

# It's a Hair Affair

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## Purpose

The purpose of this experiment is to learn how to effectively grow a horse's tail. I chose this experiment because I admire horses, especially the way they look and move. I am part of the Green Acres West 4-H Horse Project in which I learn many things about horses. This experiment will help me learn how to take care of my horse's tail and especially how to make it grow. This information will help other horse owners know how to take good care of their horse's tails. It's important to have a long healthy tail because if you are going to show your horse you and your horse have to look the best.



## Research

Tails are very important when it comes to horse shows. Competitors want their horses to have the best tail so their horse will stand out in the show ring. At horse shows the judges look for long, full, and healthy tails. To successfully grow a horse's tail may take a lot of time and patience. Some horses have difficulties growing thick, full and healthy tails. There are several different methods of growing a long tail. They include the use of special hair growth products, good nutrition, proper grooming, and artificial enhancements.

Genetics can be a factor in a horse's potential for mane and tail growth (encyclopedia equestrian). Some horses have short tails because they have been bred to have short tails. Some horses that have short tails are Appaloosas, draft horses and Akhal- Tekes (Bakersfield Veterinarian Hospital). Appaloosas were originally bred by the Nez Perce Indians to have short tails so they wouldn't get their tails stuck in bushes. Some horses are bred to have long tails also. Some horses with long tails are Arabians and Saddlebreds (Bakersfield Veterinarian Hospital).

Tails and hooves are made of keratin (Kunkel p. 2). Keratin is a protein. Therefore products and supplements that affect hoof growth also affect tail growth. The average rate of tail growth for Appaloosas and Paints are two to four inches a month (Bakersfield Veterinarian Hospital). Tail hair is very fragile. Brittle hair can be caused by the cold, dry air or mud. In order to increase the length of the tail, touch the tail as little as possible. Never braid tails tightly or brush them. Pick debris out of the tail carefully when brushing the tail is totally necessary brush the tail with your fingers only. Always keep the tail untangled. When brushing the tail is absolutely necessary (for example: in preparation for a show), brush the tail in sections. Use Cowboy Magic Detangler and Shine to make the tail slick and shiny (Moore p. 31).

Dirt and grease gather on the dock (the top of the tail) so wash the tail regularly (encyclopedia equestria). The dock should at least be sponged each time the horse is groomed. A horse's tail should be washed at least every two weeks (Moore p. 43). Orvus may be used to wash your horse's tail (Moore p. 43). Shampoo should be applied on the tail roots.

Short tail hairs are the sign of tail rubbing (Online Veterinarian). Some causes of tail rubbing are dirt, ticks, worms, and other parasites (Moore p. 52). Dirty sheaths can also cause tail rubbing (Moore p. 43). Sometimes mares rub their tails because they are in season (Moore p. 52). Treatments for tail rubbing include shampoos, insect control, worming, skin treatment (gold bond powder, betadine), hot wire, regular grooming, garlic and Listerine (Bakersfield Veterinarian Hospital). These treatments prevent itching.

Poor health and nutrition can also prevent optimal tail growth. Diseases, hormone abnormalities, and poor tail care can also negatively impact tail growth. Color-dilute follicular dysplasia occurs in dogs and now horses (Barakat, p. 2). Color-dilute follicular dysplasia is a genetic condition in animals that have blue-gray coats that causes hair loss. Things that cause hairs to grow are a balanced diet that includes biotin- vitamin B, oil, minerals, melatonin (a hormone that increases hair growth), hormones, and sulfur (Moore p. 110, The Horse.com).

Tails can be protected from damage. Loose braids, tail bags, and tail wraps are placed over the tail hair and can protect tail hairs (Moore, p. 43). There are also hair products that promote to tail growth. Some products that are recommended for growing horse tails are baby oil, Strawberry Derma Silk Shampoo, iodine shampoo, Cowboy Magic shampoo and M-T-G (Moore p. 45). Supplements that include flaxseed and kelp are said to improve tail growth (Bakersfield Veterinarian Hospital). When all else fails a horse's tail can be enhanced with a fake tail. People who show horses often use fake tails on their horses. The types of fake tails are synthetic and horse hair. Many competitors prefer tail extensions made from real horse hair.



A long healthy horse tail can help competitors win at horse shows. There are many ways to grow a long, full, and healthy tail. However, some horses cannot ever grow a long tail. If this is the case fake tails can be used. In order to grow a long healthy tail horses must have good nutrition, good health, and be properly groomed.

## Hypothesis

Cowboy Magic shampoo, Cowboy Magic conditioner, M-T-G, and Nutra Flax, not brushing the tails, and using tail bags for protection will all make horse tails grow to their potential faster than the tails of horses that are not exposed to this health and care regimen.

## Materials

1. Cowboy Magic Shampoo
2. Cowboy Magic Conditioner
3. M-T-G
4. Nutra flax
5. 4 tail bags
6. Measuring tape
7. Data chart

## Procedure

**Step one:** Measure the tails of the horses in the control group and the experimental group to establish a base line. Measure the tails by measuring from the end of the tail bone to the end of the tail hairs.

**Step two:** Wash the tails in the experimental group only with Cowboy Magic Shampoo.

**Step three:** Condition the tails of the experimental group with Cowboy Magic Conditioner.

**Step four:** Rub the M-T-G onto the docks of the horses of the experimental group once a week.

**Step five:** Put the tails of the experimental horses in tail bags.

**Step six:** Feed the horses of the experimental group Nutra Flax daily.

**Step seven:** Repeat this process and measure the tails of both groups every two weeks.

## Observations

Data Chart in Inches

	Blondie	Crazy	Lily	John Wayne	Hawk	Baylee	Hector	Miss Murph
11/11/2009	31	36	35	15	9.5	23	30.5	26
11/25/2009	31	41	35	16.5	10	23.5	32.5	29
12/12/2009	31	36.5	35	17.5	10.5	25	34.4	26
12/27/2009	N/A	36.5	36.5	18	11	26	34	30.5
01/10/2019	N/A	37.5	36	18	11.5	24.25	34.5	31.5

## Application

Horse owners should regularly use Cowboy Magic shampoo and conditioner, M-T-G, and Nutra Flax so their horse's tails are not thin and short. Additionally, owners should brush tails as little as possible and keep the tails braided and in tail bags. The M-T-G actually makes tails thicker. M-T-G is oil that you put on the horse's dock to stimulate hair growth. Also Nutra Flax is a dietary supplement which helps stimulate tail growth. Nutra Flax is a supplement that you give to your horse two times a day. Doing all this will maximize a horse's tail growth and improve its overall look which will make it more competitive in the show ring.

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## Further Research

In order to produce more accurate results further research should include more horses and the experiment needs to progress for a longer period of time. Also the age and breed of the horses should be controlled. The recommended directions for the Nutra Flax should be followed. The directions stated to feed the horses Nutra Flax two times a day which was economically impractical for this experiment due to the cost of the gas that would be necessary for the additional travel to the experiment site. Perhaps in future experiments the owners of the ranch that live on site could administer the additional dose of Nutra Flax daily. Lastly, the tails of the control group should be brushed regularly so the experiment will be more realistic because horse owners usually brush their horses' tails regularly.

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