

The Ten-Minute Box

by Audrea Johnson

The Box. It takes incredible preparation—all the extra equipment, the organization, time management, and choreography of a team. It takes focus, the ability to handle pressure and stress, while remaining completely calm for the sake of the horse, the rider, and the rest of the team.

For a groom, there is no comparison to a real three-day. It's such a rush, an adrenaline high, for those 10 minutes—get that horse in, TPR, check shoes, halter on, stirrups up, loosen the girth, weave through traffic to your pre-determined station, towel on the saddle, reins to the ears, sponge and scrape and walk, sponge and scrape and walk (big circles not small ones!), change studs if needed, minute-four TPR and jog, back to station, sponge and walk, scrape, "TWO-MINUTES!" do up the girth, overgirth, check the noseband, towel the reins, rider up, rubber glove, leg grease shoulder to ground, stifle to ground, "ONE-MINUTE!" rider leaves, take a breath and cheer. It's such an accomplishment to work as a team, get that horse down and send him out to run the course of his life.

I don't profess to be a master three-day groom. Actually, I've only groomed at 3 long formats, since 2001 (and competed two, myself), and at least four short-formats (riding in two more). But I was very, very well "schooled" in the process of Endurance Day—my (very experienced) rider made darn sure I knew every small detail of preparation and execution of our plan. I dearly miss the long format three-day... not just from the saddle, but from the ground in the 10-minute box. We're losing horsemanship with the loss of the long-format....

And for anyone out there hoping to do a long format, please keep supporting it! Go and groom first, for an experienced rider if you can, so you have a good idea of what to expect. That's the best way to prepare... that way you can be there for *your* grooms!

For any potential grooms out there, here's my personal Endurance Day list of stuff. Keep in mind every rider has a few particular items they like/don't like, but these things have served me well: (please feel free to add... I may have missed something off the top of my head!)

STEEPLECHASE BUCKET: (to travel With Groom Following Horse, will go to Box)

- Halter (numbered) with lead rope, chain shank if your horse is rank
 - Rag
 - Water (bottle for rider)
 - Extra shoes (WITH STUDS IN, prepared Fri night, know L/R, F/H)
 - Duct tape
 - Electrical tape
 - Hoof pick
 - Sponge/scrapper (for possible C-halt)
 - Vetwrap (optional)
 - Extra studs (copies of what you use, maybe something diff if rider chooses), wrench
- I like to carry the extra studs in a small baggie, with wrench, in my pocket

10-MINUTE BOX: (label and/or stripe EVERYTHING)

- Large tarp, to place everything on
- At least 4 buckets, 5 to 6 is better (one for drinking); muck tub
- 2 quart-size pitchers, for pouring water on horse (better than sponges for immediate cooldown!)
- At least 2 sponges and 2 scrapers
- Appropriate clothing: irish knit, scrim, thermatex
- Several large towels and rags
- Halter (numbered) and lead rope
- Chain shank (even if you think you won't need it)
- Chair (for rider)

- Water/gatorade (for rider)
- Boot jack, boot pulls
- Hole punch
- Powder
- Grease (and rubber gloves)
- Electrical tape
- Duct tape
- Stud kit (you may leave this at the barn, if multiple horses competing, but be sure to have spare stud options!)
- Stick spray/saddle tite
- Woof boots (for walking horse home)

- Extra gear
 - >Bridle (fitted to horse, with similar bit; or different, if rider prone to bit-change)
 - >Girth (make sure it fits!)
 - >Overgirth
 - >Martingale
 - >Breastplate
 - >Reins (unattached to spare bridle)
 - >Stirrup and leather (usually just pull it off the dressage saddle)
 - >Boots (horse) front and hind, bell boots
 - >Helmet
 - >Gloves
 - >Whip
 - >Watch

First aid:

- >Band-aids
- >Triple antibiotic
- >Eye drops, saline, esp if rider wears contacts (extras!)
- >Aluspray/wound dressing
- >Bandage, wrap, gauze
- >Vetwrap (2+ rolls), diaper/hoof boot (lost shoe)
- >Thermometer (don't *always* trust the vet's!)
- >Electrolyte paste (optional)
- >Stethoscope (optional)
- >Alcohol (optional, add to ice water for evaporation cooling)