

Horse Care Level 1 111 Principles of putting on and taking off tack

1.1 State how to recognise if the tack is likely to cause the horse discomfort or be unsafe

Incorrectly and badly fitting tack can cause discomfort to your horse which can result in behavioural issues both when riding and on the ground.

If your horse begins to develop behavioural issues when being tacked up and ridden, or is acting out of character it is worth checking your tack fits correctly. More often than not a horse could be trying to tell you he is in pain or uncomfortable and is not simply 'being naughty'. Here are some common behavioural issues that can arise due to badly fitting tack:

- Bucking/rearing
- Cold backed, hollowing and hunching of the back
- Becoming head-shy
- Refusal or reluctance to move forwards
- Agitated/aggressive/uncomfortable when girthed

Some horses are much more tolerant than others and so will not exhibit any behavioural issues despite being uncomfortable or in pain. It is important to pay close attention to your horse and if you begin to see any significant changes in his physical appearance you should look at what could be causing the changes. Physical signs of badly fitting tack that you should be aware of:

- lumps and bumps appearing on the back (in the saddle area)
- rubs
- sores
- ruffled hair
- hair turning white

Saddle

An incorrectly fitting saddle can cause numerous amounts of problems both physical and behavioural so it is important to ensure your saddle fits correctly. Saddles should be checked by a qualified saddler every 6 months. Saddles can often be adjusted as your horse changes shape. Horses can change shape depending on work load and age; a young horse will develop muscle as he matures whereas an older horse may show signs of muscle wastage.

Bridles

When a horse begins to develop behavioural issues it is commonly assumed it may be the saddle that doesn't fit correctly and the bridle gets over looked. As the bridle sits around the delicate areas of the horses face it is important to ensure it fits correctly and is comfortable so your horse can get on with the tasks you ask of him.

As a general rule, most areas of the bridle should allow a 2 finger width clearance between straps and the horse's head.

- Headpiece – should sit comfortably behind the horse's ears and not dig in or inhibit the ears
- Brow Band – should sit across the horse's forehead and have a 2 finger width clearance to prevent pinching and not pinch the ears.
- Cheek Pieces – should be buckled as equally as possible and sit flat on the horse's face. Cheek pieces should hold the bit correctly in the horse's mouth and not gape when a contact is taken up.
- Throat Lash – should be able to fit a hands width between the cheek and the strap.

Numnah

Numnahs and saddle pads are used to keep the underside of the saddle clean and as extra comfort for the horse, particularly those that are sensitive. Numnahs and saddle pads should be washed regularly to prevent a build up of dirt and sweat and should lie flat underneath the saddle to prevent any pressure points or rubs.

- There should be a clear margin between the edge of the saddle and the numnah or saddle pad to prevent pressure points (approx 1 inch/2cm all the way around the saddle). The saddle should not be sitting on the binding of the pad at any point.
- The numnah/saddle pad should sit up into the gullet of the saddle to prevent pressure on the spine.
- Ensure the pad is not pressing onto the withers.
- Secure with straps to ensure the pad does not slip.
- Ensure the pad is sitting centrally and lies flat on the back with no creases or folds.

Exercise Boots

The general rule is that boots should fit snug with enough room to press a finger between the horse's leg and the boot. Too tight and you'll pinch a tendon or restrict the blood flow that is essential during exercise. Too loose and dirt or footing material can sneak inside the boot and become an irritant. Or worse, the boot slips off.

<https://www.naylors.com/blog/correctly-fitting-tack/>

1.2 State how to secure the horse if it needs to be left when tacked up

Thread the lead rein through either side of the bit as clipping the lead rope directly to the bit could be dangerous for the horse and cause harm to them if they pull back. A safer way would be to put the headcollar over the bridle and tie them up that way.

Tie the lead rope to the baling string loop attached to a metal ring. Ensure that where the horse is standing is clear and has no obstacles in the area such as tools or equipment. Ensure that the stirrups are gathered up and are not hanging down. You can thread your reins through the stirrups or knot them to avoid the reins coming over the horses head and them standing on them or tripping up over them.

<https://horseandrider.com/how-to/dos-donts-tying-up-horses/>

1.3 List the parts of bridle and basic parts of the saddle, and the individual horse's equipment

Snaffle Bridle

The snaffle bridle is the most commonly used bridle because of its versatility and functionality. It is typically used in starting young horses, trail riding, in all of the sport horse disciplines — hunter, jumper, dressage and eventing— and in fox hunting. A snaffle bridle consists of the many types of single snaffle bits, such as eggbutt, loose ring, or D-ring snaffle, a single set of reins attached to that bit, and any of a number of types of noseband or cavesson. These include:

- The Standard Cavesson
- Flash Noseband
- Crank Noseband
- Drop Noseband
- Figure-8 or Grackle

A snaffle bridle works through pressure— pressure from the bit as it applies to the bars and corners of the horse's mouth, lips, tongue and palate, and pressure from the bridle as it applies to the horse's poll and nasal bone.

In an English snaffle bridle, the noseband keeps the horse's jaws aligned and prevents the horse from opening its mouth wide enough to avoid the bit and rein aids. When adjusted properly— not too tightly or too loosely —the noseband also transfers some of the bit pressure from the bars of the horse's mouth to the nasal bone. A noseband also provides a place for a standing martingale, if used, to attach.

The cavesson is the simplest noseband and gives a smart appearance. It can also be used for attaching a standing martingale to, if you need to use one. The action of a cavesson noseband is very slight, unless it is used with a standing martingale. This, or the crank noseband, is the only sort which should be used with a double bridle.

The drop noseband - Traditionally these nosebands adjusted at the front and the back, but most now fasten only at the back. The drop prevents a horse opening his mouth to resist the contact, but has a more definite action than the flash. Some horses respond well but others resent it. The low pressure point in front and pressure in the curb groove at the back is said by some to encourage a horse to lower his head.

The flash noseband- The flash was originally invented so that a standing martingale could be attached to the top (cavesson) part, while the bottom strap fastens below the bit to prevent the

horse from opening its mouth wide to evade the bit. The flash helps prevent a horse opening his mouth too wide, but is not as definite in its action as some designs. Some horses accept it better for this reason. It also helps keep a jointed loose ring snaffle central in the mouth. Beware flashes with narrow cavessons, as they tend to slide down the nose.

Numnahs and polly saddle pads, provide a buffer between the saddle and the horse's back. This protects the saddle from dirt and sweat. Apart from that, the numnah is also intended to make wearing the saddle as comfortable as possible for the horse.

Basic saddle parts

Tree: The foundation on which the rest of the saddle is built - usually manufactured of wood or a synthetic material.

Cantle: The back of the saddle that gently curves upwards for backward seat support.

Pommel: The front of the saddle that gently curves upwards for the forward seat support

Twist: The "twist" is the part of the saddle tree that sits just below the pommel in front of the "seat" of the saddle.

Seat: This part should provide balance to the rider and can be classified (along with the cantle and pommel) and shallow, medium, medium-deep or deep. Different disciplines require different seat depths for suitable performance.

Knee Roll: The knee roll provides a cushion for knee support. Saddles can oftentimes be found with molded knee rolls for added comfort and deep support.

Saddle flap: The saddle flap refers to the flap as a whole that is not in contact with the horse's back. Saddle flaps can come in different lengths and angles to accommodate the rider.

Stirrup Leather Keeper: The stirrup leather keeper contains the slack of the stirrup leather. Some are a slit in the saddle flap and some are an additional piece of leather stitched on top.

Skirt: The skirt of the saddle protects the rider's leg from being pinched by the stirrup leather buckle and conceals the stirrup bar. The stirrup bar is a metal piece that supports the stirrup leather to hang freely beneath the flap.

Girths

A girth is an essential addition to your saddle as without one your saddle is of little use. A girth is a long, broad piece of material often made of webbing, leather or cotton that secures the saddle to the horse, each offering unique benefits.

The girth is designed to keep the saddle on the horse, keeping it secure and to prevent it from slipping from side to side. A horse's girth attaches by buckles to your saddles' "billet straps". These are the three straps underneath the top flap, on each side of the saddle. The billets are securely attached to the saddle's tree, so once a girth is buckled to the billets, it prevents the saddle from slipping.

<https://www.doversaddlery.com/overview-of-english-bridles/a/496/>

1.4 Describe horse identification through colours and markings

The colours of horses are defined as follows:

Black: Where black pigment is general throughout the coat, limbs, mane and tail, with no pattern factor present other than white markings.

Brown: Where there is a mixture of black and brown pigment in the coat, with black limbs, mane and tail.

Bay-brown: Where the predominating colour is brown, with muzzle bay, black limbs, mane and tail.

Bay: Bay varies considerably in shade from dull red approaching brown, to a yellowish colour approaching chestnut, but it can be distinguished from the chestnut by the fact that the bay has a black mane and tail and almost invariably has black on the limbs and tips of the ears.

Dark bay: Brownish overall appearance, but mahogany bay is not as dark as dark bay.

Bay markings appear in some parts of the coat e.g. bay-brown

Light bay: Paler brownish colour with a light red to yellowish tinge.

Chestnut: A chestnut can be any shade of red with no black points like the bay. There are many variations in the color. Think of the different colors a penny can be--from brand new to very old and tarnished--chestnuts can come in all of these colors. A chestnut with a light colored mane--almost white is said to be a chestnut with a flaxen mane and tail. A very dark chestnut--one the color of a very tarnished penny is called a 'liver chestnut'--they too can have the flaxen manes and tails--a very eye catching combination.

Dark chestnut: Mahogany or copper chestnut (listed in the USA).

Light chestnut: Chestnut of a light red / yellow body colour.

Sorrel: Coat ranging from a yellowish / reddish to a brownish shade, usually uniform. 1) With lighter shades the lower limbs, mane and tail are usually the same or darker than the body.

Grey: Where the body coat is a varying mosaic of black and white hairs, with the skin black. With increasing age the coat grows lighter in colour. The flea-bitten grey may contain three colours or two basic colours and should be so described. A pure white is exceptional.

Roan: Permanent colour with a mixture of white hairs and one or two other colours of hairs in the coat.

Strawberry: Where the body colour is chestnut mixed with white hairs.

Piebald: The body coat consists of large irregular patches of black and white. The line of demarcation between the two colours is generally well defined.

Skewbald: the body consists of large irregular patches of white and of any definite colour except black. The line of demarcation between the colours is generally well-defined.

Dun: The body coat is of a cream colour, with black mane and tail.

Cream: The body coat is of a cream colour, with unpigmented skin. The iris is deficient in pigment and is often devoid of it, giving the eye a pinkish or bluish appearance.

Palomino: The body coat is a newly-minted gold coin colour (lighter or darker shades are permissible) with a white mane and tail.

Appaloosa: Body colour is grey, covered with a mosaic of black or brown spots.

https://inside.fei.org/system/files/ID_of_horses_2014.pdf

1.5 State how to tack up and un-tack horses

1. Start with a saddle pad.
Place it across the horse's back and over the withers. Where you place, the saddle pad is important as it needs to sit in a position that is most comfortable for your horse. Place it slightly higher than its intended position so you can slide it into the correct place when you put the saddle on.
2. Place the saddle on the saddle pad.
The saddle should sit in the middle of the saddle pad. Both the saddle and saddle pad should sit just behind the horse's shoulder.
3. Next, connect the girth.
Attach the girth to the saddle's right-hand side and fasten it under on the left-hand side, with the girth running underneath the horse's belly, behind the front legs.
4. Finally, put the bridle on, starting with the bit.
Cup the bit in your hands and slowly insert it into the horse's mouth. Once in, slide the top of the bridle over the horse's ears and head and fasten the noseband and throat lash.

Always put on the horse's halter and secure him before you take off the saddle:

1. Flip the reins over the horse's head. This way when you remove the bridle, you will still have some control over the horse as you put on the halter.
2. Undo the noseband and the throat latch.
3. Hold the halter in your left hand and stand to the left side of the horse's head.
4. Grip the bridle from the crown (the very top) and gently pull it over the horse's ears.
5. Carefully lower the bridle down and avoid letting the bit knock against the horse's teeth.
6. Slide the halter onto the horse and remove the reins from the horse's neck.

7. Attach a cross tie to each side of the halter or tie the horse in a safe area with a safety release knot.
8. Hang up your bridle right away. Never leave it lying on the ground or in the aisle way where the horse could become entangled.

Remove the Saddle

1. If you haven't already, secure the stirrups.
2. Unbuckle the girth—first the left side, then the right.
3. Place the girth on top of the saddle.
4. Return to the left side of the horse and grip the saddle by the pommel and cantle (the front and the back).
5. Lift the saddle up before pulling it towards you; don't pull it into the horse's spine. If you cannot reach, get assistance.
6. Place the saddle on a saddle rack or out of the way, tipped onto the front of the knee rolls (but never flat down on the ground).

<https://horsebondingsuccess.com/horse-care/how-to-tack-up-a-horse-for-beginners>

1.6 State the types of difficulties which may occur and to whom these should be reported

A horse may not want to stand still while you are tacking them up and can be fidgety. If this happens you should ask someone to help you hold the horse so that you can safely continue to tack up without the horse becoming stressed and you injuring yourself by being trod on. There may be a piece of equipment, such as the girth or bridle part, that you come across as damaged, in this situation do not continue to use the equipment but tell the manager immediately. The horse you are riding may be lame. Dismount the horse and seek immediate help from the manager so that they can contact the vet.

If the horse develops any behavioural problems such as biting, kicking out and ears back when you are racking up, there could be an issue regarding poor saddle fitting. Always tell your manager or supervisor straight away and do not continue.

<https://www.horsetalk.co.nz/2021/01/28/horses-abnormal-behaviours-tacking-up-mounting/>

1.7 State how and where to store tack

The best place to store tack is in a dedicated place such as a locked tack room. Tack is expensive and should always be locked away safely and securely. The tack room should be dry and away from sunlight. You should place your saddle on the saddle rack which should not be too high and out of reach but easy to get to.

Your bridle should be hung on a bridle hook and you should make sure that the reins are not hanging down low as someone could trip over them.

Always put your tack away after use and lock them away securely.

Store your tack in a dry, room temperature space, like a heated, well ventilated tack room or in your house. These environmental conditions help keep the temperature and humidity at optimal conditions for leather health. Also, a controlled environment helps prevent mold and mildew and infestations from hungry bugs.

Use a saddle and bridle bag to fully cover your tack up and protect it from the weather and light.

Clean your tack before putting it away.

<https://malvernsaddlery.com/blogs/news/tack-storage-care>

2.1 State safety precautions to be taken while tacking up

Ensure that you are wearing the correct PPE, riding hat and gloves. You should wear suitable riding trousers such as jodhpurs and boots specific for riding such as long or short jodhpur boots. You should wear a back protector to keep you safe in the event of you falling off. Hair should be tied back and long fingers should be tucked underneath the hat.

Check the horse all over when you groom and before racking up for any lumps and bumps and sore spots.

Ensure that your horse has been tied up correctly and in a safe place with no hazards around. Be gentle! Horses are sensitive. A bad experience when tacking up can easily lead to a horse becoming difficult to tack up. If you are struggling always ask someone with experience for help.

Check the condition of your tack to ensure it is fit for purpose. You should do this every time you tack up as it can prevent an accident when riding. Tip: Regularly check the stitching on the bridle, saddle and stirrup leathers especially.

Do final checks before mounting. Ensure that the forelock is pulled out from under the browband, the bit is sitting correctly in the horse's mouth and that the numnah is not lying flat on your horse's withers - pull it up slightly to take the shape of the pommel of the saddle.

<https://www.theirishfield.ie/amp/horse-sense-ten-tips-to-remember-when-tacking-up-308178>