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## **Saddle Fitting Mini-Clinic**

### **Agenda**

Introductions

Why are we here? Goals and Expected Outcomes

Why is proper saddle fit important?

Quick overview: Parts of a Saddle (English and Western)

Review the 6 major components of a comprehensive saddle fit evaluation

- Lecture and hands on: Component one: Saddle evaluation off the horse
- Lecture and hands on: Component two: Evaluation of the horse
- Lecture and hands on: Component three: Saddle evaluation on the horse (static)

Group Discussion: How do the above three components above affect the other three components and the overall physical and mental health, performance and behavior of the horse and rider?

Questions

Wrap up



## Saddle Fitting Mini-Clinic Goals and Expected Outcomes

- STAY SAFE!!
- Walk away with some practical tools you can use to help your horse and yourself. (Don't worry!! The goal is **not** to make you a saddle fitting expert in 90-120 minutes.)
- Ask questions....and (hopefully) get some answers
- Share group wisdom
- Have fun!!
- STAY SAFE!! (Yes, this is a repeat.)

## 6 Major Components of a Comprehensive Saddle Fit Evaluation

Component one: Saddle evaluation off the horse

Component two: Evaluation of the horse (Note: I do some of this prior to component one.)

Component three: Saddle evaluation on the horse (static)

Component four: Evaluate the "rider's conformation" (if they give permission—oral and visual only)

Component five: Saddle evaluation with the rider up

Component six: Saddle evaluation with the rider riding

Note: Each component has 20-30+ individual items to evaluate. Today, we will focus on a subset of items in components 1, 2 and 3.

### **Component 1: Saddle Evaluation off the Horse**

We will focus on this subset of items today.

#### Tree

- broken or intact?
- symmetry? warped? twisted?

#### Panels (if using an English saddle) or Skirt (if using a western saddle)

- material
- thickness ok? equal on both sides?
- hard? soft?
- smooth? lumpy? holes? wavy?
- excess or uneven compression?
- symmetry?
- width
- blocked or unblocked skirt? (Western)

### Gullet (English) or Center/Channel (Western)

- width
- symmetry

### **Component 2: Evaluation of the Horse**

Note: I obtain a full health history of the horse including all current issues and concerns before starting component 1. This includes performance and behavioral aspects as well as nutrition/supplements and hoof status.

We will focus on this subset of items today.

- pelvis/hips: level? equal swing up and down, side to side? sensitivity/pain?
- shoulders: level? symmetry? muscle atrophy? sensitivity/pain?
- back including withers: symmetry? muscle atrophy? curvature? sensitivity/pain?
- withers pocket: symmetry? sensitivity/pain?
- feet: high heel/low heel? toe in or out? how many tracks? wear evenly?
- skin/hair condition: sores? white hairs? scars?

A word about selenium....

### **Component 3: Saddle Evaluation On the Horse (static)**

Be sure the saddle is placed in the “natural pocket” and not too far forward or rearward.

**THE HORSE MUST BE STANDING SQUARE AND ON LEVEL GROUND!!**

We will focus on this subset of items today.

#### Length of saddle on the back

- beyond last rib? (English)
- seat beyond last rib (Western)? Skirt too close to point of hip?
- interfere with scapula (shoulder blade) movement?
  - 2 inches behind the scapula to account for movement (except points of a close contact saddle)

#### Level

- tilt right or left?
- tock back or forward?

#### Panels (English) or bars/skirt (Western)

- spinal clearance: (gullet or center/channel)

- front, middle, back (western too!!)
  - what will happen when the horse is turning?
- contact even? bridging? banana? (English)

### **Component 5: Saddle Evaluation with the Rider Up**

We will not cover this today, but here is a subset of key items to evaluate.

#### Seat relative to rider

- too large or small? (length and width)
- twist shape? (English) seat shape (Western)?
- comfort?

#### Rider balance point

- centered or too far forward or rearward?
- side to side balance?

#### Line of ear/shoulder/hip/heal (aka column of support)

- proper alignment for saddle type and discipline? (There are slight variations.)
- chair position?

#### Stirrup bar placement

- even (height and forward/rearward)?
- alignment under hip?

#### Stirrups

- angle ok? (Western)
- level?
- comfort (esp Western)

#### Weight distribution

- dig in at shoulder or loin?

#### Spinal clearance

- front, middle, back

#### Knee roll and thigh block placement (English)

#### Rider postural considerations

- hips/pelvis and shoulders level? too far forward or rearward?