

## Read the Label

Your customer wants to know **which shampoo is best for general bathing purposes.** According to Miller, synthetic detergents (the “sulfate” ingredient on the product label) generally have the advantage over soaps in cleansing efficacy in most types of water. (“Don’t use lye in hard water,” he says.) **The problem is that not all equine shampoo labels list “inactive” ingredients.** Even if a brand’s label contains a complete listing, you won’t know how much detergent it contains or how that product will work in combination with the other ingredients or in the customer’s water supply.

**Miller’s rule of thumb is simple:** “You can probably throw out the super-cheap stuff and the super-expensive stuff, and any stuff in the middle will be fine. There is no reason to switch to a new shampoo if you’re happy with what you have.”

That may not necessarily be what retailers or manufacturers want to hear, since selling product is their business, **but supplying tried-and-true items is a standard customer service.**

## Cosmetic Shampoos

You may be cheered to learn that those **shampoos that purport to enhance horses’ coat color do indeed work—on a superficial level, anyway.** “Altering or removing the film of oil and sebaceous [waxy] material on the haircoat will change the color,” Miller explains. “If you change the film so that less light is reflected, it makes the coat look darker. If more light is reflected, the coat looks lighter.”

So a specially formulated shampoo can make a black horse look blacker, or white markings appear snowier. **However, because the effects are cosmetic only, they’re not long-lasting—**a point your customers would do well to keep in mind when they’re prepping for a show or other event.

We come clean on the subject of equine suds



## Medicated Shampoos

Miller urges restraint in the use of medicated shampoos, despite consumers’ love of antibacterial products in the home, as well as in the barn.

“I have an issue with a horse owner using an antibacterial or antifungal shampoo for routine grooming,” Miller says. **“Excessive use of these products can increase the horse’s susceptibility to infection.”**

**Medicated shampoos can be strong stuff.** Fort Dodge’s Nolvasan shampoo contains chlorhexidine diacetate, a disinfectant with antibacterial, antifungal and antiviral properties. Purdue Pharma LP’s Betadine cleanser, a detergent solution containing povidone-iodine, is another well-known antibacterial and antiviral product.

Eqyss International’s popular Micro-Tek Medicated Shampoo, sold as a remedy for a variety of skin ailments, contains the antibacterial agent triclosan.

**These and other similar products are not intended for daily use or general bathing.** If a customer is unsure about how to treat an equine skin condition or the use of medicated shampoos,

**Miller advises recommending a vet call.**

## Sensible Solutions

Aesthetics drive many equine shampoo purchases, but your customers will derive good value from most any mid-priced, nonmedicated, basic product that lathers and rinses well in their water and agrees with their horses’ skin and haircoats. **If you really want to do them a service, consider adding two products not commonly found in tack shops.**

“Johnson’s Baby Shampoo doesn’t cut oil well, but it’s great if the horse’s coat isn’t very oily,” says Miller. “And Joy dishwashing liquid contains a degreasing agent that’s excellent for rare use. You wouldn’t want to shampoo your horse with Joy all the time, but it would work well for the horse coming out of winter, for example,” **Miller chuckles.**

“I don’t know whether tack-shop owners would want to tell their customers that,” he says.



Tack 'n Togs Merchandising