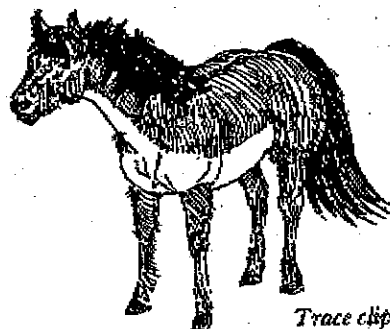
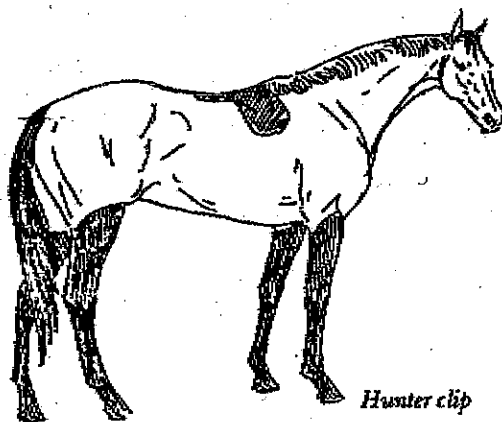


NOTES ON CLIPPING HORSES

By Huntsman Dr. G. Marvin Beeman, DVM and Jt. MFH

The purpose for clipping horses is two-fold. For years we thought clipping was necessary to allow a horse to cool out more efficiently and prevent sweat from being retained in the long hair coat; these reasons are still very true. However, we have learned from exercise physiology studies in recent years that the more important function of clipping is to facilitate the horse's use of his thermo-regulation system. We have also observed that when horses become warmed up, especially thin-skinned warm-blooded horses, the veins in their skin will become very prominent primarily along their neck, head and upper body. This system is to allow the horse to cool down from the tremendous amount of heat that is generated by muscle activity.

Prior to the research, we observed the fact that in the fall before the horses were clipped, they would reach a fatigue point relatively quickly even though they were in good condition. Immediately after the horses were clipped, the situation dramatically improved as far as their stamina was concerned. Horses that are full body clipped perform better throughout the season and have more endurance than those that are not full body clipped.



Thermo-regulation is the main reason that the horses are clipped with hunter or full clips. With a trace clip, on the other hand, the majority of the highly vascular skin area remains covered and the thermo-regulation system is compromised. For this reason, trace clips are of little value to the fieldhunter that works hard. In a hunter clip, the legs are left with the long hair for protective purposes; however, this protection is not as critical now in our open hunting country as it was in the oak brush. Hair on the legs does influence thermo-regulation due to the large vessels along the inside of the horse's legs, but this restriction is not as important as the long hair restriction on the upper body. In addition, of course, a hunter with a full clip is much easier to groom.

Clipping methods vary with many different people; however, I think one of the most recent logical suggestions written in The Chronicle of the Horse is to give the horse a bath prior to clipping; the bath eliminates much of the dust that is generated while clipping.

In addition, fieldhunters should be clipped fairly early in the fall. The earlier you clip them, however, the more times you will have to clip throughout the season. They will need clipping for as many as three times if clipped the first part of October. This procedure is beneficial for the horses. After February 1st, horses should not be clipped because their hair coat will not grow out sufficiently for a nice, attractive, protective summer coat. After early February, horses prepare to shed their winter coats and clipping should not disturb the process.

As far as style goes, horses should be clipped entirely on the upper body for the reasons stated. Leaving their legs covered with long hair is good protection, but is optional. One important matter is to leave a saddle area with the long hair because short hair underneath the saddle can create soreness and irritation problems. Traditionally, good taste dictates that the clipping design should not use any ornamental designs over the hips or elsewhere.

Blanketing of clipped horses is a matter of practicality. Most of the time, if it is cold enough for a horse to have a blanket on outside of the stable, the horse should be turned out without the blanket, exercised and put back into the stable and blanketed. I see more horses injured by getting a blanket in a mess than I see injured by getting too cold. Also, the blankets they ruin outside are expensive.

Hopefully, this advice will be of some value to Hunt members regarding the reasons for clipping horses. The bottom line is that a field of clipped hunters is very attractive and impressive. Clipping is a very practical and useful procedure to enhance a fieldhunter's appearance, health and welfare.