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For Albertans About Albertans

### A GOOD HUNTER GROOM

Grace Major-Bouck

Every good groom knows that having a beautifully groomed horse starts back in the barn. It is important to keep your horse's coat in great condition and shiny. While appearances may not be everything, they are very important, especially in the hunter ring. As a team of horse and rider, you want to stand out from the rest of your competitors and every little detail can help.

When heading up to the ring, a groom should have the horse equipped with a leather lead and chain to lead your horse, a scrim sheet or cooler, if necessary and the horse's number. Now that you are ready to head to the ring, there are a few key items that every good hunter groom brings to the ring with them. These items are crucial to keeping both the horse and rider looking and feeling their best.

First on this list is hoof oil. No matter that the horse's hooves may soon be covered in sand once in the ring, the first steps that the horse and rider take into the ring will shape the judges first impression. In the hunters, first impressions are crucial. Along with the hoof oil, a good groom always carries towels. One for the rider's boots and another for the horse's face and any extra "slobber" that may have occurred during warm up. Baby oil is also a good trick to keeping the horse's nose and eyes looking clean and bright. A stiff brush is handy to get any dirt off the horses body and legs. To round out your grooming bag an extra pair of earplugs, a short black crop, alcohol for white socks and "stick-em" are some other components that are good to have at the ring.

Turnout is essential at a show, it is important to look the part. A good groom should always be prepared to help you and your horse look your best. As the rider it is equally crucial that you also are prepared, both mentally and physically. When you walk into the hunter ring you strive to look and ride your best. Yes, you are their to compete but also to show pride in your horse's beauty and their abilities, as well as your own. Every good hunter groom knows this and also takes pride in having a beautifully groomed horse. The items mentioned above are imperative to keeping your horse and rider looking their best up at the ring.

