

STRIDES RIDER AND VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

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RIDING LESSON: SADDLE FIT AND POSITION

If your saddle doesn't fit your horse properly, the result can be anything from causing your horse to have a sore back to lameness. It also can affect the way you ride, throwing you backwards or forwards.

Some saddle fitting problems aren't caused by a poorly fitting saddle, but rather by a saddle positioned poorly. Saddles are designed to match the horse's anatomy when in their proper position. If the saddle is positioned in front of, or behind this position, it can cause physical problems for both the horse and rider.

Proper saddle position will have the saddle placed on the horse's back so that the girth or cinch falls about four inches behind the elbow. It's very common for riders to place the saddle

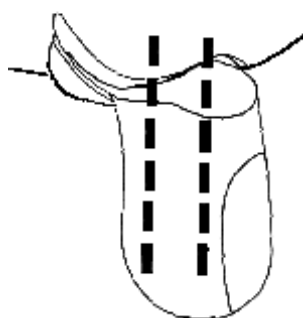
too far forward, causing soreness and constricting the horse's movement, and also putting the rider out of position. A saddle placed too far back will place the rider's weight on the horse's loins, causing discomfort and impairing movement.

These problems can be misinterpreted as a saddle fit issue, when the saddle is not to blame.

The best saddling technique is to place both the saddle pad and saddle slightly in front of the final position and then slide both backwards into place by holding onto the pommel (front of saddle) or horn and jiggling the saddle from side to side and back. The saddle will usually settle into the correct spot, but check to see by checking the cinch position. Then lift the pad up into the gullet (the wide

groove running down the middle of saddle underneath) to make sure it's not putting pressure on the horse. This saddling technique will place the saddle in the proper position, leave the horse's hair lying in the right direction, and prevent bunching of the pad.

Evaluating your saddling technique and saddle position is a good first step in diagnosing saddle fit issues.



Saddle in proper alignment.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

RIDING LESSON: SADDLE FIT AND POSITION	1
DEALING WITH THE HEAT	1
TIPS TO KEEP YOUR HORSE COOL IN HOT WEATHER	2
HORSE FUNNIES	2
YOU KNOW YOU'RE A HORSE-PERSON WHEN...	3
CALENDAR	4

DEALING WITH THE HEAT

Horses create body heat all the time, even standing quietly in a pasture, because of the muscle activity associated with standing and the heat created by digesting food. When they decide to run, buck and play or when we ask them to exercise by riding them, this creates even more heat with which the horse

must deal.

Horses have several ways to deal with excess body heat. Their circulatory system carries some of the heat from the center of the body out to the skin so that it is lost through waves of heat radiating off the body. This type of cooling depends on a large differ-

ence between the environmental temperature and the horse's temperature. So when the temperature outside gets too high, or when a horse is asked to exercise in the heat, this does not work as efficiently, and a second process must take over.

(Continued on page 3)

TIPS TO KEEP YOUR HORSE COOL IN HOT WEATHER

- Provide ample fresh clean water. Check daily that buckets or troughs are not contaminated with bird droppings, insect larvae, chaff, or algae growth. Try to keep the water cool. Horses may not want to drink warm water. Ponies and foals may have trouble reaching to the bottom of a shallowly filled trough. Make sure everyone in your paddocks can reach the water.

- Sponge or hose down the large blood vessels along the inside of the legs, belly, and neck. Don't spray the horse's face or get water in its ears—sponge them down gently.

- If you must work your horses hard try to schedule your session for early morning or late evening when it is cooler

- After riding or driving in hot weather cool your horse down slowly. Loosen girths or belly bands immediately after a work out. Offer sips of cool, not cold water to

the horse slowly.

- Muscles are more apt to stiffen if the horse is allowed to stand and moving muscles dissipate heat better than stationary ones.

- Make sure there is a place for your horse to avoid the sun—either a building or a shade tree.

- Clip horses with heavy coats. Be careful not to clip too close however, since exposed skin can sunburn.

- Apply zinc oxide cream to horses with pink noses to prevent and treat sunburn.

- During very hot weather consider keeping your horses stabled during the day, and let them out at night.

- If your barn becomes hot and stuffy consider setting up a fan. Make sure the horse can not reach the cord or fan itself, it can't be tipped, and that it is plugged into a ground fault interrupt electrical receptacle if

there is any chance of electrical wiring coming into contact with moisture, such as a spilled water bucket or a curious horse's mouth.

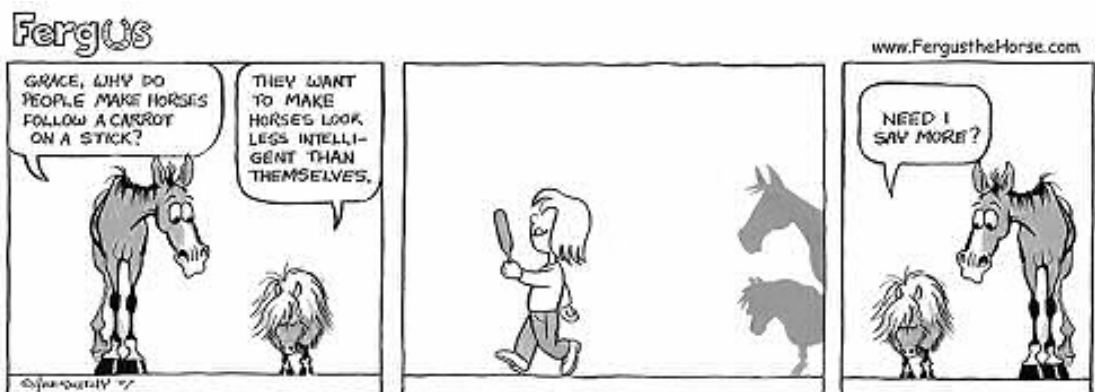
- If hot weather brings clouds of biting insects that keep your horse pacing and stomping try using fly sprays, masks, and sheets. Water based fly sprays may be less harsh on the coat hairs as oil based ones can cause bleaching.

- Whether you are at home riding, or competing a bucket full of ice water and old towels can help refresh you and your horse. Place them over your horse's neck, and your own. A drop of lemon, mint, or citronella essential oil on the people towels is an energizing touch.

- Take care of yourself. If you get overheated and tired you may not be able to take care of your horse effectively. And you could miss warnings that your horse itself is showing signs of heat stress.

The magic of your horse you are sure of... your maladies a cure of... doctors should prescribe horses, I guess they just don't fit in those pesky little bottles.

HORSE FUNNIES



DEALING WITH THE HEAT (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 1)

Horses also sweat to increase body heat loss - a process called evaporative cooling. This is the most important means that horses have to dissipate excess body heat. When environmental humidity increases, evaporation of the sweat does not occur as readily, and this type of cooling becomes less effective.

During exercise, horses lose very large amounts of water and electrolytes in sweat. If not replaced, dehydration will interfere with the horse's ability to sweat, leading to heat stress. Horses can also have problems with the heat if they do not sweat appropriately. A temporary loss of the ability to sweat can cause a horse to overheat, so they must turn to another process to get rid of the excess body heat.

If these first two processes are not sufficient to cool the horse, they will try to "blow off" heat by increasing their respiratory rate, much like a dog panting. Because horses do not breathe with their mouths open, panting is not as effective in horses as it is in dogs, but it does help remove some excess body heat. Young foals and older, geriatric horses do not tolerate heat well and neither do overweight horses, who have an extra layer of insulation holding in excess body heat. These groups of horses

are the ones often seen panting, because their other ways of dissipating heat do not function as well.

Horses can get into trouble if one or more of these systems do not function correctly or if the amount of heat they are subject to increases more than the amount they are able to transfer out from their body. Heat stress can cause a horse to become anxious or restless, but many will appear depressed or lethargic. Profuse sweating is often seen. The horse's heart rate and respiratory rate will be high, as will the rectal temperature. If not treated, horses with heat stroke become increasingly weak, start to tremble and may go down; coma and death can occur.

While waiting for the veterinarian to arrive, horses suffering from heat stroke should be placed in a shady, well-ventilated area. The rectal temperature can be taken which in normal horses is less than 101 degrees Fahrenheit; when overheated, many will be above 104 degrees. To help control the temperature, a cold water bath can be given concentrating on the head, neck, underside of the belly, the chest area between the front legs and the inguinal area between the back legs. Rubbing alcohol can also be used to encourage faster evaporation.

Affected horses may be offered frequent, small amounts of water, but should not be allowed to gorge. Offering one gallon of water once an hour until the horse doesn't greedily finish the bucket is a good rule of thumb when watering dehydrated horses. Electrolytes can also be offered and are often mixed in the water - if you offer electrolyte water, make sure that you also offer plain water, as the electrolyte powder may change the taste of the water, making your horse reluctant to drink.

The means used to prevent heat stroke will vary slightly with the horse's living conditions. Horses kept on pasture should have ready access to shade and cool, clean water at all times. If your horse insists on standing in the sun instead of the shade, consider hanging flytraps or other forms of insect control - bugs tend to congregate in the shadier areas, forcing the horse out into the sun to escape. Fans, misters or other cooling systems can be used over stalls, paddocks or pens to help keep the area cool. Despite these precautions, horses may develop heat stroke - when this happens, the situation can rapidly become a medical emergency and a veterinarian should be contacted as soon as possible.

YOU KNOW YOU'RE A HORSEPERSON WHEN....

****YOUR HORSE GETS SHOES MORE OFTEN THAN YOU DO.
**SOMEONE DOES SOMETHING NICE FOR YOU AND YOU PAT THEM ON THE NECK AND SAY "GOOD BOY!"
**YOU SAY "WHOA" TO THE DOG (OR CAR)
**SOMEONE ASKS FOR A SCREWDRIVER AND YOU HAND THEM A HOOFPICK
**YOU ARE UNREASONABLY PLEASED TO GET A HORSE ITEM, ANY HORSE ITEM, AS A GIFT.
**YOU SEE THE VET MORE OFTEN THAN YOUR CHILD'S PEDIATRICIAN.
YOU CLEAN TACK AFTER EVERY RIDE, BUT YOU NEVER, EVER, CLEAN THE TRUCK.

STRIDES THERAPEUTIC RIDING CENTERS, INC.

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Tax ID # 95-4786134

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.STRIDES.ORG



REACHING FOR THE STARS.

Strides Therapeutic Riding Centers, Inc., is a non-profit benefit corporation providing therapy on and with horses for disabled children and adults, and abused teens and adults. Our program was founded in January 2000, and has provided the highest quality of therapy for hundreds of riders.

Volunteers are always needed and always welcome. The minimum age for volunteers is 13. Riders are welcome from age 3 up.

Donations are appreciated and help us to keep our prices low for our riders.

Strides is a NARHA (North American Riding for the Handicapped) Premiere Accredited Center.



WISH LIST

Office Supplies:

8 1/2 x 11 paper by the ream
Pens and pencils
Colored file folders (letter size)
Scotch tape
Masking tape
Shipping tape
Shipping envelopes (10 x 12)
Storage boxes
Mailing labels
Postage stamps
Photocopy machine

Ranch Supplies:

Manure rakes
Wheelbarrow
Horse treats
Carrots
Fly spray
Tack sponges
Saddle cleaner
Saddle conditioner
Folding or plastic chairs
Senior feed for the horses
Rags and towels
First aid supplies

CALENDAR

- **July 3 to July 28** Summer Mini Quarter 1: morning classes only
- **July 31—August 25** Summer Mini Quarter 2: morning classes only
- **August** Summer Camp all month. Call the ranch for an application (818) 341-4737
- **August 27 to September 22** Summer Mini Quarter 3: morning classes only
- **September 7** Return to afternoon classes on the weekdays.
- **September 27 to September 29** Quarter Break
- **September 30** Kiwanis Club Invitational Horse Show. Open to riders enrolled in the September Mini-Quarter or Summer Quarter only.