
Waterless turnbacks

by Joy Poling, Chief Horse Management Judge, Mid West region

I think kids rely too much on using a hose or water bucket to "clean" their horse after riding and don't know how to use elbow grease to groom a sweaty horse. I've seen kids not do a good grooming because they didn't have water available and thought they could not groom properly without water. At one clinic where we didn't have the option of using a hose, I let my horse dry and groomed (without water) and let the kids give me a turnback*. He was cleaner than the horses that were "groomed" with water. Maybe this is due to the fact that they board; time is limited so they try to short cut the grooming.

To clean a horse for a turnback without water, after the horse is dry, I curry him all over; then use the dandy brush. I then use a medium bristle brush and clean the brush every 2 or 3 strokes (I use a metal curry comb to clean the brushes). As the dried salt comes up you can feel the difference. I just keep brushing until I don't feel the grit/grime on my hands. Your hands will eventually come back clean when you wipe them across their coat. I finish off with a body brush. I have a medium bristle and a very soft bristle body brush and all my brushes are natural bristle. I think they clean better than the synthetic ones. It does take a lot of time and I know we don't always have the extra time it takes. I do think it's important that kids learn that you can groom without water. It just takes lots of time and elbow grease.

*For non Pony Club people, a turnback is a horse, tack, and rider inspection one hour after your ride at a rally competition. This check ensures that your horse and gear have been properly cared for (e.g. no sweat marks, mud, etc...).