



Caring for your Grooming Kits

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1. Introduction

Maintaining your grooming kit is crucial for keeping your horses healthy and looking their best. With so much to do around the stables, it's easy to overlook these small details. However, grooming kit maintenance is just as important as cleaning your horse's stable, feed bins, hay nets, and water buckets. Dirty grooming kits can harbour bacteria, fungi, and parasites, leading to skin infections and other health problems for your horse.

Using worn-out and damaged tools makes it much more difficult to groom your horse properly. More importantly, your horse needs to feel comfortable and pain-free during grooming. Damaged tools can be uncomfortable and even painful for your horse. Grooming is also an opportunity to bond with your horse, giving them love and attention. Building a trusting relationship starts in the stable during your grooming time together.

Neglected grooming kits can be more costly in the long run, as tools become damaged more frequently and need replacing.

Here are some helpful steps to make sure that your grooming kit is ready for both you and your horse to have the best possible bonding experience and for you to be show ready.

2. Equipping your Grooming Kit

Grooming kits must include the following essentials:

1. **Curry Comb:** Curry combs are used for loosening mud, brushing coats and even massaging your horse. The most important thing to consider when using a curry comb is that this process helps to stimulate your horse's skin to release natural oils.
2. **Dandy Brush:** This is a stiff bristle brush that is used for removing thick mud from your horse's legs and body. It is very important not to use your dandy brush on sensitive areas. Light brushing of your horse's tail with a dandy brush can help with detangling after your horse returned from the paddock, however vigorous tail brushing with a dandy brush can make your horse's tail thin as hair may be pulled too hard.
3. **Body Brush:** This is a soft bristle brush used to remove finer dirt and dust and is especially good for removing bedding after a night in the stables. Body brushes are very important to take to a show as this brush is very soothing for your horse. A body brush is always used to shine up your horse and when used wet can help with smoothing hair into position and neatening up quartermarkers.
4. **Mane and Tail Brush:** This brush is always used to detangle hair and to keep your horse's hair free of knots. Always prepare your horse's mane and tail with a brush before plaiting for a show. It will make the turnout process much easier.
5. **Mane and Tail Comb:** These combs vary in sizes and uses. A larger comb can be used for detangling while smaller combs are used for plaiting. You can even get plaiting combs that help to divide hair evenly for perfect plaits.



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6. **Sweat scraper:** This is always useful to have in your grooming kit. Removing excess sweat and water is made easy with a scraper. Be gentle when scraping sweat and water off your horse and always be mindful of their sensitive areas and needs.
7. **Sponges and Towels:** Cloths and towels are vital. They can provide you with the perfect shine finish at a show and can also be used to dry off your horse after bathing and wiping sweat away after working. Sponges should always be clean and dry after use. A useful tip is to keep sponges and towels in a mesh laundry bag so that they can be easily washed and dried.
8. **Hoof Pick:** Grooming kits should never be without a good quality hoof pick. Your horse's soundness is vital and making sure that they do not have mud or stones in their hooves, keeps them comfortable and happy in their way of going.
9. **Surgical Steel Scissors:** These are the safest for trimming and neatening up your horse. Never use blunt or rusty scissors. Although these are expensive, they are worth investing in and will last a long time. Curved scissors with blunt ends are the safest to use.

3. Cleaning and Disinfecting your Tools

There are two reasons to clean and disinfect your grooming kit. Firstly, cleaning ensures health both your own health and your horse's health. The second is to achieve longevity of your tools.

There are a few steps that you can take to ensure that you have the very best grooming kit for your horse:

1. **Regular cleaning:** After grooming your horse, remove any dirt hair and debris from your tools. Tap your brushes against a hard surface to dislodge the dirt. Use your brushes to remove dirt from combs and wipe then with a cloth.
2. **Washing:** Periodically wash your grooming tools with warm soapy water. You do not need to use any harsh chemicals. A mild soap works fine. Always rinse the soap out well and air dry. This prevents the growth of bacteria and mould. Do not store damp grooming tools.
3. **Disinfect:** Disinfecting your tools is good practice and can be done periodically. If you are using a bought equine product, always follow the instructions carefully. Bleach is also a good disinfectant, however, always make sure that it is diluted. One part bleach to ten parts water is a good guideline. Disinfecting must be done after illness.

4. Sharing Grooming Kits with Multiple Horses

Grooming kits should not be shared among multiple horses. Shared tools can spread diseases such as Rain Rot, Ringworm, Strangles, Equine Herpes Virus (EHV), Vesicular Stomatitis and Equine Influenza.

When working as a travelling groom, I prepare clean and disinfected grooming kits for each of the horses in my care or I ensure that the client has packed their own grooming kit. This ensures that there is the highest quality care.

The same applies to cloths, sponges and towels, blankets and tack.



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It may be tempting to lend others your grooming supplies, but it is not advisable. Rather keep a spare clean and disinfected cloth, towel and hoof pick for a friend in need. Your travelling groom can provide these things in an emergency.

Horse owners may have preferences when it comes to grooming so always be sure to ask before working with their horses.

5. Storage

Grooming tool storage is just as important as looking after grooming tools themselves. After all, if you have taken the time to care for your tools, you would want to store them in the best possible manner. The following things are important when storing your grooming kit:

1. **Organization:** Use a dedicated grooming bag or box to keep things neat and tidy and easy to find when you need them. Ensure that the bag or box that you choose protects your tools.
2. **Ventilation:** Keep your grooming kit in a ventilated area. If in a tack room be considerate of others and make sure your area is neat and tidy, and your grooming kit is packed in a suitable place.
3. **Regular Maintenance:** Ensure that your grooming bags and boxes are maintained. Wash these with care and repair any rips and tears in bags. Boxes and bags should be replaced when worn out. You do not need expensive boxes and bags either, keep things simple and practical. If you are going to a show, it is important to consider a bag that keeps your things together so that they don't get lost or mixed up on the showground.

6. Bonding time

Grooming your horse can be one of the most rewarding activities. There is nothing quite like the quiet brushing sound in the stable. It is precious time that you have with just you and your horse. Grooming builds trust and allows you to have quality time with your horse.

Physical contact can be soothing and reassuring to your horse, helping them to get to know you, your touch, voice and body language. This helps in every situation in and outside the stable. Physical contact also allows you to look at the finer details of your horse so that you can identify any change or issues that may need attention.

Routine and consistency are a wonderful practice both for the rider and the horse. The predictability of the time you will spend together is a gift and each day is a new experience you will share together. Both you and your horse can quietly brush away the troubles of the day or share the exciting moments. Take time to talk to your horse while grooming and you will be rewarded with understanding and love.



Sean the Travelling Groom

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7. Final Thoughts

Where this resource started as a practical guide to maintaining your grooming kit, it ends with so much more. Every action you take is an act of love and dedication to these beautiful athletes and companions.

Happy grooming to everyone
