



Groom Faves

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If you spend enough time caring for horses and preparing them to be their best for sport, you start to develop a bit of a ritualized system complete with your favorite products and tools to make it all happen.

We caught up with 13 of the best professional groomers and horse care specialists to find out what they just can't live without.

CLEANING UP THE MESS

There are countless shampoos on the market, all specially designed to make your equine friend the cleanest he's ever been – until later in the day when he rolls in his own manure. The one name brand that stuck out in our conversations was... Ivory! Nearly everyone we spoke to extolled the virtues of having Ivory on hand: great for legs, great for oily coats, great all over, great to mix with Quic Silver for grey horses, and so on. Ivory has rightfully earned its spot on the list of must-haves.

Also of note is Corona shampoo, which at the moment is only available in the United States. Several of our advisers swear by it for full-body shampooing.

DETANGLING THE BIRD'S NEST

Tails are good for a few things. They have a high capacity for holding shavings, specifically when running late or on show days. They also seem to practice braiding themselves all night, resulting in a nest that an eagle would be proud of. Thus, the emergence of the detangling spray.

It seems that Cowboy Magic detangler takes the cake in this category, though not the runaway that Ivory was for our previous section. Interestingly, this category polarized some of our groomers – some loved Cowboy Magic and swore that Show Sheen was the devil, others said the opposite. Some honorable mentions to Dream Coat and Canter mane & tail spray.

The next trick of course is that the spray won't detangle everything without at least some human intervention. It was a common refrain that large knots should be pulled out with fingers first, followed by either a brush or comb (dealer's choice) starting at the bottom working section by section upwards to the top.

CLEAN TACK IS GOOD TACK

This particular category was nearly the runaway that saw Ivory blow the greasy grime off the competition earlier. It appears as though most groomers trust Stubben saddle soap to do the job of sudsing up the leather goods. Not much argument to be made against it either!



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THE WRAP GAME

Bandaging horse's legs is a huge responsibility and is a huge part of keeping horses healthy before, between and after competitions. Our grooms all had their own personal take on the best practices for bandaging, with perhaps just one trend emerging: Back on Track wraps with Sore No More was most frequently mentioned as the trusted method.

Some grooms prefer the Euro-style bandages (much taller quilts, from just above the knee all the way to the hoof), especially when using poultice. Meanwhile, most grooms elect to use poultice sparingly if at all, sometimes just after the last competition of the week. Traumeel and Tendonil were other favorite gels and creams to use under bandages.

DESERT ISLAND GROOMING

We asked our grooms to list some of the things they simply couldn't live or work without. The leader in the clubhouse? You guessed it... towels.

It seems as though there are never enough towels. Small ones for small stains or drips. Medium sized ones for the ring bag – your jack-of-all-trades towel, as it were. Large ones for after baths. More medium sized ones for hot-towelings backs on cold days. Maybe just a few more towels in case.

Also hoof picks. Maybe a good idea to put one in every pocket you find.

Kevin Bacon's hoof solution was the most commonly referenced hoof care product, while Back on Track everything, baby powder, baby oil and baby wipes were all quite popular as well.

IT'S COOKIE TIME

The love these grooms had for their charges was evident through the thought and care they put into their daily work. And what goes well with love? Treats. Everyone should put treats in their ring bag, and keep a healthy supply in the tack stall too. But, you know, don't spoil them.