Contents

Horsemanship Judging

1. Bits

The type of bit we use is a widely varied opinions and preferences. There are a vast variety of bits available, but there are basically four main types. The Snaffle, Pelham, Curb, and gag bits. It is important to know the actions of these types of bits.

1.1. Bit fit

You know it's important for your horse's saddle and bridle to fit correctly. But do not forget to make sure his bit fits, too. A bit that is too small can pinch the corners of the mouth, while a bit that's too big can move around too much and clunk against his teeth. Rubbed patches or thickened skin at the corners of the mouth are signs of bad bit fit, but it is better not to wait to see physical evidence that a bit doesn't fit well.

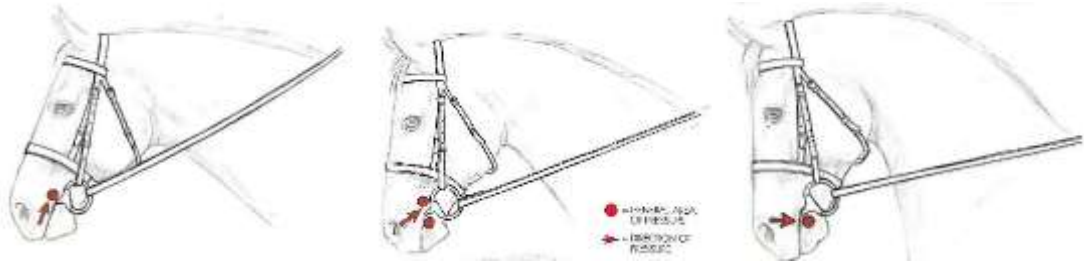
To test whether a bit is the proper size for your horse, you need only an ordinary piece of twine and a ruler or tape measure: Guide the twine into the horse's mouth and back toward the corners so that it is positioned approximately where the bit would lie. Pull it taut and use your fingers to grasp it at each corner of the lips. Remove the twine and use your ruler to measure the length between your fingers. The general rule is that a properly fitted bit measures a quarter-inch longer than the width of the horse's mouth. You can adjust the

Checking bit fit

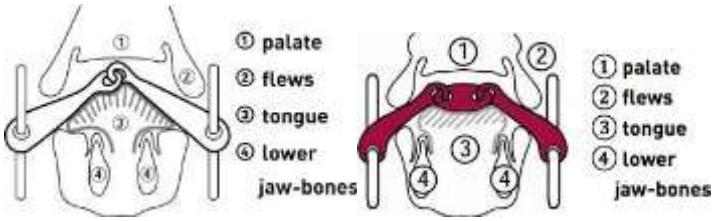
cheek pieces of the bridle to make sure that the bit rests properly in the bars of the mouth, creating one or two wrinkles at the corners. If the rider is having bitting issues ask them to approach a trainer or specialist bit fitter to assist.

The Snaffle . The basic action of the simple snaffle, when pressure is added on the reins, will be that of a nutcracker action. The snaffle will cause pressure on the bars of the mouth, the tongue, and the pallet, which is caused by the joint in the middle of the mouth. By tying the horse's mouth shut with a noseband, it causes more pressure into the pallet. Not all horses react in the same manner, some would yield to the pressure, where other might react by running.

The double jointed snaffle is shaped more anatomically, and relieves the pressure in the pallet, but the pressure remains on the very sensitive bars and tongue

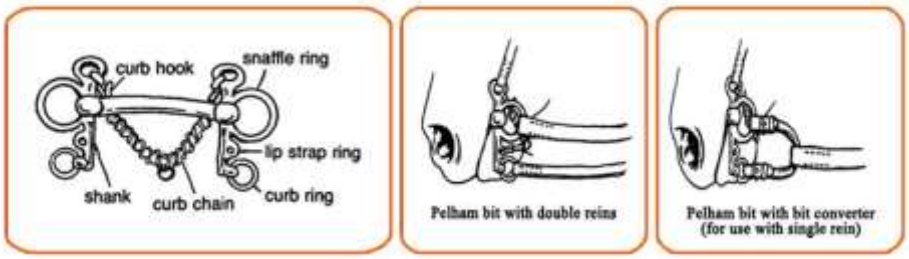


The action of the snaffle corresponding to the relevant head position.

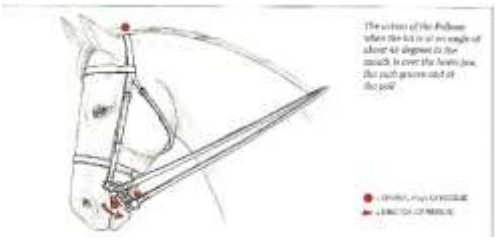


The position of the single jointed and double jointed snaffle, and the action inside the mouth.

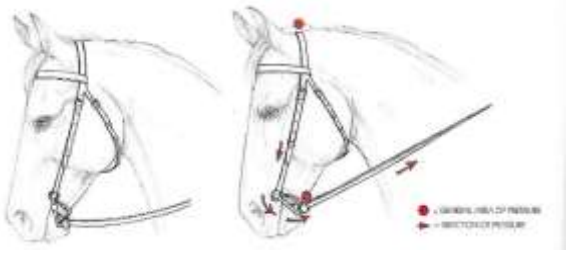
The Pelham has elements of both a curb bit and a snaffle bit and functions similar to a double bride, as it has double reins. A Pelham apply pressure on the bars, tongue, and lips of the horse. Pressure can be allied to the poll when the curb rein is engaged and depended on the length of the upper shank in relation to the lower shank. Pressure is also applied to the chin groove due to the curb chain.



Action of Pelham

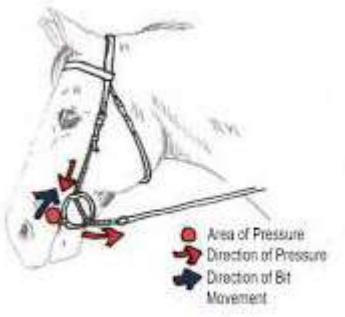


Action of the Pelham



Action of the Curb bit

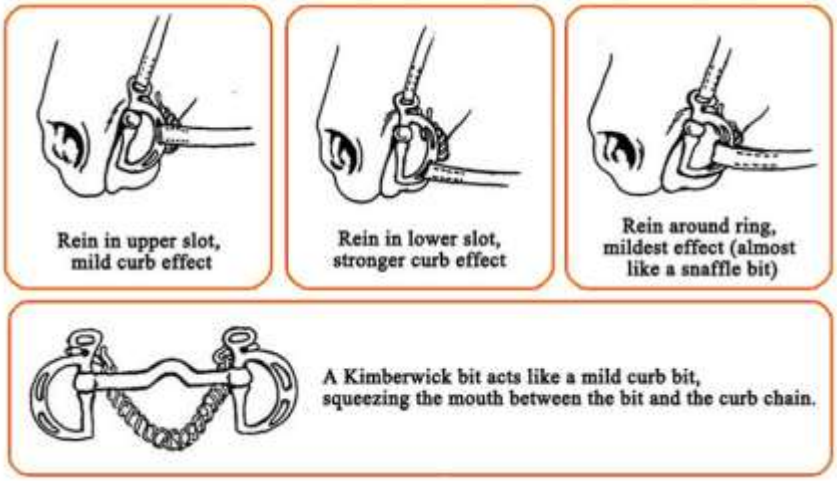
The gag bit works on the horse's lips, corners of the mouth and poll simultaneously. The pressure on the lips tends to make the horse raise its head, which is useful for a horse that tends to lean on the bit. **The gag bit is normally used with two sets of reins**, the gag bit gives a rider the ability to use either a standard direct action, which allows the bit to be used as a normal snaffle most of the time or a gag action used only when your horse gets strong.



Action of the Rope gag

Rope gag as often used by Polo players

A Kimblewick tries to combine the action of snaffle and curb into one bit using one pair of reins. The mouthpiece is typically ported, like a curb, the cheeks are D-shaped rings and hooks to attach a curb chain.



Action of a Kimblewick

It provides a mild curb action to help to control a horse or that pulls pony (used for small children because of the control the bits provide) or which requires help from a slight curb action to encourage it to lower its head

2. Saddles

Essentials for a good saddle:

It must:

Fit the horse and rider.

Be of the correct type for it's purpose. (DRASA has no restrictions on type)

Be well cared for, clean and supple.

Badly-fitting saddlery and hard, dry, cracked leather:

Are dangerous for both horse and rider.

Cause pain and injury to the horse.

Look sloppy and untidy.

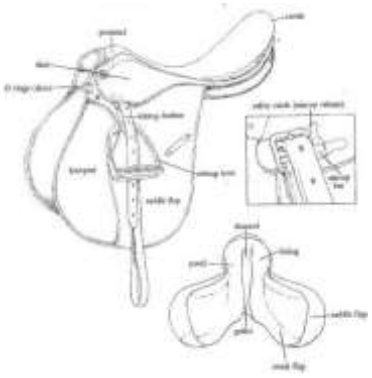
Devalue an expensive investment.

Well-cleaned and well-fitted saddlery contributes greatly to the comfort and of both horse and rider.

Buying saddlery

Before buying saddlery it is wise to obtain expert advice. Buy from a reputable retailer, that offers aftersales service. The saddle should be comfortable for both horse and riderand it's purpose is:

- To distribute the rider's weight as comfortably over the horse's back.
- To help the rider adopt the correct position.



Types

2.1. General Purpose

General Purpose saddle

As its name implies, this saddle is designed for general riding. It is suitable for most activities. The cut of the saddle-flaps and the length of the seat are midway between those of the dressage and show-jumping saddles.

2.2. Dressage saddle

Dressage Saddle

This is generally a deep-seated saddle with a straight-cut saddle-flap. It is often built on a spring tree and fitted with long girth straps and a short girth, to prevent the girth buckle lying under the rider's thigh.

2.3. Show-Jumping saddle.

Show Jumping Saddle

This type of saddle usually has a flatter seat than the dressage type. Designed for riding with shorter stirrup-leathers, it has forward-cut saddle-flap. Generally built on a spring-tree.

2.4. Tree-less saddles.

Tree-less Saddles

This type of saddle is not a very popular saddle. Some horse's have "hard to fit" backs, and therefore the rider might opt to ride with a tree-less saddle. It is however not recommended for long distances, as it doesn't gives the horses back enough support, and could create pressure points under the rider's seat, and the stirrup bars.

2.5. Endurance Saddles

Different Types of Endurance Saddles

Endurance saddles are designed for comfort during long hours in the saddle These types of saddles comes in leather and synthetic – leather combinations. They are usually very light & many endurance saddles are highly adjustable, to accommodate the changing shape of a horse over time and distance. Most endurance saddles allow for freedom of the horse's shoulder. A rider typically rides with longer stirrups in these saddles.

An endurance rider with longer stirrups.

2.6. Western Saddles

Parts of a Western Saddle & a typical Western Saddle

Western saddles are used for western riding and are the saddles used on working horses on cattle ranches throughout the United States, particularly in the west. This saddle was designed to provide security and comfort to the rider when spending long hours on a horse, traveling over rugged terrain.

Today, although many Western riders have never roped a cow, the western saddle still features this historical element. (Some variations on the Western saddle design, such as those used in bronc riding, endurance riding and those made for the European market, do not have horns.) Another predecessor which may have contributed to the design of the Western saddle was the Spanish tree saddle, which was also influential in the design of the McClellan saddle of the American military, being used by all branches of the U.S. Army, but being particularly associated with the cavalry.

The Western saddle is designed to be comfortable when ridden in for many hours. Its history and purpose is to be a working tool for a cowboy who spends all day, every day, on horseback. For a beginning rider, the western saddle may give the impression of providing a more secure seat. However, this may be misleading; the horn is not meant to be a handle for the rider to hang onto, and the high cantle and heavy stirrups are not for forcing the rider into a rigid position. The development of an independent seat and hands is as critical for western riders as for English riders.

2.7. Polocrosse and Australian Stock saddles

Polocrosse saddles popularly used are either an Australian Stock saddle or a hybrid saddle.

Stock Saddle & a Hybrid Saddle

The **Australian Stock Saddle** is a saddle in popular use all over the world for activities that require long hours in the saddle and a secure seat. The saddle is suitable for cattle work, starting young horses, everyday pleasure riding, trail riding, endurance riding, polocrosse and is also used in Australian campdrafting competitions and stockman challenges.

The traditional Australian stock saddle was designed for security and comfort in the saddle no matter how harsh the conditions. While having stylistic roots from the English saddle in the design of the seat, panels, fenders, and stirrups, it has a much deeper seat, higher cantle, and thigh rolls in the front to create a very secure saddle for riders who ride in rough conditions or spend long hours on a horse.

A surcingle passing over the seat of the saddle is also used to provide additional safety. The rear of the saddle is sometimes secured by a crupper. (The Indian-made copies, are very heavy, and does not fit well)

Polocrosse saddle (hybrid-) Modern styles range from traditional models through to a newer "half breed" that incorporates the independent swinging fender and stirrup style of the western saddle with the traditional Australian tree and seat style. There are also "hybrid breed" saddles that combine other western saddle elements, such as a saddle horn or a western cantle design, with traditional Australian elements, such as the pommel swells and deep seat.

3. Stirrup irons.

Synthetic stirrups, Safety stirrups and Caged stirrups

Although Stainless steel used to be the preferred metal for stirrup irons, there are many other composite metals and other synthetic materials. They must be large enough to allow approximately 1cm at each side of the rider's foot. The measurement should be taken at the slipping through and becoming jammed. *It is particularly dangerous for small children to use adult stirrup irons which allow their whole foot to slip through.*

4. Numnahs

A Numnah is a pad cut in the shape of the saddle. A well fitting numnah is essential as it might cause injury.

It is worn under the saddle for the following purposes:

- To protect the horse's back when riding for a long period
- To protect a sensitive back especially when just starting work. As a numnah is supple, it fits and lies flush against the horse's sides, thus helping from causing friction.
- A shaped numnah is preferred, as a flat, straight cut numnah is more like to cause pressure on the whither, or back. The numnah could fold under the saddle and create pressure.
- Leave about 3-5 cm around the saddle. The numnah need to be long enough to protrude at the pommel and cantle at least 3-5 cm. Remember, cotton shrinks with washing, but numnahs made from hi tech fabrics don't.
- If you have a saddle with a forward flap, or a high whithered horse, get a numnah with that shape.
- You should have free space at the shoulder.

- When it is too short, it would cause the saddle to “ride” up and down, and cause injury.
- If the numnah or saddle pad is too long it could hamper the horse’s neck to move freely.

5. Girths and sleeves.

Different types of Girths

5.1. Girths

Girths are the sole means of securing a saddle on a horse’s back. Girths are vitally important, both for your safety and for the comfort and efficiency off your horse. Girth sizes are measured from end to end, including the buckles. Materials most commonly used for girths are leather, webbing, nylon and other man-made materials.

- The stitching should be checked regularly

- Cleanliness is vital, to prevent chafing.

- Care should be taken to fit he girth correctly, for safety and efficiency. Not too loose, for safety, nor too tight, it will inhibit breathing and could cause injury to the horse.

- Care should be taken especially with elasticated girths, which, when too tight, could cause haematoma.

5.2. Girth sleeves

Girth sleeves are used to help prevent rubbing and chafing from saddle girths. Ideal for sensitive horses, girth sleeves offer a soft and comfortable girth cover that helps to prevent rubs, sores and pinching on sensitive areas around the horse's underside and behind the elbows. They offer the horse better comfort while working which can assist with improving the horse's ridden performance.

Lambskin, sheepskin, faux fleece and neoprene girth sleeves will all offer an exceptionally comfortable addition to girths.

6. Additional Fittings

6.1. Surcingle's

Surcingles

Surcingle's are used to act as safeguard to secure the saddle should the girth or saddle's points break. It is fitted around the horse, lying across the top of the saddle. It is fastened to itself like a belt, with the buckle lying directly over the centre of the girth. The surcingle should pass through the loop of the martingale or breastplate, to prevent it from slipping off the girth.

You cannot tighten the surcingle while you are mounted, so you will need a helper to check, and tighten your girth and surcingle. Surcingle's are commonly used in disciplines like cross country, show jumping, and is mandatory in polo and polocrosse.

6.2. Cruppers

Cruppers are used to stop a saddle from slipping forward, which should not happen with a well-fitting saddle. It consists of an adjustable leather strap, with a loop on one end, which fits under the tail. The other end of the strap passes through a metal “D” which has been attached to the back of the cantle of the saddle.

Crupper

7. Boots

There are numerous types of boot designed to prevent a horse injuring himself, or being injured. Injuries such as over-reaching, brushing and cuts. The rider need to ensure the boots are fitted correctly, neither too tight or too loose, in both instances can cause injury.

Brushing boots or splint boots

Brushing boots correctly fitted

These are used to protect a horses legs during exercise, protecting the lower leg from injury that may occur if one leg or hoof strikes the opposite leg. They are commonly seen on horses in fast work, such as jumping, when in training, such as when lunging, or in competitions such as reining or eventing. Brushing injuries are more common on the forelegs, when one hoof catches the other leg, or when the fetlock or cannon bones hit each other. This can cause a serious injury on a horse's legs, especially if the horse is wearing shoes. Poor equine conformation can often lead to brushing, although even properly-conformed horses can also accidentally injure themselves. Brushing boots may also be placed on horses in the field to protect them if they get overly excited. Other reasons for use may include placement on a young or unfit horse which may be excitable and step on itself, or on horses subject to intense work that may stumble more if they are tired.

Fitting and use the boot is usually placed onto the horse with the straps facing towards the rear on the outside of the leg, unless the attachment design mandates a different placement. To ensure there is even pressure around the leg when putting the boot on, they are fastened middle strap first, then the others. Boots that are too tight can cause discomfort and pressure injuries, but those that are too loose may become dislodged or come off entirely. Incorrectly fitting boots will be uncomfortable for the horse and can cause rubbing and soreness, as well as impeding the horse's movement. Brushing boots are not to be worn for long periods as they can become uncomfortable for the horse, especially if the boots get wet or dirty which may cause irritation and sores.

7.1. Tendon boots

Examples of Tendon Boots

Tendon boots are used on the front legs for protecting the tendon area of the horse's front leg from strikes from the hind hooves that can occur when the hind leg extends forward towards the front leg such as when cantering or on landing whilst jumping. They also offer protection to the inside of the legs from brushing injuries.

Open-fronted tendon boots are popular with show jumpers as they provide protection to the tendons whilst still allowing the horse to feel a pole if it brushes or knocks it whilst jumping so that is encouraged to be more careful next time. Tendon boots often have a hard moulded plastic outer shell but may also be made of leather or other material and should be placed high enough to protect the tendon and extend low enough to protect the fetlock joint.

7.2. Overreach boots

Overreach Boots

Bell shaped and made of rubber, these fit around the lower pastern, encompassing the hoof. Some are fitted with straps. If not, they are put on by turning them inside out and pulling them on over the hoof. They should be removed when finished riding, to prevent injury as it can run up the horse's leg and over the fetlock and tendon. They protect the heels and the coronet. Used to minimise injury to the heels from over reaching.

Tendon boots should have a soft lining to prevent any soreness occurring and it is important that the tendon boots fit the horse comfortably to avoid any rubbing. There are tendon boots available with fleece or sheepskin lining for extra comfort and these linings may be removable for easy cleaning. Tendon boots will inevitably get dirty and so it is important that they can be easily and regularly cleaned.

8. Fly Bonnets, Fly fringes and Fly masks

Fly Fringe and Bonnet and Fly Mask

Though very seldom seen amongst ridden horses, occasionally there might be a horse which might need one of these due to a chronic condition. Care need to be taken with the fitment as part of the tack while under saddle. Over a long distance, a Fly fringe could become more of an irritant than an aid due to the constant movement of the tassels moving across the eyes, while a fly mask or bonnet could rub the horse's face.

9. Additional articles

9.1. Saddlery and Tack safety check

9.1.1. Checking the Saddle

- Check the saddle for any weakness or wear including cracking.
- Check the tree of the saddle is in good shape by squeezing the sides of the saddle together - there should be no movement. If there is this indicates damage to the tree which could seriously damage the horse's back.
- Check the girth straps under the saddle flap to ensure that all straps and stitching is secure.
- Check the bars which hold the stirrup leathers to make sure they are secure.
- Check the stirrup leathers for wear and cracking.

9.1.2. Checking the Girth

- Check that all stitching around the girth buckles is secure and that the buckles themselves are not damaged or bent.

- Check the girth for signs of wear and tear.

9.2. Endurance Riders' Secrets Insert :

DRASA can supply you with South African equivalent brand names of gear – This is an article from the American Endurance Riders Forum but most of the tips from here apply to Competitive Trail Riding here as well as overseas

Learn endurance riders' secrets to stay comfortable while spending hours in the saddle.

(Written by JENNIFER NICE)

Recreational trail riders tend to view endurance riders as a bit of a motley crew. They seem to ride too far, too fast. They wear funny-looking clothing and seem to prefer brightly colored tack that looks as though it was made for a drill team.

In truth, endurance riders were all recreational trail riders first—and many still are. Over time, they've merely adapted. Think survival of the fittest. They've learned valuable lessons along the way—some painful, others expensive, and all as a result of mistakes they don't want to make again.

Endurance riders have mastered the secrets to staying comfortable while spending many hours in the saddle. This applies to their horses, as well. They know that their horse's comfort is just as important as their own, if not more so.

So, if you want to know what type of riding pants won't chafe, what footgear won't leave you crippled, what tack stays looking new for years, what girth won't rub, what water bottles won't bounce, and more, just ask an endurance rider.

Here, I'll share 17 riding-apparel, trail-tack, and on-trail secrets directly from those who've logged countless miles on the endurance circuit. Riding-Apparel Secrets

This insider advice will help you stay comfortable and safe; it'll also help you look like a serious trail rider rather than a wannabe.

Apparel secret #1: Ditch street jeans. For every trail rider who's ever gawked at an endurance rider in a pair of brightly coloured tights, there's an endurance rider cringing and muttering, "I can't believe that person is riding in blue jeans."

Leave your street and fashion jeans at home. Although riding jeans, made with stretchy materials and flat inside seams, can be comfortable, consider adding riding tights to your trail-apparel wardrobe. If you'd sooner give up riding than be caught in a pair of neon-coloured tights, then consider a more conservative colour, such as tan, navy, or black.

Most tights designed for long-distance riding are made of a cotton/spandex blend specifically designed for saddle comfort. The fabric keeps you warm in inclement weather, cool on hot days, wicks moisture, and, most important, doesn't chafe or rub.

Riding tights made by Carousel Action Wear, Inc., for example, are durable, breathable, and fast-drying, because they're made from a Dryflex cotton/poly/Lycra Tactel fabric. Other popular brands with endurance riders are Irideon, Kerrits PowerStretch, and Saddle Bums. (Guys, if you just can't bring yourself to don tights, then consider wearing them under your jeans.)

Apparel secret #2: Layer. To keep warm and dry, layer. If your outerwear becomes too hot or heavy, tie it around your waist or to the back of your saddle. Don't bother with a hooded jacket; you'll never use the hood, and it'll just fill up with water if it rains. Do, however, wear a raincoat long enough to cover your bum.

As a base layer on top, endurance riders usually compete in slogan T-shirts from previous rides. Cotton is cool, comfortable, and easy to wash. If you tend to burn easily or will be riding through brush, layer a long-sleeve cotton shirt over your T-shirt.

Apparel secret #3: Buy comfortable footwear. Comfortable footwear is also important. Find a riding boot or shoe that's wide across the ball of the foot, offers your toes ample room, has a cushioned, yet sturdy, sole, and has a heel just high enough to catch your stirrup.

Many riding shoes come in Western styles, so you won't feel as though you're riding in athletic shoes (although they're the most comfortable). Both Ariat's Endurance Collection and Mountain Horse's line of paddock boots offer a variety of styles for both men and women for summer, winter, and wet-weather riding.

Apparel secret #4: Invest in half-chaps. Another important article to the endurance rider is half-chaps. Before you frown on these, answer these questions: Do you have more hair on

your head than you do on your inner calves? Have your calves ever been rubbed so raw from chafing against your horse's sweaty sides (making your calves also uncomfortably wet) that you scream in pain when showering after a long, painful day in the saddle?

If your answer to either of these questions is yes, seriously consider buying a pair of half-chaps. They'll keep your calves from being rubbed raw and will keep the bottoms of your riding pants dry and down on your ankles.

Apparel secret #5: Wear a riding helmet. The single most important piece of equipment you can wear is an ASTM-approved, SEI-certified riding helmet. Don't shun a helmet because you're "just meandering down the trail"; you can suffer a serious head injury falling off even if your horse is standing still. Think of a helmet the same way you do the seatbelt in your car. You hope you never need it to save your life, but if you do, you'll be grateful you wore it.

In the old days, helmets were hot and heavy. But today's helmets are comfortable, cool, and even stylish. For helmet makers, see the resource guide; it's best to try on several makes and models before you buy.

9.2.1. Trail-Tack Secrets

Now that you're set, consider your tack. Endurance riders have learned a lot from their miles in the saddle; here's what they recommend.

Tack secret #1: Check saddle fit. Your saddle is the single most important piece of tack you'll use. You'll spend hours sitting in your saddle, and your horse will spend hours wearing it. Thus, it's imperative that your saddle properly fits you both. An ill-fitting saddle can cause significant bone and joint problems. Your horse can suffer behavioral problems and, worse, muscle, tissue, and nerve damage.

Finding a saddle that fits perfectly shouldn't be a problem, provided you do your research. Consider a saddle custom-made for your horse. Many endurance riders choose saddles that are semi-custom; that is, they select the tree size that best fits their horse and the seat size that best fits them.

Custom saddles endurance riders prefer include those made by Kanavy Endurance Saddles, the ReactorPanel Saddle Company, Sharon Saare Saddles, Specialized Saddles, SR Saddle Company, and Synergist Saddles,

There are also innovative saddles on the market that offer optimum fit and comfort at a reasonable price - and weight. Two popular brands are the Bob Marshall Treeless Saddles and the Freeform Saddles from Action Rider Tack.

Tack secret #2: Buy biothane. One reason endurance riders appoint their horses in brightly colored tack is because they can. Biothane, which is what most endurance tack is made from, comes is more colors than a rainbow.

If you select a custom-made biothane bridle or tack set, you can choose any combination of colors and accents that you'd like. If you want a bridle made of 10 or more different colors, no problem! And if you have a favorite color, why not dress your horse in it? (Biothane tack does come in brown and black if you'd prefer a more understated look.)

Why biothane? This man-made material lasts virtually a lifetime and is easy to clean; you simply hose it off or dunk it in water. Or, to make it look sparkling new again, throw it in the dishwasher, bit and all. Biothane also doesn't chafe your horse or become stiff.

Endurance riders especially like biothane halter-bridle combinations. "Combo halter-bridles allow you to unclip the bit, leaving you with a halter," notes endurance rider Terre O'Brennan. "Together with a single long rein, you can tie your horse, which is far superior to tying by the reins or bit (gasp!) or having to pack a halter."

Sportack is a leading retailer of custom biothane tack, but also check out the other tack makers listed in the resource guide.

Tack secret #3: Enhance comfort. Endurance rider Angie McGee shares humorous stories in her book, The Lighter Side of Endurance Riding. However, the horse's comfort is no laughing matter to McGee.

"The object is NOT to see how tight you can get your girth," McGee notes. "That was the rule when you were a child, but once you're a grownup, you can definitely overdo it. Get it good and snug, and check it often to make sure it's snug. But it does not need to be tight."

McGee also recommends checking your horse's back a couple of hours after a ride, or the day after, by pressing his back with your fingertips. "What you consider training problems may be saddle-fit problems," she says. "It's often the second day that the bruising effect kicks in and he acts up."

So that you can walk again after your ride, don't set your stirrup length as though it'll never change again, says McGee. "If you have leg pain, go up or down a notch, and spread the effort out amongst other muscles. Get off and walk if you hurt!"

Tack secret #4: Add a breastcollar and crupper. A breastcollar is an absolute necessity to keep your saddle in place while going uphill. It'll also give you lots of great places to hang things, such as a sponge. "Using a sponge on a string to cool a horse off during the ride on a really hot day will sure freshen him up and make the ride more enjoyable," says McGee.

Endurance riders like breastcollars made from biothane or neoprene, which are lightweight, easy to clean, and come in an array of colors.

Also consider a crupper to keep your saddle in place when going downhill. "A crupper is a wonderful thing," says McGee. "If you buy a good-quality, soft one - I don't like the leather - you quit having to wonder, Is my horse's neck getting shorter?"

Tack secret #5: Attach a seat cover. For those of you with tiny hineys, seat covers do wonders to make a hard saddle seat more comfortable for a bony behind. Most endurance-tack retailers carry them in sheepskin (check out EasyCare's line of Shear Comfort covers), and Toklat makes a cushy gel seat for most any type of saddle. Aaahh!

Tack secret #6: Find a good saddle pad. While it's true that no saddle pad can make an ill-fitting saddle fit better, a proper saddle pad is important. For long hours in the saddle, a pad that wicks heat and moisture, distributes weight evenly, protects pressure points and is easy to keep clean is a must for endurance riders. Top on the list is the Skito Pad from Carousel, which can be custom-ordered to fit any saddle. Supracor pads also receive high marks from endurance riders.

Tack secret #7: Secure your saddlebags. Buy saddlebags designed to stay secure. "There's no reason for stuff to bounce when you trot," says McGee. "Get packs that will stay anchored instead of flogging your horse."

The brand of choice that most endurance riders prefer is Stowaway (available from Synergist Saddles), which has both pommel and cantle packs. These handy packs come in a variety of colors for English, Western, and trail saddles. They come small (just large enough to hold two water bottles and a small snack) to large (enough to pack an assortment of beverages and a three-course meal).

9.2.2. On-Trail Secrets

You and your horse are well-outfitted. Now, consider these tips to on-trail safety and comfort for you both.

On-trail secret #1: Pack snacks and water. As for packing snacks for the trail, anything that will hold up to being stuffed into a saddlebag will suffice, such as granola bars, jerky, and hard candy. Never put a banana in your pack. If it doesn't get smashed beyond recognition, you'll forget you put it there, and find it weeks later.

Never hit the trail without water, even if you're just going for a short ride. Carry at least one bottle per every hour you plan to be on the trail. If you don't drink it, there's a good chance that someone else in your group will. For longer rides, especially in hot weather, supplement your water with electrolytes, or pack Gatorade.

On-trail secret #2: Carry a safety kit. Endurance rider Karla Perkins recommends always carrying an Easyboot, a hoof pick, a knife, Vetrap, and a small roll of duct tape. "I have been on rides when all of this stuff has been used, and not necessarily by me," she says.

An Easyboot - or other top-quality temporary hoof boot - is a necessity if your horse has the misfortune of losing a shoe. Duct tape comes in handy for just about anything you need to fix, and also works well to help keep on the Easyboot; just wrap it a few times round the hoof, avoiding the coronet band, before applying the boot. The teeth inside the boot will grip the tape.

"With Vetrap or duct tape you can spell words out on the ground," Perkins says. "I did that during the Pony Express endurance ride. The famous Dave Rabe and Holy Toledo got stuck in mud. None of us noticed. With the Vetrap, Laura Hayes and I spelled out 'NO' in bright colors, so those after us didn't make the same error."

Glow sticks are handy in case you get caught out after dark. Attach them to the front of your breastcollar, where they'll illuminate the ground without affecting your horse's (excellent) night vision.

On-trail secret #3: Keep your horse hydrated. The infamous endurance rider Crockett Dumas once said, "From the moment horses are born, they spend their entire lives trying to kill themselves." For this reason, it's important to look after them as best you can.

"Let your horses drink!" declaresMcGee. "I'm amazed how many riders still think 'six swallows.' If you're going to continue on down the trail, let them have their fill. If you've got a very hot horse, as in [one that] has been racing, that's when you offer six swallows, walk a while, then six more, but not out trail riding. And let them eat! Grass has lots of electrolytes in it. On a long ride, give them a chance to replenish."

Endurance rider Steve Shaw also believes hydration is key. "If your horse won't drink, and you know the next water is far away, then wet your horse down using your hands, your sponge (on a string) or water bottles to cool him," he says. "Water not lost is as good as water taken in."

On-trail secret #4: Keep cool. Endurance riders have devised some interesting ways to stay cool during long hot rides. The most important is to carry plenty of water, as mentioned. Freeze your water bottles before your ride. As they thaw, you'll always have a supply of ice-cold water. (Don't freeze all of them, though, in case they don't thaw fast enough.)

Tie a water-soaked bandanna around your neck to both keep the back of your neck cool and to protect it from the sun. If you really want to stay cool, try CoolMedic's cooling vests, helmet liners, and neck bands. The unique fabric actually keeps you cool and can be worn under or over your riding clothing.

On-trail secret #5: Stay warm. There's nothing worse than being freezing cold as you go down the trail. Your fingers are numb; your toes feel like someone smashed them with a hammer. You're miserable.

The key to staying warm is twofold: (1) Dress to protect yourself from the elements with layers, as mentioned earlier; and (2) enhance your circulation. The reason your extremities get so cold is because they're the farthest from your heart, and the cold weather has compromised your circulation. Gripping the reins and sitting in the saddle only makes it worse.

To keep your circulation moving in your hands and feet, wear warm gloves and comfortable socks that wick moisture. Also wear properly fitting footwear that offers ample room. Finally, just get off and walk.

9.3. How Natrc qualify horsemanship judges

To become a horsemanship judge, a rider has to have won Nationally in the highest division (we have three divisions), have experience with different breeds, must have volunteered in

all positions (Judge's secretary, Manager, Ride Secretary, Safety Rider, Pulse and Respiration stations, etc.) and pass a written exam. Once that is complete, an apprenticeship is started and the new judge must show competency with the ever changing weather and sometimes less than perfect observations sites. During the apprentice process, the managers of the ride and the other judges have a voice in how the new judge is doing. After 6 apprentice rides, then the judge has 3 provisional rides (judged without oversight at the ride). All of this is considered on a national board and the judge is either approved or sent back for additional training.

9.4. NATRC CHEAT SHEET

NATRC is the longest standing Competitive Trail Riding Association in the world and we at DRASA have based most of our rules and regulations on their system. They do not have vet checks between loops but rather Pulse and Respiration checks. Read the P&R tips as something to be done at Vet checks

Tips for a happy horse and rider

Vet Grooming	**Tack**	**P&R Check point**
No parasites (ie bot eggs)	Proper saddle fit	Maintain contact/control of horse
Clean nostrils	Proper bit fit	Sponge to cool horse
No sweat marks	Proper curb chain fit	Encourage horse to relax
Pick out hooves	Proper halter bridle fit	Remain quiet with low energy
	Saddle pad clean and in position	Loosen girth slightly
	Proper fit, Breast plate/collar	Ask neighbour before leaving P&R
		Lead away from group to remount
Stabling/Trailer	**Mounting**	**Trail safety & courtesy**

Blanket straps fit properly Locked gate/rope knot Quick release knot Double tie stallions High hay net Secure bucket Evidence of food Access to water Rope snap hangs 6” off the ground Keep equipment away from horse Cover sharp edges	Have tack ready before mount Settle/square horse before mount Even reins Use terrain/mounting block where possible Land light in saddle Don’t drag leg over saddle Settle before moving off	Don’t follow too closely Rider must be visible Ask permission to pass, always at walk Don’t crown other riders (?) Wait for other at obstacle or creek After passing, move on Don’t run up on other riders Offer help to dismounted rider Follow golden rule (?)
In-hand presentation Avoid holding halter or snap Don’t loop lead around hand Keep rope off the ground Stand on same side as vet Keep two hands on rope Maintain control of horse Don’t stand in front of the horse	**Uphill/Downhill** Maintain rein contact Hold on to main not saddle Ride balanced and centered Keep legs under you Avoid swaying side to side	**Trail equitation** Light in the saddle Soft rein contact Ride balanced and centered Proper stirrup length Light, quiet, low hands Subtle leg aids
In-hand trot and circles Keep horse at shoulder		

Keep eyes forward Turn horse away from you Two hands on rope Large & complete circles Maintain concistant gait		

Of course this isn't a complete list, but it is a start. Keep in mind that these are simply tips and recommendations to promote safety and success. All competitors are encouraged to view every NARTC experience as a learning opportunity and as a chance to strengthen their relationship with their horse while increasing their overall horsemanship knowledge. But most importantly… HAVE FUN

HAPPY TRAILS