

Horse Care Level 1 113 Principles of cleaning tack and horse clothing

1.1 State the dangers of unsafe stitching or damaged tack

Comfort of horse, health and safety of horse and rider

Due to the nature of the sport, horse riding is considered a high-risk activity. It is important that all riders take steps to minimise the risks involved for their own safety. For example, buying a riding hat which fits correctly and conforms to the latest safety standards seems an obvious choice to keep yourself safe.

It is just as important to regularly check that your tack is safe too. Accidents from tack breakages can cause serious harm to you and your horse.

A good way to monitor your tack health is to clean and condition it. Doing this regularly will ensure your tack lives a long life and you can check for wear and tear.

What to look out for when cleaning tack:

- Cracking, thin, or dry leather. Leather is a natural product which requires regular conditioning to keep it supple. Worn leather carries an increased risk of snapping when pressure is applied. If any parts of leather are showing weakness, replace this immediately. Cracked leather cannot be repaired and a horse spooking or pulling too hard on the reins can easily cause a break
- Stretched holes. These will be particularly common on stirrup leathers and girth straps. Once these have stretched, they are more likely to break or drop. If your girth strap breaks when riding, you could easily have a fall. Change the hole you buckle regularly to help prevent them stretching. It is also a good idea to switch your stirrup leathers over periodically, as the leather on the near side will stretch quicker as you mount each time
- Rusting, loose, or bent buckles. Any hardware showing signs of wearing can easily break so will need to be replaced. Also check stitching around buckles to ensure it is not frayed
- Check the girth for any signs of wear. Damage to the girth could cause it to break when riding.

Cleaning and regularly checking your tack will help keep you safe. It is also advisable to check over your tack before each ride.

Horses change shape throughout the seasons, so even if your tack was the correct size when fitted, it may not stay that way. It is advisable to have your saddle checked regularly by a qualified saddle fitter. If tack is too loose, it may become insecure and move when riding. If the tack is too tight, your horse will be uncomfortable which can cause an accident. A bridle should not be fastened on the top cheek piece hole. If the cheek piece were to break when riding, there would be no more holes to reattach the buckle to. Signs to look out for that your tack does not fit correctly are injuries on your horse. Look for cuts, rubs, sores, and abrasions around the saddle and bridle area. If your horse has been injured from their tack, allow them to recover and then have the tack checked before using again. Remember, one size does not fit all with horses so ensure your tack is always properly fitted and fastened correctly.

<https://www.collegiatesaddlery.co.uk/blog/post/tack-safety-why-is-it-important-to-check-your-tack>

1.2 Give the reasons for regular cleaning of tack and clothing

Regular cleaning of your saddle, bridle, boots, jodhpurs etc helps to increase longevity of your equipment and helps to prevent injuries.

Cleaning your tack also allows you to conduct safety checks on important areas - ensure you check that all stitching is intact, and that the leather is in good condition (supple and slightly wrinkly). If you do come across any damage, make sure it is rectified as soon as possible as it could cause injury to you or your horse! Areas that require regular checks are stirrup leathers and girth buckles, as these are culprits for showing signs of wear and tear! Sometimes items are beyond repair and simply need replacing.

Riders put their tack through a lot of abuse. The dirt, sweat and horse slobber that saddles and bridles are subjected to in their daily use can break down the leather and stitching over time.

While few riders have the time to give their tack a thorough cleaning after every ride, it's important to make sure you don't let the dirt get out of hand.

Many riders like their horses to work the bit in their mouths. The resulting foam around the mouth is often considered a sign that the horse has accepted the bit. However, when that saliva reaches the leather bridle, it can be damaging. Water weakens leather if it has a chance to soak in. Dried

saliva can attract dirt, which will wear away at the leather, or it may cause mold over time. If your horse is a drooler, make sure that you wipe down the reins and cheekpieces near the bit on your bridle after each ride.

Similarly, if you've given your horse a solid workout or the weather is warm and your horse has worked up a sweat, be sure to at least wipe down any part of your tack that contacts the horse's body. Generally a saddle pad will protect the underside of your saddle, but take the time to check. Sweat and the dirt it brings with it can cause irreparable damage to your tack.

Horses tend to sweat in the girth area even if they don't break a sweat anywhere else, so it's a good idea to make wiping off your girth after each ride a regular habit, this will also help prevent sores around the girth area.

<https://stable-equestrian.net/articles/why-it-is-important-to-clean-your-tack-daily/>

1.3 State the problems vermin may cause when storing tack

Mice and critters can create damage to lots of things – leather tack, feed room everything, and even saddle pads and blankets. Vermin can chew through saddles, bridles, head collars, saddle pads etc. Vermin also carry disease which can spread easily.

It is important to store your tack safely in a specialised bag that is strong and durable. Keep your saddle on a saddle rack rather than on the floor. Vermin can chew holes and bite through all sorts of tack and equipment. They can also make nests in the equipment and reproduce creating more problems in your tack room!

<https://proequinegrooms.com/tips/saddles-and-bridles/the-problem-with-mice-their-pee-and-your-leather-tack/>

1.4 State how to store clothing and tack

Store clothing in boxes in bags in a well ventilated and dry area such as a tack room. Ensure that they are not dirty or wet before storing as they will get mouldy. Always keep your riding equipment clean before putting away. Storage chests are very useful for keeping clothes and equipment in as you can keep them dry and clean and they are large enough to put all of your equipment in. 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>

1.5 Identify the basic parts of the saddle and bridle

Name parts of the saddle and bridle

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.

Parts of the bridle

Headpiece (Crownpiece): Goes over the crown of the horse's head to hold the bridle on. Connects to the cheek pieces.

Throatlatch: Keeps the bridle from slipping off over the horse's head.

Cheek Piece: Connects the headpiece to the bit.

Noseband: Goes around the horse's nose and is often used to keep the animal's mouth closed, or to attach other pieces of equipment, such as martingales.

Reins: Connect the rider's hands to the bit and the bridle.

Bit: The metal part of the bridle that goes in the horse's mouth. Primary source of control through the horse's mouth.

Browband: Extends over the horse's forehead and prevents the bridle from sliding behind the poll onto the upper neck.

<https://www.allpony.com/learn/bridles/>

1.6 State how to carry out routine cleaning of tack and clothing

Equipment required, and how it may be used

The best way to clean most horse tack is by using saddle soap and water. Mix the saddle soap with warm water and scrub the leather with a soft cloth or sponge until it's clean. Once you're finished, rinse off your equipment in cold water and let it dry before storing.

What you need

- Sponges and rags
- Leather cleaner or glycerin soap
- Leather conditioner
- Brushes/old toothbrush
- Q-tips
- Bucket of water
- Mink oil – warm (optional – for very dry saddles).
- Silver polish (optional – for buckles)

The best way to clean a leather bridle is with glycerin soap and water. Apply the glycerin soap to the bridle and rub with a rag or sponge to remove hardened dirt and grime. You can then wash it under running water. Hang to dry. Condition the leather bridle using a leather conditioner or neatsfoot oil.

The best way to sanitise tarnished bits is using diluted vinegar. Soak the bits in warm water and vinegar for an hour. Use a brush to remove the gummed on grime.

To clean an old horse halter, dip an old rag in water mixed with saddle or glycerin soap. Apply this to the harness in sections and rub thoroughly. Rinse under warm water. You can also use water and baking soda to restore an old halter.

Use the flat part of a butter knife and remove the congealed dirt from martingales and breastplate. Make sure to hold the knife at an angle and scrape off in the grain of the leather.

<https://horseracingsense.com/how-to-clean-horse-tack-products/>

1.7 State how to use cleaning equipment

Methods of cleaning – leather metal, cloth, sheep skin

Leather is a natural material and varies widely, so it's important to know what type of leather you have and what the manufacturer's instructions are for that leather. However, most leather can be cleaned using the same process, with one major exception: Suede, which often requires cleaning with a suede brush or consulting a professional.

Leather is a very absorbent material in many cases, unless it has been coated with a protective barrier. The sooner you can get to any potential stain, the better — letting a stain linger increases the odds that it will be difficult to remove. In some cases, that may mean giving your leather items a once-over every so often to make sure they don't need immediate cleaning.

Before using a cleaning product, you'll want to remove any dirt and dust from the surface of the leather, with a soft cloth. Gently dust any loose dirt away before cleaning the leather thoroughly. Spot testing involves finding a hidden section of the item, applying a bit of the leather cleaner and then allowing it to dry so you can fully preview the effects. Put your leather cleaner in a spray bottle and lightly spray down your leather, then follow with a lint-free cloth to lift dirt. The other is to dip a lint-free cloth into your leather cleaner, then use the moist cloth to wipe down and clean the leather. In most cases, you should not have to scrub — gently wiping the leather will remove most dirt and grime.

<https://www.leatherhoney.com/blogs/leather-care/how-to-clean-leather>

For metal tack - You can toss bits, nylon halters, stirrup irons, and spurs into the dishwasher for a cycle. Nice and shiny when the cycle is over.

For polishing things by hand, grab yourself the following – a cleaner/polishing compound, soft rag, and toothbrush for the nitty-gritty parts. The cleaner/polishing compounds come in many forms and usually work on all types of metals, from brass to stainless. Some are paste, some are more liquid, and some come in a jar with bits of fiber that you break off and rub the metal with.

For cloth numnahs you can simply wash them in the washing machine but wash on a cool cycle so that you do not shrink them.

Sheep skin - Sheepskin can be washed, however a water wash should be your last port of call when it comes to approaching dirt or a spill. Firstly giving a sheepskin product a regular, thorough vacuum and a shake outside is the best place to start when giving it a general clean.

<https://proequinegrooms.com/tips/equipment-and-tack/polishing-brass-and-other-metals/>

2.1 Describe health and safety requirements within the workplace

PPE should always be worn when working with horses.

Sensible clothes should always be worn when dealing with horses. A protective riding hat is essential when riding, and a body protector is highly advisable. These should also be worn when in any risk situation, such as when loading a horse, schooling from the ground or handling an excitable animal. Sturdy boots and gloves should be worn when handling horses and when turning out or bringing in from the pasture. Protective clothing should be fitted correctly and purchased new from a reputable retailer which has up to date product knowledge and fitting skills. When working around horses, the wearing of jewellery should be avoided. Earrings, other piercings and finger rings are easily caught and can either break or cause injury. Keep long hair tied back.

Check over the equipment before using it to ensure it is safe to use and to avoid injury.

<https://www.bluecross.org.uk/advice/horse/safety-around-horses?amp>