



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

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“You don’t get a second chance to make a good first impression” the saying goes. And in competition, first impressions are really important. From the very start you must create a picture that grabs the attention of the judge and then, of course, support that first impression with the quality of your work.

Remember that coat preparation for the show season starts months before your first outing. Here are some useful tips to ensure that first impressions count:

1. Consider adding a vegetable oil or an essential Omega-3 fatty acid supplement to your horse’s well-balanced diet for added coat shine. These are available at feed stores or (yes, it’s true!) the supermarket. Copra, which is a coconut by-product, is a good additive to feed. This is usually available at your local feed merchant and is very inexpensive. However, it is quite fattening, so don’t overfeed. You should soak it before feeding, as well. Use as recommended and introduce this slowly over a period of time.
2. Sponging around your horse’s face and ears after exercise helps prevent fungal hair loss. There are also fungal shampoos on the market to assist with this problem. We recommend ‘3 Horse Fungal Shampoo’ with Aloe Vera and two active fungal ingredients. Avoid contact with your horse’s eyes. This product is good for girth rash and mud fever as well.
3. Keep different-sized sponges for different duties (face, body, dock) and remember which is used for which. Tip – use a different colour or size for each task. An economical way of buying sponges is to buy in bulk, somewhere like Plastic Box. Here you can buy slabs of sponge and cut it into the sizes you require.
4. Hoof picks are cheap. Always use a sharp one to remove rocks and debris and replace the pick when it no longer does the job easily. Tip – tie a bright string on the pick to make it easier to find! It is a good idea to hang a hoof pick on a hook at the paddock so when you are bringing your horse in, pick its hooves at the paddock, leaving the hoof dirt behind.
5. Use a COTTON tail bag to keep your horse’s tail thick, long and protected. We do not recommend synthetic tail bags. Make sure to wash and condition tail as necessary, remembering to wash the tail bag when you wash your horse’s tail. Let the tail bag dry before putting this back on the tail. Don’t ever bandage a wet tail; the consequences can be disastrous as your horse may lose tail hair and worse. This can happen very quickly; some horses can drop their tail overnight. Try to avoid brushing or combing a wet tail, too, for similar reasons.
6. Remember, vigorous brushing of manes and tails is likely to break the hairs and result in unwanted thinning. It can take a long time to replace hair that is broken or inadvertently pulled out. Combo type covers can be hard on manes if there is no satin lining. Go gently.
7. Hoof oils and dressings for health or show are available. If you have a particular problem with your horse’s feet-such as hooves that crack easily-ask your farrier for product suggestions and advice. We recommend that your horse’s hooves are thoroughly cleaned weekly - using a stiff brush and a bucket of water - especially in winter. Inspect for cracks and fungus, such as seedy toe and thrush. Tip: ‘Worlds Best Hoof Oil’ is a product that is quickly absorbed. Use on dry hooves and don’t forget the underneath of the hoof.
8. Use a detangler and a wide-toothed comb (or your fingers) to gently remove any large snarls from mane and tail. Only brush or comb tails sparingly and work from the bottom up to lessen the likelihood of unwanted hair breakage. We recommend using Canter Mane & Tail Conditioner as a weekly application to keep the tail from snarling or tangling.
9. Horse’s coats will fade or bleach in the sunlight, so provide plenty of shade. Also consider adding a cover and neck cover or hood (depending on the season) to prevent this. If you decide to use a hood on your horse, please ensure that the fit is correct and won’t move over the eyes. You can buy hoods that are made out of very light material that is breathable. We recommend detachable neck rugs, as they won’t rub a mane out as much as combos. Sweat in the coat accelerates the fade, so rinse a sweaty horse before allowing it to sunbathe.

10. Wash your horse when necessary, but don't overdo it. Frequent shampooing may actually dry out and dull the coat by stripping the natural oils. Don't forget to use conditioner after shampooing for a lovely soft coat. An inexpensive way of conditioning your horse's coat is to use a couple of tablespoons of Eco Bath Oil in a bucket of water. Use this as a leave-on rinse after shampooing, avoiding the face and bottom area as these areas can get sunburnt. We don't recommend you use this on pink-pigmented skin or light coloured horses. Conditioner is great on tails, but don't condition manes if you are planning to plait them! Look after your horse by scraping it down, then keeping it warm after washing. Never leave a wet horse in a cold wind or without a warm cover on a cold day.
 11. Good covers will keep your horse warm and dry during the worst weather and help its coat stay smooth and glossy. Remember to keep the inside of covers clean as well as the horse. We recommend using a cotton under-rug; they wash easily and keep your other covers from clogging up with horse-hair. Check that the covers fit properly and are not going to rub, especially in the shoulder area. Cheap covers can be false economy. We do recommend a good wool rug as an additional under-rug. They are readily available. Check out: www.sudburyfarm.co.nz for good quality wool rugs made by Roulette Rugs or The Saddlery Warehouse for less expensive wool rugs. Use a good rub vest. We don't recommend using a thick rub vest as they can cause additional bulking and more rub problems.
 12. For extra shine on special occasions, spritz your horse's coat with a sheen product. Tip - take care to avoid the saddle area if you are planning on riding; saddle slippage is never good. A very good shine product is Cowboy Magic Super Bodyshine or Show Sheen. Regular use of coat polish sprays right after washing acts like Scotchguard – the dust and dirt slides right off. Once again, avoid the saddle area if you are competing in ridden classes.
 13. Horses with pink skin need extra sun protection. Use sunscreen or a shade on susceptible pink noses! You can buy nose guards from your local saddlery store. Similarly, watch out for pink-pigmented skin in white socks; it can get burnt just as easily. You can buy inexpensive (soft) bell boots for protection but make sure they don't rub. Zinc and Castor Oil (from the baby section of the supermarket) is a good cost-effective product to use regularly. Alternatively, there are commercial preparations available for animal use. Don't use human sunscreen products on animals.
 14. To help protect against skin infections, regularly disinfect grooming brushes and combs. It doesn't make much sense to use dirty grooming tools on your horse, so try to wash brushes weekly. Take care not to spread any skin irritations between horses if you are grooming more than one.
 15. Keep brushes clean as you go. After every few strokes with your body brush, clean the bristles on a currycomb, damp sponge or towel held in your other hand. You can buy inexpensive towels at Spotlight, to ensure you have plenty of dry ones on hand. We picked some up there for \$5.99, so keep an eye on the 'Special' bins!
 16. A rubber currycomb is great for shifting coats in the spring and autumn and doubles as a massage for your horse. The Saddlery Warehouse has a wide range.
 17. Multi-task: use a brush in each hand or a sheepskin mitt in one hand and brush in the other! Brush one stroke, mitt one stroke and so on. This not only flattens the coat but also helps with shine. Brush from front to back, top to bottom, for the most efficient effort.
 18. Grooming or Baby Wipes are very handy on show day for any number of last minute tasks. We recommend that everyone has a roll of Chux cloths in their tack box. They are inexpensive and very useful. You can buy them at your local hardware store by the roll.
 19. If you have a grey horse or one with a lot of white markings, keep some spray-on equine stain remover—created to deal with manure and grass stains—at the ready.
 20. Grooming is the best opportunity to inspect your horse for injuries, skin irritations or areas of sensitivity. Run your bare hands down its legs to check for any heat or swelling.
 21. Keep up with routine grooming chores, such as mane pulling, trimming fetlocks, et cetera. That way you (and your horse) are not overwhelmed with last minute clean-ups before a show. If your horse objects to having its mane pulled, try doing a little each day after exercise, while the pores are open. Make sure to only pull a little hair each time, to lessen discomfort.
 22. Check your horse's stable and/or paddock fencing for protruding objects, as minor wounds can lead to blemishes and worse. Horses love to rub on all the wrong things. Ripped covers are also a nuisance and can be expensive to repair.
 23. When plaiting or even training a mane over to one side, use a mousse or gel to help get wayward hairs under control. Once again a neck cover (satin lined) will assist with training and settling hair. Mane Stay Hoods are excellent for this problem; they breathe and are a firm fit. You can often find second-hand ones on TradeMe. Affordable gels are available at the supermarket. Be sure to test on your horse first.
 24. Colour-enhancing shampoos accentuate your horse's natural tones and bring out the highlights of its coat. There is a huge selection at your local saddlery or feed merchant. Get a small bottle first and see if it works before committing, as they can be very expensive. There are now horse dyes on the market, if you would like a more permanent look. This can be a bold and expensive exercise, so make sure you get the right colour. Sudbury Farm now sells Show Pony Colour – www.sudburypark.co.nz. Chestnut horses can be given a course of Cacoliv paste to help darken coats. This product is available through your local feed merchant or can be bought on line at www.horsesuppliesdirect.com.au and can be less expensive and more effective than some colour-enhancing shampoo products.
 25. Remember, a healthy horse will usually have a great coat – look after the inside and the outside will largely look after itself! Don't forget your worming regime. We recommend yearly attention to teeth using a qualified equine dentist. Feed only good quality hay, chaff and other feed for optimum health. Avoid hay that is filled with weeds. Horses don't like eating weeds and it makes a mess in the stable or paddock as well.
 26. Let sweat and mud dry before attempting to brush it out. Alternatively, hose your horse off, if the weather is nice and/or you can keep it out of any cold winds.
- Let your horse go naked and roll—dirt isn't permanent and sunlight is good for general well being. Don't do this in winter or immediately after you have prepared for an event!



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