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Why Wash?

Many horses can live healthy, full lives without soap baths, says William H. Miller Jr., VMD, of Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine in Ithaca, NY, and co-author of the textbook "Equine Dermatology."

"Dogs don't really need baths. Cats don't need baths. Horses don't generally need baths," Miller says. **"We bathe them because we like the products, but animals' skin and haircoats don't require it."**

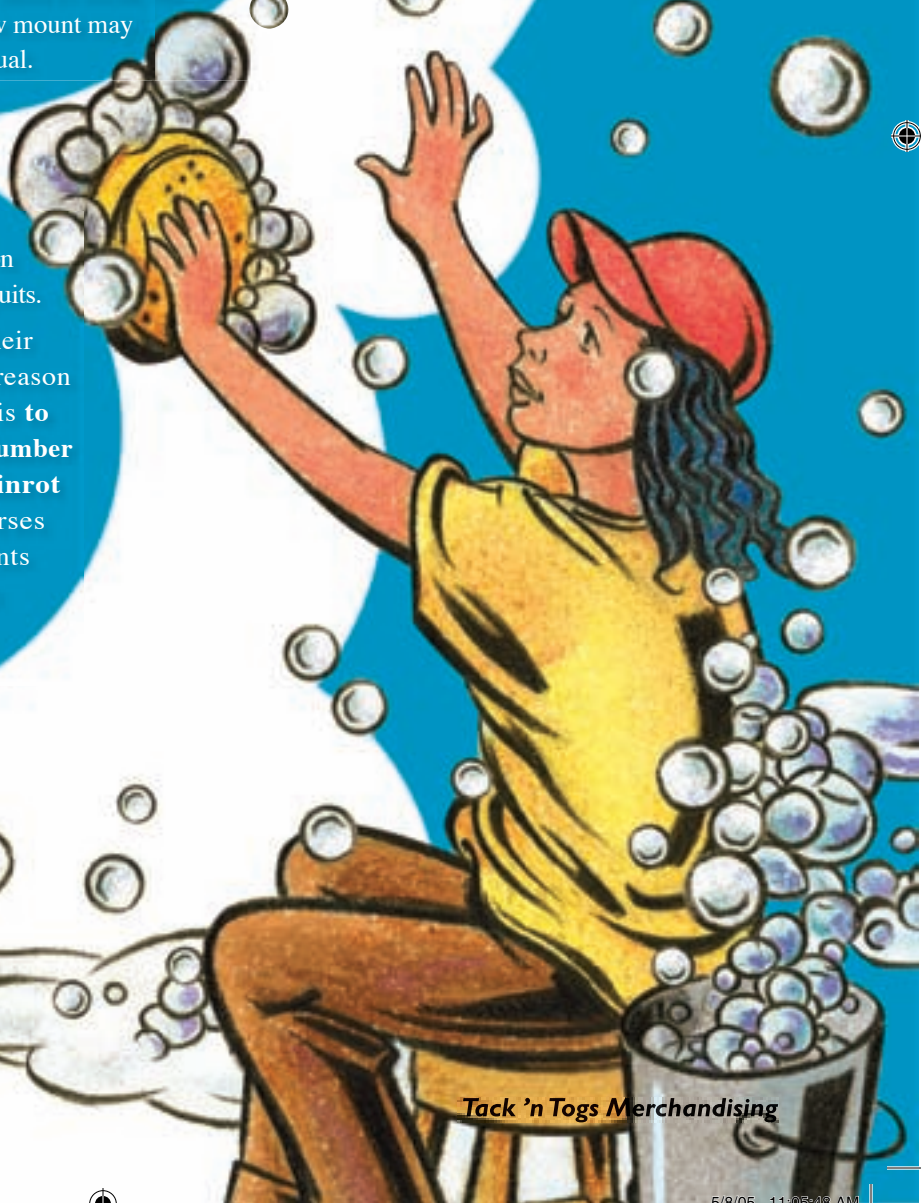
The average horse will do just fine with regular thorough grooming to remove excess dirt, dust, loose hair and dead skin, Miller says. **On hot days, a slosh of lukewarm** (not cold, unless the horse is dangerously overheated) **water from a hose or bucket serves as a welcome cooler.**

"One exception would be if you use fly spray," says Miller. "That needs to be removed with shampoo because **it affects coat glossiness and can irritate the horse's skin** if it's left on for too long."

Another case in which bathing might prove necessary is the horse that's moved from a cool climate to a much warmer one, particularly if the new locale is both warm and humid (think Florida), says Miller. The southern buyer of a horse previously stabled in, say, New England might need to break out the shampoo because her new mount may sweat more than usual.

The same logic holds true true for horses that winter on the southern show and training circuits.

Aside from the desire to get their horses sparkling clean, the other reason owners lather up their animals is **to clean wounds or to combat any number of skin conditions, such as rainrot and scratches.** Owners of horses with these or other skin ailments may well ask the retailer's advice on how best to treat it.



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