

New Saddle Fitting Standard For 2018

In January 2018, The Society of Master Saddlers introduced further changes to their 'Qualified Saddle Fitters' accreditation to maintain the highest standards within our equine industry because we are constantly moving forward in knowledge, technique and skill.

Other industries, doctors, dentists and teachers have for many years used a Continuing Professional Development scheme (CPD), as they are regulated by law. Likewise, a saddle fitter's knowledge should be kept up to date and the standards gained on qualifying should at the very least be maintained.

Therefore, the Society's Executive Committee have taken the decision to make the gaining of CPD points compulsory for those on the Society's Saddle Fitters' Register. These changes have now opened up a new category called MASTER SADDLE FITTER, although this standard is new, all Qualified Saddle Fitters will be expected to have earned the per-requisite CPD points before the end of 2019 to remain within the accreditation.

"When fitting a saddle, it is important to contact a Qualified Saddle Fitter"

Buckaroo Saddlery's Nicola Barry BSc Hons Equine Sports Science, Society of Master Saddlers, Master Saddle Fitting Consultant



As opposite, when fitting a saddle, it is important therefore to contact a qualified saddle fitter who has been trained by The Society of Master Saddlers. A Qualified Saddle Fitter has undertaken the highest level of practical training and sat multiple exams to obtain their title. Their expertise, advice, and help are invaluable, so why risk your horse's health and happiness by using an unqualified fitter?

Nicola Barry, owner of Buckaroo Saddlery, competes in British Show Jumping competitions in the UK and in FEI competitions throughout Europe. Her career, passion and business is combined which allows her to produce young show jumping horses through to international level horses jumping Grand Prix and World Ranking classes. Nicola is also a registered and Qualified Saddle Fitter with the Society of Master Saddlers. Since January 2018, she has started to attain the necessary CPD points for that Master Saddler Fitter category.

When is it a good time to check your saddle?

Although the beginning of the summer season is a good time to check your saddle, that's not where it ends. Your saddle needs to be checked regularly, just as your horse's teeth do. Prevention is better than cure and having your saddle looked at by a professional saddle fitter every three to six months is strongly recommended.

Horses are forever changing shape due to their weight, fitness, and muscle mass. In the winter season, most of us ride less and our horses go out in the field for shorter periods of time. This can cause a dramatic change in shape, meaning that saddles no longer fit. It is very important to get your saddle checked before the summer season. A saddle is a huge commitment that not only affects your bank balance, but also the welfare and willingness of your horse. Choosing the right one can be a challenge, so here are some important things to bear in mind:



The most important thing is to have a saddle that fits your horse correctly. It bears all your weight, so if it is too tight, pinches, is unbalanced etc., it can cause your horse discomfort and pain. Riding in a poorly fitting saddle long-term can cause serious injury to your horse. A correctly fitted saddle can transform your riding and the performance of your horse. A saddle that fits enables the horse to move more freely through their shoulder, making riding more fun and comfortable for both horse and rider.



It is important that your saddle not only fits your horse but also fits you and your style of riding. It needs to suit your body shape and size, whether that is long or short legs, etc. to make sure you are balanced on your horse and not sitting in the way of their movement.

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There are many types of saddles so it's important to know which discipline you are pursuing. The small differences between types of saddle can vastly change your riding experience. Not every saddle is made with a wooden tree; plastic and carbon fibre trees are now available and each comes with its own benefits.

Riding style differs from person to person, you need a saddle that suits yours. Some riders like the feeling of the close contact monoflap saddle, as they feel there is little between them and the horse. Other riders prefer the feeling of the support provided by knee rolls that support their leg and position. This is purely a matter of taste. It's important to try a few different saddles to understand the feeling of them and their affect on your position.

Here at Sovereign Equestrian, we do our utmost to keep our horses working and feeling amazing. We don't let anything prevent our horses and riders giving 100% which is why we regularly have our saddles checked for that perfect fit.

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