



**Article by Laura Tennill – Ten-L Training Center**

## **SHOW CLIPPING YOUR MINIATURE HORSE'S HEAD**

First of all, I would like to say there are several ways to clip a show horse's head. This is the way that I like to clip the heads of our show horses and it is the way I would recommend to those wanting to achieve a smooth clip job that will accentuate the horse's facial features.

When show clipping your horse's head, you can make a dramatic difference in his appearance by using a combination of different size blades. I use a combination of #30, #40, and #50 blades. Always keep your blades clean, sharp, and well oiled for maximum results. Make sure you have your blades sharpened as needed and on hand well before the show so you will be prepared. Using the different blades will contour your horse's face really nicely.

We normally clip our show horses heads very close to the day that they show. I like to shave their bodies first a few days prior to the show, and come back and do their heads one to three days before the show, depending on their color, and personal preference.

Begin by clipping your entire horse's head in a #30 blade going against the way the hair grows. Use a light, but steady pressure, on your clippers making even strokes. You can lightly blend the area behind the ears into the area where the head joins the neck by turning your clippers around and blending in the direction the hair grows. Do just a very small area behind the ears and down to blend head and neck area well. I normally use a #15 or a #30 on the body of the horse so it will usually blend very well there. Clip the outside of the ear, unless it is white, with a #40 down to the base. This really makes the ears look sharp. Keep in mind that any moving part of a horse will grow hair more quickly than the other area. The base of the ears is one of the parts that grows the fastest. It will blend well with the #30 you have used on the head. Clip the outside edges of the ear in a #50 and the inside of the ear as well. This will really take the hair and will look good and clean when showing, using a light oil inside the ear right prior to your class!

Take a #30 or #40 blade and go over the throatlatch area underneath your horse's neck, just where the head joins the neck and the area where the hair grows in a swirl. This will make that area look really neat and clean.

Use a #50 under the entire horse's lower jaw, looking under there to be sure you got all the hair there as it would be very distracting with a show halter on to have hair on the jaw line.

Clip above the eyes with a #50 blade, making it arch up just a little right above the center of the eye and arching down towards the eye corners as shown in the diagram.

Then clip your horse's entire muzzle with a #50 and angle the area back towards the sides of the jaw line as shown on the diagram. On the front of your horse's face you can clip a slightly rounded V about where your horse's show halter noseband will be.

You may want to try your horse's show halter on at this time, and make sure you have the noseband sitting in the right area. A good way to judge this is to have the top of the noseband about a thumb's width below the lowest part of the cheekbone, or half inch or slightly more. You can practice with the height of your clipping on the front of the face according to the length of your horse's face as well but the above instructions will work for most horses.

When making your V with your #50 blades, go ahead and go up to the cheekbone on the sides of the horse's face and under the eyes as shown on the diagram. Go closely right up under the horse's eye and be sure to get all of the hair really well, angling the clippers as needed to do so. We do take the eyelashes off but leave tiny spikes there to keep out the dust. Our horses are fly sprayed often here so they have done fine with this. By removing the eyelashes you can really make the eyes appear larger and more defined, especially on horses with white eyelashes. The lashes grow back very quickly, but be sure to apply fly spray to your horse to help him defend himself against flies especially on his face when clipped.

When clipping the forelock of the horse, pull it up in your hands and then separate some hair from each side of the forelock, making a V under it. Take a little at a time, angling your clippers away towards the outside of the forelock so you don't accidentally clip more than you intend to if the horse shakes his head or moves quickly. Again use caution and do not take more than a little at a time until you get the right thickness. A pretty head can be hidden under a bushy forelock. It is the trend to have thinner forelocks that looks nice straight down on a horse with a straighter profile, or pulled to the same side as the horse's mane and tucked under the show halter below the ear nicely on a horse with a more Arabian looking head. Use a #50 under the forelock as it will also grow back very quickly. You can blend all areas where the #30 blade meets the #50 blade by using very light strokes with a #40 blade.

Be sure to check inside your horse's nostrils and be sure to get the small little hairs there too.

Your horse's bridle path should be clipped with a #50 as it will grow out very quickly so it's best to do this the day before the show. The length of the bridle path will be decided according to your horse's length of neck. Too short of a bridle path will hide

the horse's throatlatch and length of neck. Clip a shorter bridle path, making sure you have the forelock pulled out of the way and angling your clippers away from it. You can step back and hold a small piece of mane over at a time and clip as needed until you achieve the right length of bridle path. You can always take it back a bit more later, but if you clip it too long it will take a long time to grow back out, so use caution.

All areas that are clipped with a #50 really should be done the day before the show whether you decide to razor your horse or not, it will have a much cleaner and finished appearance. When a horse is closely clipped, it will make the skin really shine more when your light oil, baby oil gel, or clear face gel is applied just prior to your class! Horses with dark skin will really be darker with a close shave job on them; it can really make a difference in their heads and contouring. \*\*\* Please note that on horses with bald faces, or cremellos and perlinos, you may want to practice clipping them in a #30 and #40 or a bit longer and see how you like them trimmed.

It's important to keep any horse with a white area clipped closely out of the sun as much as possible as it will sunburn and turn pink until it has grown out a few days. So if you wash your freshly clipped horse with lots of white on it be sure to do it early or when the sun is not strong and move the horse indoors or into shade quickly after he is washed so your horse will not turn too pink in those areas. Even a horse with a snip or narrow blaze can sunburn easily so take care when clipping a horse.

Their facial hair will grow back in very quickly it seems. A horse with a close clipped face will really stand out showing its best features to the judge.

If you are new to clipping, I recommend that you watch someone else that has a lot of experience clip their horse's head and then practice a bit before trimming your horse for his first show so you will be better prepared and do a nice job of it. It does take some practice but is not that difficult once you learn it.

\*\*\*We do train all horses to tie well before trimming them. I teach them to cross tie and clip them that way. Never ever leave a horse unattended when being tied for safety reasons.

If your horse is really touchy about clipping his ears, etc. it may be best to try him first and if he really fights with you use a twitch for the areas he is hard to clip. That way you will not cut him or prolong his clip job and he will not get tired of standing and fighting you and it will also help you to do a better job and keep this from being a frustrating job! It is also for the safety of the horse as well so he will not get cut by the clipper blades accidentally.

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