

## **What Happens in Your Saddle Fit Session (Evaluation and Analysis)**

**with Jochen Schleese, Certified Master Saddler - Schleese Saddlery Service Ltd.**

Step 1- Have primary rider ride the horse to get a dust pattern, to analyze saddle fit and biomechanics before making any adjustments.

Use all three gaits: walk, trot, and canter in a 20 meter circle both directions without saddle pad, once around only

Step 2 -The saddle fitter will discuss with rider and/ or coach the need or goal that they wish to have help with in today's evaluation.

Step 3- After discussion with rider the horse will be measured, saddle will be measured, and rider will be measured.

3A- Using a wither tracer which has a level incorporated, a Shoulder gauge and a tool which measures 3 dimensional shape, the saddle fitter will determine how the saddle complements the horse measurements . The 11 point check will be completed and we will explain the reason why and how the saddle has to fit to the horse.

Thanks to recent research compiled at Veterinary Universities, saddle fit is not an opinion anymore - it is now a combination of science and art which helps both the rider and saddle fitter protect the horse from long term damage.

3B – The saddle fitter will evaluate the saddle, stuffing, billets, stitching, leathers and soundness, and type of tree, including measurements of tree width and angle. He/she also will determine the seat balance of current saddle. The evaluation of girth and saddle pads are also important and included at this time. The saddle fitter will determine at this stage what repair needs to be done or what the fair market value of the saddle is.

3C – Saddle fitter will measure riders seat, upper leg, lower leg, entire straight leg, as well as the diameter of the thigh, and will compare the rider's fit at 15 points on his/her current saddle. This will help the saddle fitter and the rider to determine if the current saddle fit problem comes from improper saddle fit to horse or improper saddle fit to rider. It will also help to determine if rider struggles with seat position or with the movement of the horse, or whether comfort in motion comes from saddle fit with regard to the rider.

Step 4- Saddle fitter will give written itemized repair and adjustment report if achievable for this current saddle – if repair or adjustment is requested or an option

Step 5- Saddle fitter will list 7 options: A: Fair Market value, B: sell on consignment, C: trade-in, D: adjustment/ repair E: used saddle (\$500-\$4200) F: New saddle (\$1995-\$6500) G: leave as is (customer will receive a full written report ONLY)

Step 6- After choosing an option, the saddle fitter will adjust, repair or fit the presently owned, new or used saddle. After another ride to establish dust pattern, the saddle fitter will recheck and re-evaluate saddle fit to horse and rider (if the re-check cannot be completed on same day for a new or used saddle, or in house repair, the saddle will be shipped with a customer reply form and the client will receive a \$50 credit on account from head office upon sending in video and questionnaire)

Step 7- Regardless as to what decision has been reached, client will have 45 -60 minutes of the saddle fitter's time available to use at his/her discretion. After signing the evaluation sheet, a copy of the evaluation will be given to client for his/her records.

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