

Little Hooves 4-H Club  
Suffield, CT  
Grooming - Miniature Horses

General:

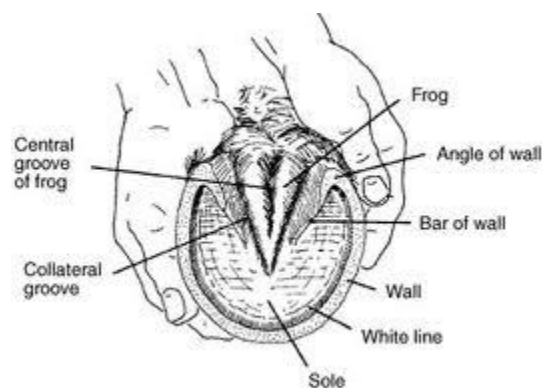
Keep one hand on the horse as you use the curry or brush with the other so you can feel if the horse is tense or wants to move around. When moving from one side to the other, also keep one hand on the top of the rump and speak so the horse can tell what you are doing. Most horses have certain places where they really like to be groomed (usually on the neck), and some may have spots they want you to leave alone. Listen to what they tell you.

Winter grooming: It is important to feel under the hair to tell if the mini is fat or thin. It is not that unusual to assume a furry mini is fat and then find out in the spring when they shed or are clipped that their bones are sticking out in places. Feel the ribs, over the hip bones and along the back and make sure that you can feel fat or muscle covering the bones.

Spring: Some minis will need to be clipped in the spring, especially if they will be shown. Others will shed out but may need help with shedding blades or other special grooming aids. Special horse vacuum cleaners can also be used to remove the dead hair and dirt, and most horses like this once they are used to it. The first time is usually pretty scary though.

Hoof Cleaning:

Always run one hand down the leg before picking up the foot. If you are concerned that the horse might kick (unusual), run your hand closest to the horse down the INSIDE of the rear leg and pick up the foot. In that way your arm prevents the horse from flexing the leg for a really strong kick. When cleaning feet, do not lift the hoof higher off the ground than about the height of the horse's knee. It is actually harder to work on a mini's hoof than on a regular size horse because most people have to bend over a lot farther! But lifting the hoof too high can be harmful, especially with a back leg.



The parts of the hoof that need special attention are the central groove and the collateral grooves (sides) of the frog, which is the slightly spongy part of the hoof that acts like a shock absorber. This area can also get a condition called "thrush" which gives off a funny smell and needs to be treated. Thrush is more common in wet or muddy conditions or if the horse stands in a dirty stall.

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