

Give Your Boots A Show-Ring Shine

By Laura Pennington

When she was young, international dressage rider and coach Shannon Peters worked for a diligent tack-store owner who taught her the importance of caring for her tall riding boots. Regular attention to cleaning and polish-

ing prolongs the life of your boots and preserves their shine. Clean, polished boots also make a good impression both in and out of the saddle.

The first step in boot care is cleaning them, ideally after every ride, because dirt and sweat can deteriorate the seams and stitching and dry out the leather, leaving it brittle, hard and



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Cleaning your boots after every ride will extend their life.

prone to cracking. Cleaning your boots maintains the correct surface for polishing, too. Shannon polishes her boots weekly or more often if they get particularly dirty to keep them shiny and to preserve their finish.

To keep your boots in tip-top shape following Shannon's system, you'll need the following supplies:

- clean, soft towel or cloth
- bucket of warm water
- cleaning tool (small, soft brush, like a toothbrush)
- soft sponge
- castile soap
- cream-based boot polish
- buffing cloth

How To Do It

1. Dampen the clean towel or cloth with water. Wring out any excess—too much will dry out the leather. Using a gentle, circular motion with the cloth, wipe the dirt, sweat and excess polish off the boots. Scrubbing can scratch the leather's surface.

2. Use the cleaning tool to gently lift any hard-to-get dirt trapped in the crevasses of the boot's heel and sole.

3. If the water alone in Step 1 didn't remove all of the dirt and sweat, use a soft, damp sponge to apply a mild detergent, such as castile soap. (Many leather-care products you use on saddles and bridles, such as saddle soap, contain harsh oils that can cause stretching and permanently dull the boots' finish.) Again, wring out the

sponge to avoid building up suds that can leave a residue on your boots. After applying the soap, rinse the sponge and use just enough water to remove the soap and dirt.

4. Apply a thin, even layer of cream-based boot polish in small circles that overlap one another as if you're waxing a car. Light strokes allow for the most even coverage. Remember that a little polish goes a long way. Excess polish can leave a gummy, sticky buildup and does not make the boots shinier. Also, don't polish the inside calf section of the boots because the polish may come off on your saddle pad.

5. Let the polish dry for five to 10 minutes, then use the buffing cloth to restore their original shine.

With regular cleaning and polishing, your boots will last longer and make a great impression, whether you're riding at home or in the show ring.

*A U.S. Dressage Federation bronze, silver and gold medalist, **Shannon Peters** captured the 2006 USDF Intermediaire I Horse of the Year honors on Luxor and was reserve champion at the 2008 FEI Young Horse National Finals on Weltino's Magic. Currently she is competing Odyssey and Flor de Selva at Grand Prix. She also coaches her husband, four-time Olympian Steffen Peters.*

Recently Shannon developed the Show-RingShine boot-care kit, which includes the Shine Rite® cleaning tool, a sponge, castile soap in its own container, Shine Rite Leather Heel & Sole Edge Color Renew, Shine Rite Platinum Premium Shoe cream and a buffing cloth, all which come in an easy-to-carry case. The kit costs \$40 and is available in local tack stores, through tack-store catalogs or at www.showringshine.net.