

# SPA DAY!

## Part 1: Mane Makeover

Transform your horse's scruffy locks with this five-part beauty plan.

BY PATTY BRUMLEY PHOTOS BY JIM BORTVEDT

**A**s a busy horse owner, you most likely value your riding time like gold. So, when a ride makes your schedule, you want to get in the saddle ASAP. As a result, grooming often consists of a quick flick of the curry, and a rough brush-through for mane and tail. Completely understandable. But when you need salon quality looks for your horse—for a show, a sale photo, or a club riding event—you'll want to spend more time getting your groom game on. Special attention to mane (and tail) coiffure not only improves your horse's immediate appearance, but also pays forward by conditioning the root beds so they produce strong, healthy, thick hairs. Result: Your everyday quick-groom will now yield better results.

This month, in Part 1 of this two-part series, we'll share our basic mane makeover program in easy-to-follow steps. (To get grooming tips for a show-banded mane, go to [HorseandRider.com](http://HorseandRider.com), and click on *Slick-Finish Tips for a Show-Banded Mane*.) Next month in Part 2, you'll learn how to transform your horse's tail into something worthy of Rapunzel.

### THE MANE PLAN

#### Step 1: Inspect

First, check out the "hidden" dirt on the underside of your horse's mane. Comb the mane to the side of the neck opposite of where it usually falls. Note the scurf, dirt, and oily sebum

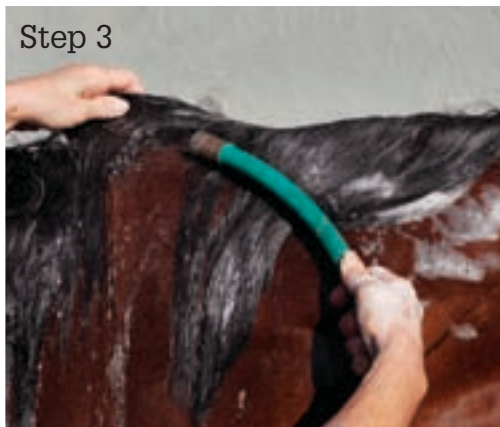
#### Step 1



**STEP 1:** Check for scurf, dirt, and oily sebum build-up at the base of your horse's mane, that cause itching and a tendency for mane rubbing.



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4

**STEP 2:** A condiment bottle (or other nozzled container) makes quick work of getting shampoo into a grungy mane's root bed. **STEP 3:** Rinse shampoo from the root bed first, being sure to saturate it. Lift sections of the mane for underside rinsing as you go along. **STEP 4:** Be generous with conditioner. Comb it into the roots and down to the ends of the mane. Leave in at least three minutes for maximum absorption, then rinse thoroughly.

build-up in the root bed at the base of the mane. A grungy, scaly root bed increases the tendency toward mane rubbing, and is a poor growing medium for lustrous locks.

Focus your first cleansing efforts on this hotbed of filth by keeping the mane on its off side, and thoroughly wetting the entire mane with a free-flowing stream of water from a hose. Emphasize a good soaking of the root bed.

**Step 2: Cleanse**

For a deep clean, it's crucial that you get cleanser to the root bed. *Tip:* For easy saturation of the root bed, dispense shampoo from a long-nozzled container, such as a condiment dispenser.

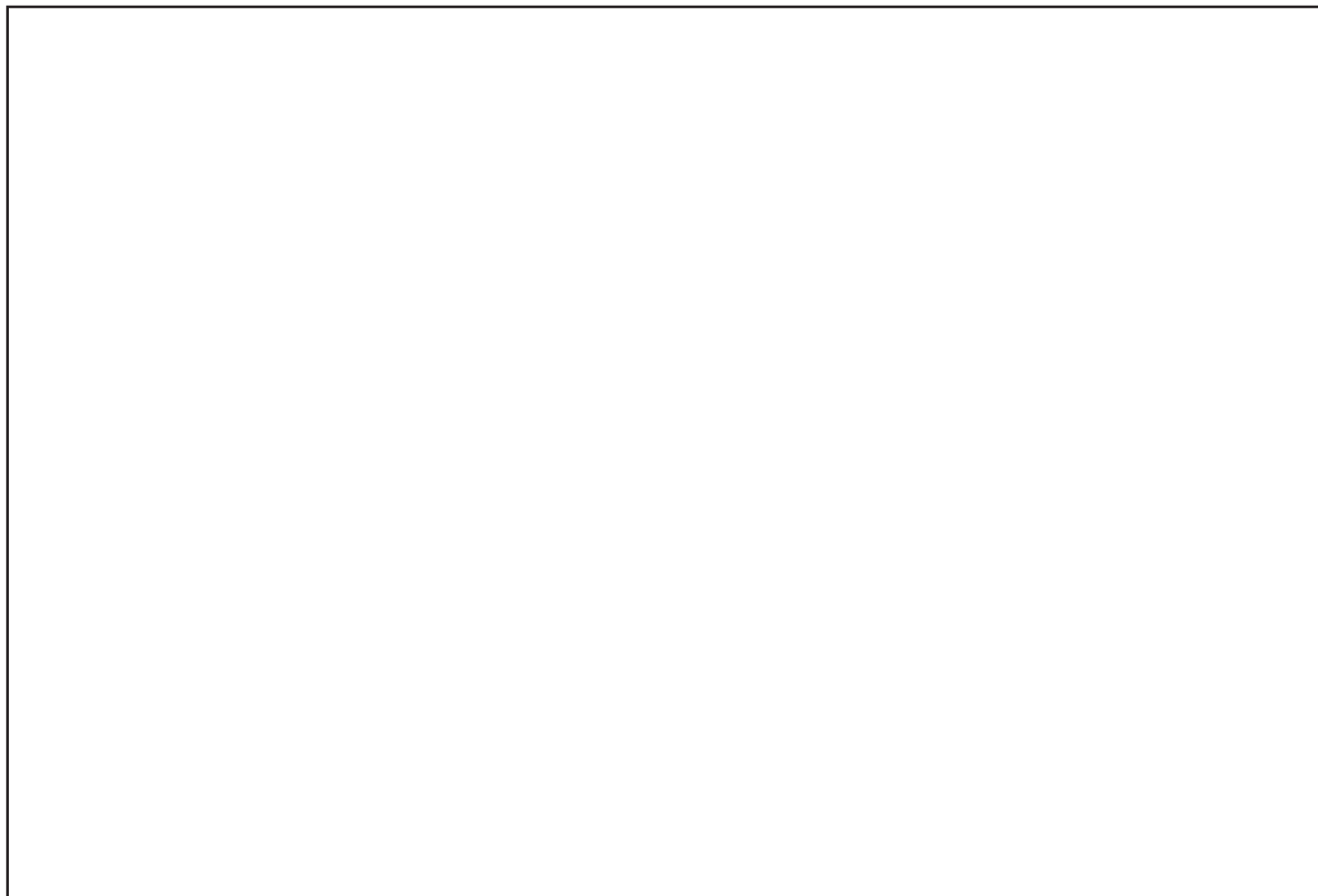
Apply cleanser along the root bed from poll to withers, then scrub up a lather. Use a wide-tooth comb to work the suds into the base of the mane. Once you've soaped up the root bed, flip the mane back to its

regular side, and use your hands to spread the suds through the entire mane.

**Step 3: Rinse**

Thorough rinsing is key to creating a clean, shiny mane. Soap residue dulls hair and attracts dust and dirt, creating more scurf build-up.

With the water running, push the hose end up under the mane and into the root bed. Rinse the entire length of



## MANE PAINS

**Fix a mane that hangs on the wrong side.** Comb the mane to the side of the neck you want it to lie on. Wash and condition the mane on the new side, then liberally spray with white or cider vinegar for pH-balancing, and comb through. The vinegar will close the hair cuticle while the mane is in the new position, helping it to relax and maintain “memory” to lie on the new side. Reinforce your efforts by banding or loosely braiding the mane; leave the mane this way for several days.

**Thin a too-thick mane without pulling it (your horse will thank you for this tip).** Separate a section of mane into an approximately 2-inch-wide chunk. Tightly braid the section; wrap the braid end snug with electric tape. Continue the entire length of the mane. Leave braids in for up to a week. The weight and slight tension of the braids gradually pulls

hairs loose; the electric tape lasts longer than rubber bands. When you undo the braids and comb out the mane, many individual hairs will come out.

*Bonus:* When hair falls out, it does so in a random pattern, so any grow-out is unnoticeable—no upright stubble to detract from your horse’s good lock looks!

**Don’t dread finding “dreads” in your horse’s mane or tail.**

(Those are the kinky, twisted knots that old-timers call “witch’s knots” and Gen X-ers call “dreadlocks.”) Here’s a handy way to unravel a dread-head without resorting to scissors:

Apply the detangler of your choice directly to the knot, rubbing it in thoroughly. The lubricant works locked strands loose from one another. Then, finger-separate strands, and finish by combing the lubricant through the lock to remove the last tangles.

the root bed first, then move your hose to the topside of the mane and rinse the mane from poll to withers. When the water runs clear and the mane is suds-free, you’re ready for Step 4.

### Step 4: Condition

Conditioning is an integral part of the mane makeover. It helps restore the mane hairs’ pH balance (to keep strands strong); plus, it enhances shine and reduces tangles.

Using your hands, generously apply the conditioner of your choice, spreading it on the top of the mane, along the length of the crest from poll to withers. Then, use a wide-tooth comb to work the conditioner into the root line and down to the ends of the mane. For maximum absorption, leave the conditioner on the mane for at least three minutes.

While the conditioner works, use the time to clean the horse’s forelock—see, “Fore Thought,” on page 105.

Finish the mane-conditioning process with a thorough rinse as outlined in Step 3. Then, comb the mane straight, and allow it to dry naturally.

### Step 5: Trim

The finishing touch to a clean, dry mane is a quick trim to even the ends. For a blunt, level look, cut laterally along the mane ends until you’ve trimmed to the desired length. For a natural look, use thinning shears the

## EVERYDAY AIDS

These drugstore or supermarket products, employed as grooming aids, come in handy for everyday grooming duties. Keep them in stock, and use as an adjunct to the specialty equine grooming products that you use for specific problems or special events.

- Liquid fabric softener, diluted 10:1 with water. Use as a detangler, to slick out stickers and burrs, and unravel tough knots.
- Economy shampoo and conditioner, such as Suave brand. Usually priced under \$1.99 for 32 ounces.
- Baby oil. Use for dry-hair care, with this caveat: Avoid applying to the face of a horse who will be out in direct sun or is prone to sunburn. (Oil hastens sunburn.)
- White or cider vinegar. Use to remove product and mineral build-up, and to close hair cuticles—which, in turn, helps to increase shine and repel dirt and grime.
- Liquid laundry bluing, diluted 10:1 with water. Use as a pre-conditioning rinse to brighten a white or flaxen mane.
- Antiseptic mouthwash, such as Listerine. Can be used to help relieve itchy skin.
- Tea-tree oil. Effective as a mild antiseptic.

same way. (They're available at drugstores, pet stores, and beauty-supply outlets.) They're engineered to cut hairs to minute differences in length, leaving a softer, less blunt edge.

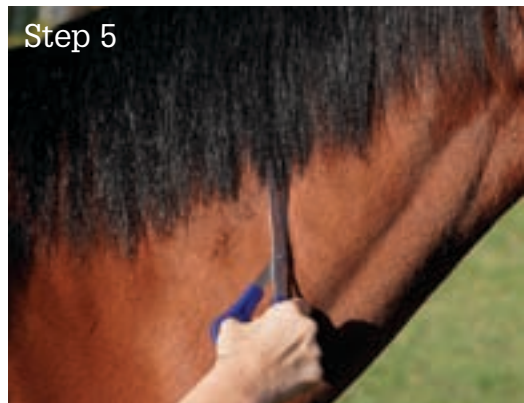
If you don't have thinning shears, you can achieve a natural result by using a pair of straight scissors. Position the scissors up into the mane ends about ¼-to-½ inch deep, then snip up and

down the length of the mane to trim and even ends.

### Aftercare

Keep your horse's tresses healthy until the next spa day with daily application of a leave-in conditioner. You'll get best results if you go beyond mere top-dressing: Spray the underside of the mane, and comb conditioner through. This helps remove loose

## Step 5



**STEP 5: If you lack thinning shears, use straight scissors to trim the mane's ends for a natural, non-blunted look.**

scurf to prevent grungy build-up. To finish, apply conditioner to the top of the mane, and comb through. ■

*Thanks to our equine model, A Big Spender, owned by Sheila Jaynes, Snohomish, Washington. And, thanks to Elizabeth Simpson, Cornelius, Oregon; Mary's Saddle & Tack Inc., Hillsboro, Oregon; and Debra Grams of Diva Salon in Portland, Oregon, for assistance with this article.*

Patty Brumley is a pro trainer and instructor from

## Aftercare



**AFTERCARE:** Keep your horse's tresses healthy until the next spa day with daily application of a leave-in conditioner.

Portland, Oregon. This article marks her return to *H&R*. Writing as Pat Roll in the '90s, she was a frequent and award-winning contributor to our magazine. We're delighted to have her back.

**Next month:** spa-day makeover tips for your horse's tail.



**On HorseandRider.com this month:** Tips for a show-banded mare.

## FORE THOUGHT

You've probably seen people attempt to clean the forelock with a steady blast from a hose—drenching the horse's face, eyes, ears, and nostrils in the process, and maybe even hurting tender tissues. While this may be the easiest method for owners, it's arguably the hardest on horses. Some horses tolerate a full-frontal water assault, but many resent it. To remain friends with your horse on a spa day, try this gentler method:

**1.** Position yourself beside your horse, behind his head, so you can reach his forelock from behind. (Use a stool if you need one to reach.) Use a mix of 50/50 shampoo and water in a nozzled container. The mix saves a step, since there's no need to pre-wet this small area, and the nozzle squirts right into the root bed of the forelock. Saturate the forelock, then work up suds with your fingers. After washing, squeeze as much soap as you can from the forelock, directing the run-off away from your horse's eyes.

**2.** To rinse, use a hose sprayer dialed to a gentle stream, positioning it between the ears to thoroughly rinse the forelock. Be ready with a sponge or towel to wipe away any soapy water that threatens to stream toward your horse's eyes. After you rinse, apply a leave-in conditioner, and comb through.

