

Bathing Your Horse: Step by Step

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If you are bathing your horse for the first time, consider a few things before you begin:

- First, check the weather. If it's too cool for you to get wet, then it's probably too cold for your horse, too.
- Next, carefully choose a good area for bathing. The ground should be concrete or grass, not dirt that could turn into mud pile and negate your efforts.
- Tie her up or, better yet, have a companion hold her still for you. Bathing can dry out hooves, so consider massaging petroleum jelly or [hoof dressing](#) onto her hooves for waterproofing.
- If you will use a hose, begin by directing the water at one of your horse's front feet. Leave the water there until she shows signs of acceptance (for example, she stops trying to move away). For an overly nervous horse, you may want to begin by sponging the water onto her back and then gradually introducing the hose.

Let the Bathing Begin

After hosing your horse's feet and legs, gradually move up to the body. Once the horse is wet, you can use a sponge to shampoo the coat. Mix a little bit of [mild horse shampoo](#) in a bucket of water. Too much shampoo can dry out the horse's coat, leaving it dull and dry. Shampoo one section and rinse. Trying to shampoo the entire horse before rinsing is not recommended. If the shampoo dries, this will also result in a dry, dull coat.

In general, horses don't like having water on their heads, so leave the head for last. To help make your horse comfortable with the water, try trickling a little between his ears, or you can allow him to take a drink from the hose. You will want to minimize any rinsing, so if you use shampoo on the head, only use a very small, heavily diluted amount. After washing the head, thoroughly dry ears and nostrils with a soft, clean towel. At least every six months, use a gentle, non-irritating [sheath cleaner](#) to clean the sheath of stallions and geldings or the udders of a mare.

Once your horse is clean, use a [sweat scraper](#) to remove excess water from the coat. Then rub her down with clean, dry towels. Work a [horse conditioner](#) into her mane and tail to minimize hair breakage. Walk your horse until her coat is completely dry, otherwise she may be tempted to take a roll in the dirt.

To ensure the bath goes smoothly, have all your tools ready and nearby. Use the checklist of horse bathing equipment below for helpful reference.

Equipment Checklist

- Hose with adjustable nozzle (large tub of water warmed if no running hot water).
- Three buckets of water - one for rinsing water, one for mixing shampoo for body washing, one for mixing shampoo for head washing.
- Several big sponges.
- Mild [shampoo](#) especially made for horses.
- Horse conditioner.
- Sheath cleaner.
- Sweat scraper.
- Clean, dry towels.
- Petroleum jelly or hoof dressing.
- Rubber gloves to protect your hands.