

Port Lewis Saddle Fitting

by Miriam James



Do you know if your saddle really fits your horse? Would you like to know without a doubt if it does? And would you like to know what can be done about it if it doesn't - without having to go look for another saddle? (Unless it's a very poor fit to begin with.) I can help you with that by using the Port Lewis Saddle Fitting System. What I will do is take the impression pad, and have you ride in the walk, trot and canter in both directions for about 30 minutes. When we take it off, an impression of the saddle is left in the pad. This will tell me exactly where any pressure points are. I then use this as a guide to build a custom correction pad using foam inserts of various sizes. We want to get it so there's even pressure under the entire saddle.

Some signs of an ill-fitting saddle:

- Flinching or pinning ears while grooming
- Reluctance to pick up hind feet
- Inability to bend or travel straight
- Wringing or carrying tail off to one side
- Short, choppy gaits
- Higher than normal head carriage
- Changes in attitude – refusals, bucking, unruliness, even dangerous to ride
- Unwilling to go downhill, over jumps or make transitions properly
- Sores, blisters, white hairs – by this time, there may also be significant muscle damage

A few things to check for:

- Generous clearance between withers and pommel (3 fingers' worth)
- Should not touch the spine anywhere – should see daylight through the gullet
- Setting only the saddle on the horse, you should be able to slide your hand along the length of it easily with no pinching of your hand
- Check the cinch – adjust so that a couple fingers slide easily between horse and cinch and that both buckles are above the elbows or it could rub sores on them.



Saddle fit cannot be determined on a stationary horse, the horse must be moving with a rider in the saddle. This system will tell you the truth about your saddle and allows customization of an appropriate pad for your horse and saddle.