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# Knocking Off the Dirt!

Proper grooming and keeping horses clean involves not only using the right tools but also behaving safely around the horse.



*Being clean can win awards!*

## Introduction

Horses, just like people, need to stay clean in order to not only look good but also stay healthy. Grooming not only gets the horse clean; it also relaxes them and allows you to look for injuries, parasites, or skin conditions.

There are special tools designed just for grooming horses.

**Curry combs** break up mud and dirt and help remove loose hair. These are used in a circular motion across the body. They are not used on the lower legs or the face, where the skin is thin, since this can be painful.

**Brush** can be “hard” (stiff) or “soft” (flexible), and are used to brush off the dirt and loose hair. These are used by brushing in the same direction as the hair and go all over the body, including the face and legs. The hard brush should be used gently on the face and legs, though.

**Hoof picks** are used to pick mud and rocks out of the bottom of a horse’s hoof.

Mane combs are used to comb out the hair in the mane and tail. They must be used gently or they will break the hair off and make it look untidy and messy. You should use the comb from the bottom of the mane or tail and move upwards to prevent breaking the hair.

Horses often stay in stalls for hours at a time. If stalls are not cleaned regularly, it can not only lead to a build-up of ammonia and other bad smells, but can be unhealthy for the horse. **Pitchforks** are best used with straw bedding. Straw and manure are picked up very easily by the pitchfork. Pitchforks are usually made of metal and can be dangerous if not carried carefully.

**“Muck forks”** have tines that are closer together. This makes it easier to pick up horse manure. They’re also usually made of plastic, which makes them safer around horses and people.

**Skill Level:** Cloverbud, K-3

### Learner Outcomes

1. Identify basic tools used to clean horses.
2. Explain the benefits of proper grooming and cleaning.

**Science Standard(s):** Life Science/ Characteristics of Organisms

**Success Indicator:** Correctly identify and demonstrate proper use of grooming tools.

**Life Skill(s):** Decision-making, Critical thinking, Disease prevention

**Tags:** Cloverbud, horse, grooming

**Time Needed:** 30 minutes (can break into smaller segments)

### Materials List

Copies of horse outline, pictures of grooming tools

Colored yarn, black felt, “Googly” eyes, glue, scissors

Stuffed animal – horse

Horse grooming tools – curry comb, hard and soft brush, hoof pick, and mane comb

Human hair brush, comb, nail file

Muck forks and muck tubs

Tennis balls/plastic eggs

### Did You Know?

Horses groom each other using their teeth and noses!

Sweaty horses like to roll in sand or dirt to help dry the sweat!

### Glossary Words

**Curry comb** – made of fairly rigid rubber, plastic, or metal; used to loosen mud, dirt, and loose hair from a horse's coat

**Dandy brush** – another term for a stiff bristled brush

**Hoof pick** – used to clean mud, rocks, and other debris out of a horse's hoof

**Mane comb** – used to comb tangles out of the horse's mane or tail

**Muck fork** – a plastic pitchfork with tines close together, designed to clean stalls bedded with shavings or sawdust

**Pitchfork** – a metal fork with tines spaced wider apart, designed to clean stalls with straw bedding

**Tines** – the thin, pointed projections of the muck fork or pitchfork

## Experience / What to Do

Begin by handing out human hair brushes, combs, and nail files. The children can certainly bring their own. Have them demonstrate proper grooming on themselves or each other.

### Groom Your Own Horse!

1. Give each child a stuffed horse.
2. Using a stuffed horse, explain and demonstrate the correct use of the grooming tools. Emphasize the proper location on the body to use each tool.
3. Allow the children to demonstrate on their own stuffed horses. Alternatively, have them cooperate, with one "holding" the horse and the other "grooming."

### Alternate Activity for Grooming

1. Give each child a copy of the outline of the horse and a page of pictures of grooming tools. Have them color the horse and then cut out the pictures of grooming tools. Help the younger children cut out the smaller pictures of grooming tools.
2. Help them cut some of the yarn into 1 inch sections, some of the yarn into 2 inch sections, and the black felt into small squares. The soft side of Velcro works, too.
3. Have the child glue a few pieces of yarn into place for a mane (1 inch pieces) and tail (2 inch pieces). Also, have them glue the small, black felt squares (or soft Velcro) over the hooves. Finally, have them glue a "googly eye" onto their horse.
4. Ask them to tell you where the grooming tools are used on the horse, and then glue the pictures of grooming tools on to the appropriate body part of the horse.

### Keeping Things Clean

1. Discuss how keeping a clean room is similar to cleaning a horse's stall.
2. Have the children help clean up after the activities!

## For More Information

Search [www.extension.org/](http://www.extension.org/) for additional information.

## References

"Equine Science – Basic Knowledge for Horse People of All Ages" by Jean T. Griffiths. [www.Horsebooksetc.com](http://www.Horsebooksetc.com) or Phone: 1-800-952-5813

"Horse Science" by Ray Antoniewicz. [www.4-hmall.org/detail.aspx?ID=16681](http://www.4-hmall.org/detail.aspx?ID=16681)

"Horses & Horsemanship" by Ray Antoniewicz. [www.4-hmall.org/detail.aspx?ID=16680](http://www.4-hmall.org/detail.aspx?ID=16680)

## Talk It Over

### Share . . .

1. What new equipment did you learn about today?
2. What is the most interesting thing about the equipment that you learned?

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### Reflect . . .

1. Why is it important to groom a horse?
2. Why is it important to keep a stall clean?

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### Generalize . . .

1. What happens if you don't take a bath?
2. What do you think happens if you don't groom your horse?

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### Apply . . .

1. How can you use what you learned today with a different animal?
2. How would you change what you did if you were teaching someone else to groom a horse?

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## More Ideas!

### Road Apple Hunt!

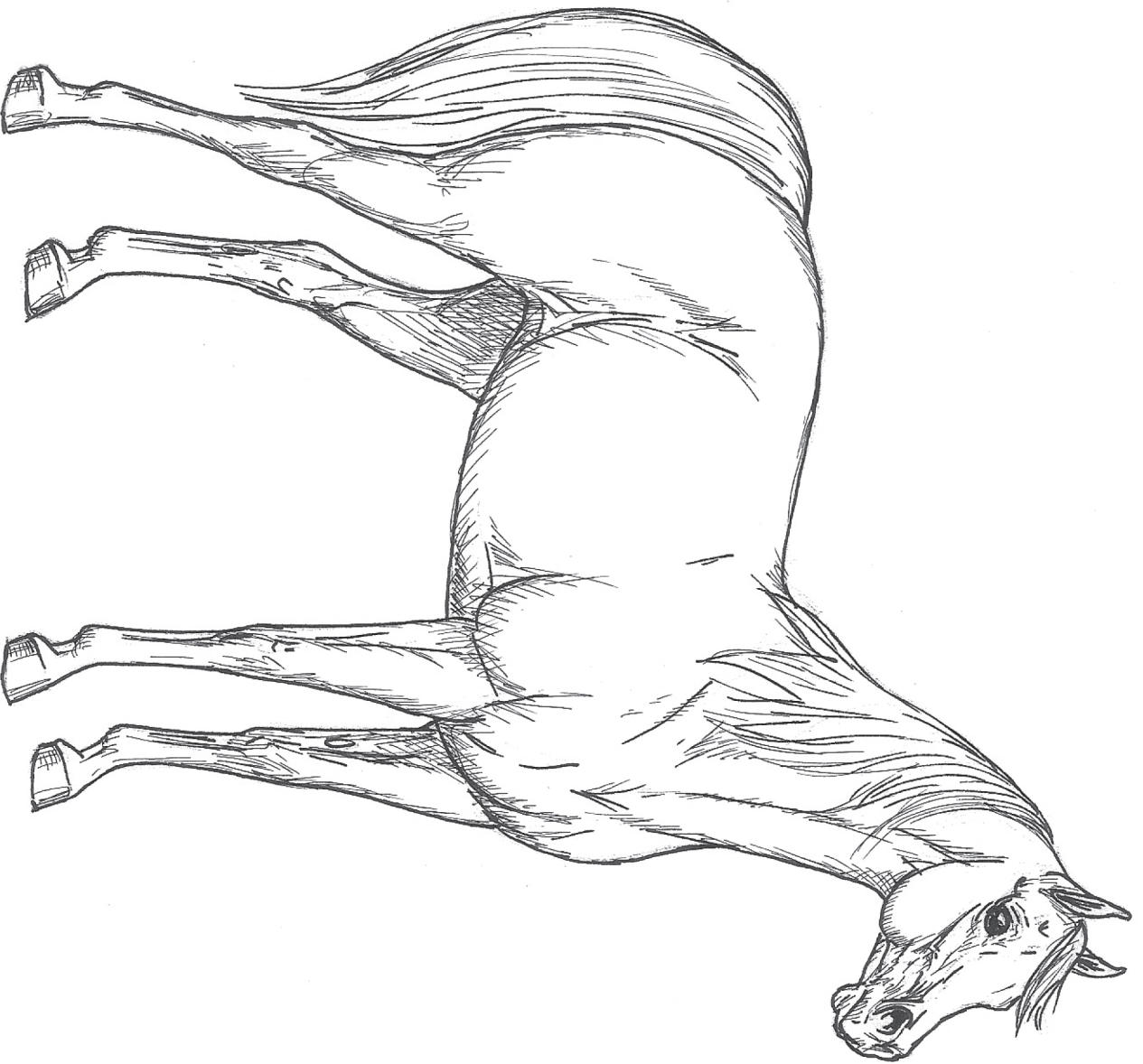
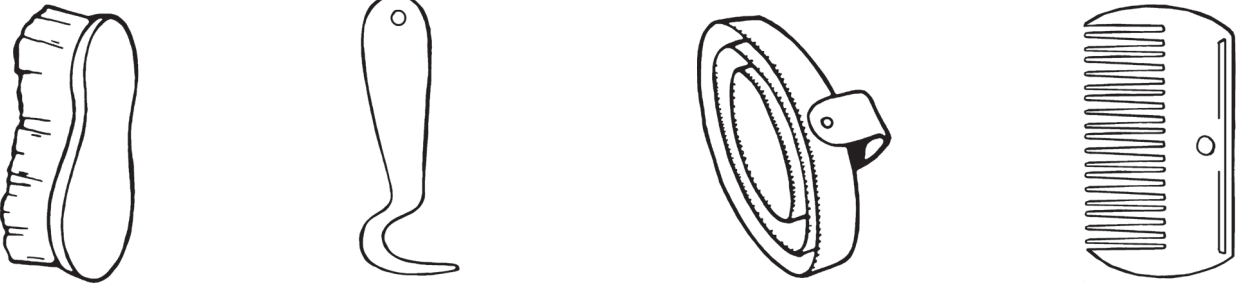
Explain why it's important for horses to have clean stalls. This can be related to the children having to clean their room. Demonstrate how to hold and use the muck fork, emphasizing safety and care. In particular, discuss the length of pole that might be behind the child as they carry the tool, and the potential danger of the tines. Use of smaller, child-sized muck forks will make this game easier for the children.

1. This game can be played indoors or outdoors, but is easier on grass.
2. Place the tennis balls or plastic eggs around the room or yard area.
3. Place the muck tub or trash can in the center of the space. As an alternative, each child or team can have their own muck tub or trash can.
4. Have the children practice using the muck fork by going around and picking up tennis balls or eggs and depositing them into the muck tub or trash can. You can assign specific colors of eggs to each child and have them take turns.

Caution: This should not be designed as a race. Encourage the children to walk carefully so as to not drop the tennis ball or egg rather than rushing to try to get the most. Spread the balls or eggs out so the children have room to move around without encountering each other.

### Alternative Activity for Road Apple Hunt!

Divide the children into teams and assign them a specific color of tennis ball or egg. Have them work cooperatively, with one child playing "spotter" and the second child playing "picker." Each time a ball or egg is delivered successfully, have the children swap roles.



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