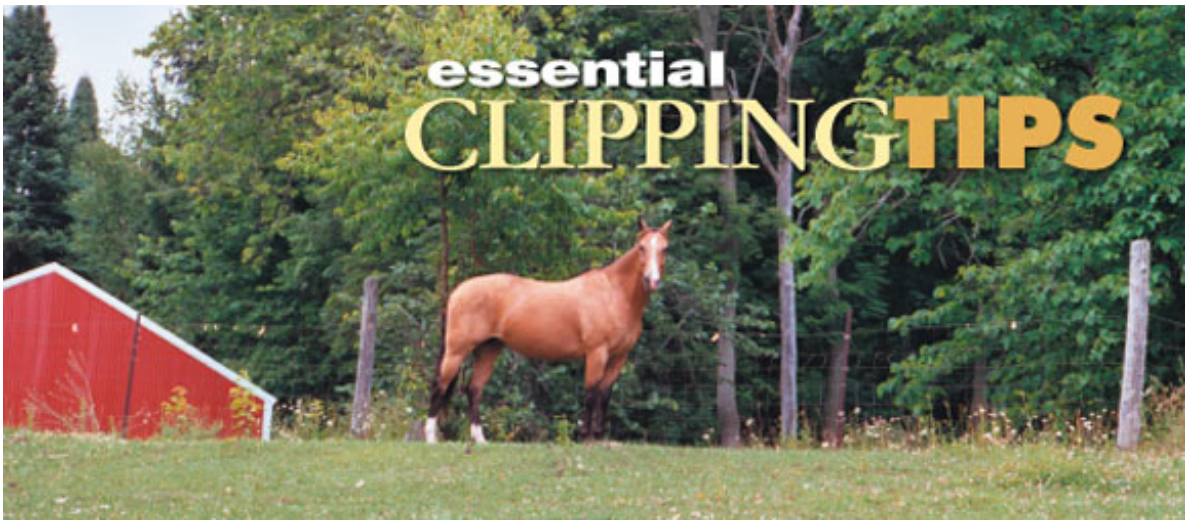
Clipping & Grooming FAQs

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



When should I clip my horse?

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When should I clip my horse?

Clip your horse for quick drying, easier grooming, better conditioning, and reduced chance of overheating. In general, horses grow a long, thick coat during the winter and a new, shorter and cooler coat for summer. This served horses well when they lived outside year round and were subjected to all the elements. Leaving a thick winter coat on your horse, however, may be doing more harm than good, especially if he spends most of the season stabled. Thick coats heat up quickly, causing excessive sweating, and they dry slowly, making the horse damp and chilled.
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How do I introduce my horse to clipping?

First, show your horse the clippers and let him smell them. Then gently rub the clippers, while they are turned off, on your horse's body. Next, step away from the horse and turn on the clippers. Let them run until he becomes comfortable with the sound. Begin clipping on less ticklish areas, such as the shoulder. Make the entire experience more enjoyable by offering him his favorite treat.
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Do I need to groom my horse prior to clipping?

Yes, your horse should be completely groomed and/or bathed before you begin clipping. Dirt and mud will clog clippers, making them dull and inefficient.
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What kind of clippers should I use?

Choose a set of heavy-duty clippers with a powerful motor for body clipping. Use a set of trimmers for clipping around

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delicate areas including the ears, eyes, and hooves. Make sure your clippers are clean, sharp, and well-oiled. Dull clippers will pull hair, making the horse very uncomfortable. Also, choose a set of clippers with a quiet motor; this will put you and your horse at ease.
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What style of clip is best for my horse?

There are several different styles of clips, depending on the needs of your horse.

- **The "belly clip":** A simple clip, only the hair on the underside of the belly and chest is removed. This clip removes hair from the area most prone to sweating. It's practical for a horse that is lightly exercised, and often turned out into a field.
- **The "trace clip":** A popular clip for riding horses, the hair is removed on the underside of the neck and belly, or where the harness traces touch. Like the belly clip, the trace clip leaves enough hair for warmth so the horse can be turned out into the field.
- **The "blanket clip":** The horse is clipped on the head, neck, and flanks. A blanket-shaped area of hair is left on back and hindquarters. This clip is good for horses that are turned out, exercised frequently, and shown on the weekends.
- **The "full clip":** Removes all the hair from the horse's body. Used mostly for show and competition horses. Horses with a full clip must be rugged up against the cold, so keep many blankets on hand.

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When should I give my horse a full clip?

A full clip is given to horses that compete during the winter. A full clip must be well maintained. Horses with full clips will need to be kept warm with blankets and stable bandages.
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Where I live, we have very cold winters. Is it best to leave my horse unclipped?

Most horses will benefit from some clipping. If your horse is turned out often, then a simple belly clipping will keep him warm, and help him cool off quickly after exercising. Clip more area if your horse is stabled most of the winter. Just remember that the more area you clip, the more layers of blankets you may have to add to keep your horse warm.
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