inside of the ears and under the chin and jaw is usually clipped. Some horsemen prefer not to remove all the hair from inside the ears since it is there for a purpose - to help keep dirt and insects from entering the inner ear. Some also prefer not to remove the long feeler hairs or whiskers from around the muzzle because they serve the purpose of helping the horse make contact with his surroundings, especially in the dark.

## THE MANE

Treatment of the mane varies considerably depending on the type and breed of horse being exhibited. On all saddle horses, the mane is usually clipped where the crown-piece or head stall of the bridle crosses behind the ears. This clipped area is called the bridlepath. It is usually about 1½ to 2 inches long, but some gaited Saddle horses are trimmed 6 or 7 inches down the neck. This is to make the horse's neck appear longer



THREE-GAITED SADDLE HORSE  
TAIL CLIPPED 6 TO 8 INCHES FROM BASE



HUNTER-TAIL BRAIDED  
6 TO 8 INCHES FROM BASE

and neater and finer through the throatlatch. The forelock or foretop from the bridlepath forward is seldom clipped and is pulled down under the center of the browband. This is braided with three strands of brightly colored ribbon on some ponies, the five gaited Saddle Horse and the Walking horse. About the only horse that is shown with a clipped foretop is the three gaited Saddle horse.

The entire mane is clipped on the three gaited Saddle horse. Many exhibitors of western or stock horses Show them with a closely clipped mane except that the foretop and a tuft of hair on the withers are left intact. Care must be exercised in clipping the mane to perform a smooth job and not get down into the body hair on the side of the neck.

Stock horses whose manes are not clipped and hunters usually have them shortened and thinned for the show ring. This is accomplished by pulling or plucking the hair until the remaining hair on the mane is about 4 or 5 inches long. Plucking is done by grasping a few hairs

at a time, sliding the hand up close to the roots, and pulling the hairs out by the roots with a quick jerk. Begin on the underside and pull the longest hair first. The hunter is usually shown with the mane braided into small braids tied with yarn along the horse's neck. The five gaited Saddle horse, the Walking horse, the Shetland and a few other breeds are shown with two braids on the mane - the foretop and the first section of hair on the mane behind the bridlepath.

## THE TAIL

On stock horses the tail is pulled or thinned (not cut off) to just below the hock. The hair is pulled as in the mane, working on the longest hairs and mostly on the underside of the tail. Most hunters and polo ponies also have the tail thinned and shortened. The three gaited Saddle horse has the tail closely clipped for a distance of 6 to 8 inches from the base.

Most hunters are shown with the tail braided for a distance of 8 to 12 inches from the base.

## NOTES

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