

Hair Care for the Fairy Tale Horse

By Sarah Gately-Wilson

Hair, hair, hair! Everywhere, hair! When it comes to our Baroque horses we have to be meticulous with their hair! Manes and tails can equal dollar signs in our sales horses and stallions at stud as well as increase the aesthetic appearance of our horses at shows. Hair is very important, and we must be meticulous when it comes to taking care of manes and tails.

Products

The use of three main products will be discussed in this article. Two conditioners: Laser Sheen (leave in detangler and conditioner) and Eqyss Coat Rebuilder (can be applied and rinsed out, or left in). Protective wrap: SyrVet (similar products include Vetrap, Power Flex, and Co Flex). All of the above products are available through Jeffers Equine and most livestock and feed stores.



Step 1

Always start with a clean mane and tail. Wash and condition it as you would your own hair. It is best to use a separate shampoo and conditioner (Suave, Finesse, Vive... or something made particularly for horses, take your pick). For very dry or damaged hair use the Eqyss Coat Rebuilder. While the hair is still damp, apply lots of laser sheen and CAREFULLY comb out any tangles or knots. You do not want to break any hairs or cause split ends by tugging at tangles or impatiently tearing out knots. I have never encountered a knot or tangle that cannot be worked out with patience and good products (and I have seen some pretty messy situations).



Step 2

Separate a 2-inch section of mane apart from the rest. Start a loose braid. NOTE: if you start a tight braid, you are pulling on the horse's crest and stressing the hair follicles. Continue the braid until you are a few inches away from the end of the hair. At this point, take a shoe lace (I use one approximately 18 inches in length for manes) folded in half and weave it into the braid, continuing until the end where you can tie it off in one simple, easily undone knot. There should still be several inches of shoelace left hanging.



Step 3

Find the top of your loosely started braid and thread the end through. Pull it halfway through so the end that is tied off with shoelace is towards the bottom of the loop you just made. Thread the end through a section of the braid towards the bottom of this loop so it is inside the loop. Then, use the remaining shoelace to wrap around the braid and tie the loop together so it is secure. Make sure you make a simple knot in the shoelace that you will be able to remove easily.



Step 4

To protect the braided hair from dirt, dust, mud, rain, itching, other horses eating it, and any other elements it may be unfortunate enough to encounter, I wrap it in a self- adhesive bandage. In this example we used SyrVet. Thread the end through the top of the braid (in the same place you looped your braid) and then carefully wrap the braid making sure it is fully covered and the end is secured. NOTE: use a little extra wrap and cover the braid twice. On occasion you may need to replace some wrap or add some to worn places, but overall it will usually last you several months. When you take the braid down you will find added growth and clean, healthy hair.



Step 5

Continue the process with the remaining mane, taking many small 2 inch sections and creating loose braids to loop, tie, and wrap. The same process can be used to protect the tail. Make sure it is washed and conditioned. With tails, we separate the feathers (shorter hairs that grow from the base of the tail bone) and leave them free. Only braid the long hairs, the main part of the tail. If your horse has a thick lush tail, you may want to divide it in half (or even thirds) and create several braids. Wrap the braids together into one unit with the wrap. Make sure to keep the tailbone free of wrap such that it gets ample oxygen. Otherwise, you could unwrap to find a sticky tailbone with a mean fungus! Think band-aid finger! Below is example of a finished tail that has been wrapped for several winter months.



A few additional notes: Mother Nature gave our horses hair for a reason, one of which is to help keep the flies away. If you take away their manes and tails during fly season, be kind and use repellent or masks. I don't typically put up forelocks, but rather just make a few long braids to hang at length. You can put them up; it is a matter of choice. Lastly, for very dry or damaged hair, or itchy horses that like to rub, I highly recommend Eqyss Coat Rebuilder. It is not greasy and really does work. For those fellow Baroque horse owners out there that have locks to match your horse, try the Eqyss on your hair, it works wonders for us, too! Good luck braiding and enjoy the new and improved hair!