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Luscious Locks

Proper care, quality products and good nutrition can help both you and your horse have great hair days every day.

By Delores Kuhlwein

Still trying to unravel the mystery of great hair for you and your Paint Horse? Join the club.

We all want fabulous hair: gal or guy, human or equine. But navigating the sea of advertising from both the human and horse industries—which constantly push products and routines for stronger, longer, thicker hair—can be trickier than picking a six-strand wind knot out of your impatient mare’s mane.

But there are ways to help you—and your horse—have “good hair day hair” a bit more of-

ten, and we’ve gathered tips from innovative product makers, a hip hair stylist and an equine nutritionist. The bonus (besides hair envy, of course): Your nails and skin, as well as your horse’s hooves and coat, will love you for it.

The Body is a Temple

You’ve heard it before, but Mariah Shields of Bob and Weave Salon stresses that what you eat really does matter. The chic cosmetologist from Glendale, Arizona, sports her own healthy head

of hair; and she reminds clients that hair is nourished from the inside out.

“Eating nutritious foods can have a direct effect on the health and appearance of our hair and nails. Foods rich in B vitamins, Omegas and healthy fats, such as leafy greens, salmon and avocado, are all great ‘hair foods,’” Mariah explained. “I also recommend supplements to my clients, especially when it comes to hair loss or if a client is growing her hair out. Biotin, which is in the B vitamin family, is usually a main ingredient in most of these supplements and has been proven

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to promote healthy skin, hair and nails.”

It’s no fluke that biotin is also found in most hoof supplements for horses.

“Biotin is an important vitamin that supports the structure of keratin—the protein that provides healthy hair, skin and nails,” said longtime APHA member Briana Fields of Phoenix, Arizona; she learned the importance of health from within while earning her bachelor’s degree in animal science with a focus on equine nutrition and reproduction. “Providing your horse with supplemental biotin can help strengthen his hooves and improve his hair coat by ensuring adequate keratin production.”

And like horses, people need to give the supplements time in their systems to see results, Mariah says.

“It’s important to remember that you must take the supplements regularly and at least for a few months before you really start to notice the results,” she advised.

Don’t Judge by the Cover

If you’re a meticulous label reader, this advice is for you; if you’re not, it’s time to change your ways. Just like what we put inside our bodies, what we put on the outside counts, too. Humans might only have to worry about their heads when it comes to hair health, but because topical products can affect your horse’s entire body, experts advise using a critical eye when reading content labels.

Mariah advises clients to avoid products containing sulfates, for example.

“Sulfates are harsh detergents that can strip color and remove hair’s natural oils; using a sulfate-free shampoo like Redken Color Extend Magnetics can help preserve your hair’s color and prevent dryness,” she said.

Some ingredients are designed to tackle the issues you’re trying to resolve. For example, Mariah

says argan oil’s high vitamin E and fatty-acid content is a proven agent to make dry hair softer, silkier and shinier.

Keratin, which is the same type of protein found in hair, is helpful for battling over-processed or damaged hair.

“Products containing keratin can be used sparingly to strengthen weak strands,” Mariah said. “My favorite is Redken’s leave-in treatment called Anti-Snap.”

While searching for a natural, strengthening product, entrepreneur Trudy Midas of Plymouth, Minnesota, discovered silk as the base for her line of all-natural products called EspanaSILK; the horse- and human-friendly product line is now in its 10th year.

Trudy and her husband, Bob Hansen, were searching for the best organic way to bring hydration into their line; they were drawn to silk protein because of the noticeable strengthening difference it made for hair and skin.

“The silkworm leaves the cocoon behind, and what’s left inside that cocoon are tiny droplets of sericin, or what we call silk protein,” Trudy explained. “It’s a strong fiber—long-lasting and durable.”

Other notable ingredients included in EspanaSILK: high-grade essential oils such as eucalyptus and chamomile, and elements like aloe, jojoba and coconut surfactant.

“The natural ingredients we use have a long, credible history of performance, safety and sustainability,” Trudy said. “Our silk proteins and our cationic conditioners are formulated to be pH neutral and balanced to slightly acidic, which



offers a wide safety variance for applications and makes them interchangeable for people and for animals.”

Allyson Winter Harrison, a self-professed grooming fanatic and CEO of EquiFuse, founded her company in 2010 when she, like Trudy, wanted an option with healthy additives for horses that performed exactly as the label said.

“When I shop for myself or my horse, I specifically look for healthy hair additives like essential oils, vitamins and proteins at active levels,” the Sunnyvale, California, resident said. “Essential oils are key ingredients in hair health and when mixed with shampoos and conditioners, they help the scalp, skin and hair stay hydrated, and they can relieve hair frizz, and improve hair strength and quality.”

Allyson’s advice for those desiring silky locks: pay attention to the order of the ingredients listed on the product label.

“If the first ingredient listed is water on a shampoo you are considering, this means most of your shampoo purchase is water. While this isn’t a terrible thing, it just means the company filled the majority of the formula with water instead of additional options that benefit the hair,” she explained.



Allyson explains that essential oils alone are highly concentrated and too potent to be used by themselves on the hair, skin or scalp, so be sure to mind the order of natural ingredients listed, too.

"If these additives are listed closer to the middle of the ingredient deck, then you know that there is a higher concentration of these ingredients in the product," Allyson advised.

Trudy recommends consumers educate themselves on product ingredients and beware of products that dry.

"Hydration is a beautiful thing. So many products are filled with sulfates, potassium salts, alcohols and chemicals that dry hair and skin out," she said. "You may not understand everything, but you'll become wiser as you practice."

Products to Peruse

All ingredient details aside, what outside-the-box products should you be seeking to keep your tresses in tip-top shape?

Mariah sings the praises of serums for both humans and horses, as these silicone-based products coat hairs but do not cause changes to a strand's structure.

"A serum is so important whenever heat is being used to protect against damage," she explained. "I work a few drops of Pravana's Silk Degrees Shine Serum through the hair to create a barrier between the heat and the hair; it can also be used to tame flyways and to make hair shinier overall."

The sharp stylist offers another tip.

"For detangling, I like to use a treatment in spray form such as 12 Benefits Leave-In; I mist it onto wet hair and carefully detangle starting from the bottom and working my way up, using a wide-tooth comb or a wet brush to avoid damaging the hair."

Ironically, Allyson's original purpose with EquiFuse was to combine a serum and detangler for convenience, which is now widely accepted for horse and owner use. This combination became so wildly popular, Allyson eventually developed a six-product bathing and grooming system.

"I first developed Gleam Moisturizer + Shine Serum with the goal of a detangler that not only unraveled knots and left hair shiny, but also improved the hair as a serum," she explained. "I wanted to infuse this serum with different moisturizers to combat dry and brittle hair, improve hair strength and encourage new growth.



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“After the product is applied and dried, the hair should feel dry, soft and pliable and not too oily. The problem with detanglers is, if they don’t dry properly, they attract dust and dirt. Lastly, I would consider the long-term effects of using this detangler and whether it improves the hair. Ideally, a good serum will keep the hair looking and feeling healthy.”

EspanaSILK just released a SILK Revitalizing Mist that naturally deodorizes, refreshes, moisturizes and detangles, and Trudy is thrilled to offer customers another way to get hydration.

“Our body functions better when it gets the water it needs and so does our hair and skin,” she said. “People and animals needed more hydration and our products are created for that.”

Habits to Heed

Showing your mane (and tail) some extra TLC includes being mindful of your habits, experts say.

“Damage can be done by frequent washing with harsh chemical-based products and exposure to environmental harm,” Allyson warned.

If you need to wash your hair daily, Trudy says it’s important to choose products that are gentle and don’t contain dyes, salt, parabens, phosphates, petroleum pyrethrins or alcohol-based chemicals—and products that are biodegradable, hypoallergenic and soap- and detergent-free, so they can be used more often.

Mariah advises her clients to limit washing to every other day or less.

“At first, you might notice your hair is a little more greasy, but once your body adjusts to your new schedule, it won’t produce as much natural oil,” she said. “I am a big fan of dry shampoo for my no-wash days; my personal favorite is Redken’s Pillow Proof two-day extender, which comes in a spray-can, making it easier to target the hair’s roots.”

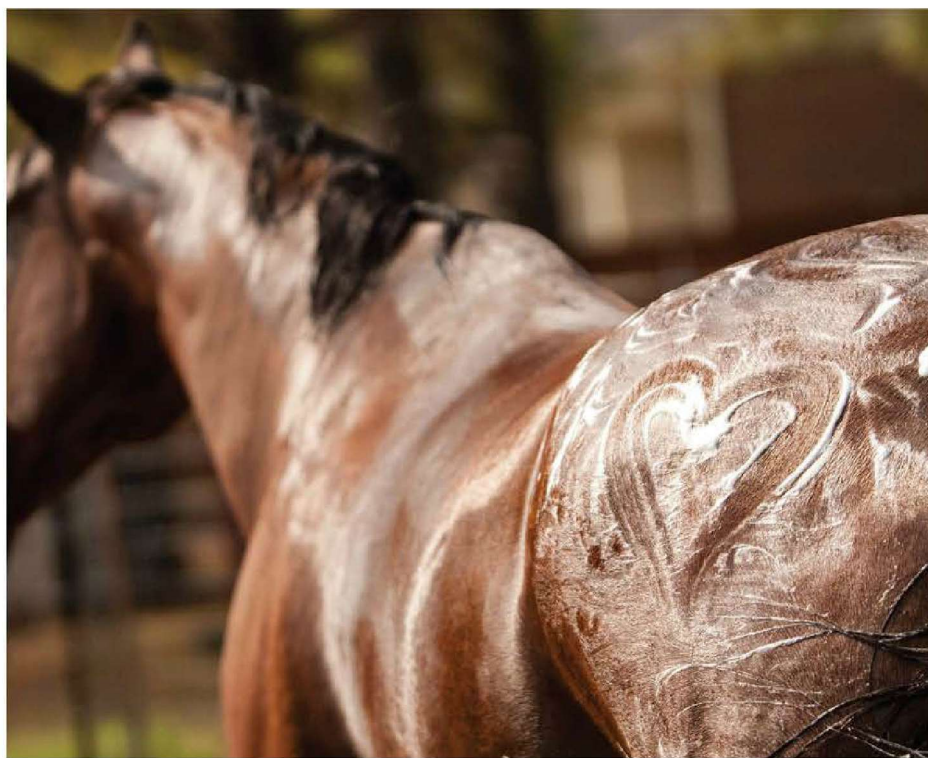
When you do wash, keep your cool, Mariah instructs.

“A cool rinse after washing and conditioning will help seal in the benefits of the conditioner and make the hair smoother and shinier since it closes the outer layer of the hair known as the cuticle,” she explained. “The same concept also goes for blow drying; that little button that turns the air cool is great for getting a smoother, shinier look and setting your style once your hair is completely dry.”

Modern Advances

The good news: as research becomes more sophisticated, you and your horse can reap the benefits for a healthy body, hair, nails and hooves. Be mindful of the products you choose and their ingredients, feed healthy hair from the inside out, and adjust your haircare routine to give yourself the best shot at some seriously luscious locks.

“Mindfulness, nature and science can all work together hand-in-hand for beautiful hair and skin for the entire four- and two-legged family,” Trudy said. 🐾



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