

Mane and Tail Pulling

A horse's mane and tail grow constantly and to make them neater and easier to groom and plait, they require shortening and in some cases thinning. The technique used to both shorten and thin out the mane and tail is called pulling.

The Mane

The mane can be pulled for a variety of reasons, such as to make it easier to plait, to encourage the mane to lie flat, to help keep horses cool in the summer or to give it a general tidy up. The best time to pull the mane is after exercise as the skin will be warm and the pores open. The mane helps to protect the horse from the elements so care should be taken with grass kept horses that the mane is not pulled too short.



The Pulling Process

1. Make sure you tie your horse up using a quick release knot and attached to a piece of string rather than the solid fixing. You may need to stand on a box or crate if you can't reach the top of your horse's mane.
2. Brush the mane out with a comb making sure not to use any products that might make the mane slippery and difficult to hold. Use a good strong comb that is easy to grip.
3. Start at one end, either the poll or the withers.
4. Take hold of a few strands of the longest hair from underneath the mane and gently comb back the hair along the strand to the crest.
5. Place the comb near the top of the hair at the crest.
6. Wrap the strands of hair around the comb and pull downwards in one brisk movement. The hair should come out easily.
7. Repeat this procedure along the neck until the mane is even and the same thickness.
8. The forelock can be done the same way.

The Tail

As with the mane, the tail provides protection from flies and the elements and so should only be pulled with care on grass kept animals. The main reason for pulling the tail is to keep it tidy and show off the hindquarters, which is important when showing horses.

The process is similar to mane pulling but additional care should be taken to avoid being kicked. Make sure you stand slightly to one side of the horse and not directly behind it. If your horse objects strongly to having his tail pulled and it has to be done then it is worth talking to your vet about having him sedated.

The Pulling process

1. Brush any knots and debris out of the tail.
2. Start at the top of the tail and take a thin strand from behind the dock.
3. Wind it around the comb and give a swift tug downwards.
4. Follow this procedure down the dock on both sides keeping as even as possible. It may be better to pull the tail over a few days as the dock can get very sore.
5. After the tail has been pulled, dampen the top down with water and bandage the tail to train the hair to lie flat.

TOP TIPS

- If your horse has never had its tail pulled before and you are uncertain of its reactions, start by pulling the tail from behind the stable door. The door will act as a barrier if your horse kicks out.
- Pull manes and tails after exercise as the skin will be warm and the pores open, making the hair easier to pull out.
- Do not pull out lots of hair in one go as it will make the skin sore. If the mane hasn't been pulled for a while it may take several days to achieve the desired result.
- If your horse won't stand still while you are pulling its mane or tail ask a friend to hold up one of its legs so that it can't move about.
- Trim the length of the tail carefully with a pair of scissors but never use scissors to trim the mane.

