
American saddles

Posted by misty - 2006/12/06 22:51

We've just got a quarter horse for Husband (but I will ride as well!) and need a saddle. I have a circle Y part synthetic which is brilliant but the place we got it from has sadly closed down. Has anybody had any experience on importing from America? The western saddlers here seem to be having a laugh regarding prices. Thanks for any help.

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Re:American saddles

Posted by Nicky - 2006/12/07 06:20

i have got a saddle from America that we bid for on ebay and it's a cheap badly made uncomfortable saddle. We thought we were getting a bargain as it looked really nice and the description sounded great but we were very disappointed so be careful... i also have a good expensive one that i had fitted by a western saddler 3 years ago but she's not in the country at the moment and nobody seems to know when or if she's coming back! I don't think my saddle fits my mare now but not willing to sell it just yet until i have that confirmed by a saddler and then hopefully be able to use it as p/x... There seems to be a shortage of western saddlers down here in the south, i know of one gent but i'm afraid i can't afford thousands for a saddle!! I've had an English saddle fitted and she's going well but i had the choice of so many to choose from and one said if i thick pad my saddle then it shouldn't be a problem should it!!! I won't do that.. :huh:

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Re:American saddles

Posted by the mendip stud - 2006/12/07 09:35

We have 2 saddles for sale at the moment on behalf of clients. One is a circle Y and the other is a brand new Champion Saddle, imported last year. Feel free to call for more details. 07866 444 739

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Re:American saddles

Posted by Roland - 2006/12/07 22:09

Hi as everybody knows any western saddle will fit any horse.... well on ebay anyway:whistle: a good saddle will cost, a good western tack shop should make sure it fits your horse and you. hopefully the price will soon be forgotten :) :) OH importing yes about \$100+ for shipping and then when it arrives the postman will collect VAT and duty and a handling charge :pinch: :S then you can see if it fits your horse :(:unsure: Hope this helps....

Post edited by: Roland, at: 2006/12/07 22:16

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Re:American saddles

Posted by HarmonyHorses - 2006/12/08 11:27

We have a range of imported saddles in stock at reasonable prices, we also offer a fitting service in the Cornwall, Devon and Somerset areas. Contact Harmony via the website at <http://www.harmonyhorses.com/> or drop an IM here.

Post edited by: HarmonyHorses, at: 2006/12/08 11:28

Post edited by: HarmonyHorses, at: 2006/12/08 11:28

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Re: American saddles

Posted by misty - 2006/12/10 21:14

Many thanks for your replies. Due to quirky circumstances Don Fechner come over on Firday and other half is sorted. Had lesson on Saturday and looked great. Thanks again

Re: American saddles

Posted by REINMAN - 2006/12/12 16:49

I have bought six saddles from Ebay (US) and they have all been absolutely great. If there is a problem, it is how you read 'into' the ads to get a feel for the quality of the item and just how genuine is the advertiser. The most important thing is just like many of the 'cheaper'saddles on sale in the UK, you cannot get a good saddle cheap. What you will get is a much better saddle, cheaper that you would in the UK....if you could find one in the UK. To my mind the only place to buy a saddle is the USA. With the dollar the way it is at present against the pound, you will not get better value. You can get a cheap flight, buy a saddle bring it back and still be cheaper than buying the same one in the UK.

Re: American saddles

Posted by Roland - 2006/12/12 18:10

Good idea :o personally yes its tempting but its not helping western riding in the uk, tack sellers pay for stand space at shows and maybe sponsor classes, its also handy to be able to try a saddle and buy tack at shows, its all part of building things up here, we need to improve the shows and successful businesses will hopefully want to invest in our sport ,

Re: American saddles

Posted by Splitreins - 2006/12/12 18:33

I do think that the saving one makes by buying cheaper abroad (without trying) can be undone if a saddle does not fit the horse or you !

That said I would like to pass a tip on (which was given to me by a western rider) to others reading this forum who are looking for a quality western saddle at a reasonable price. (Whilst I am all for encouraging western supply businesses in the UK - it should be recognised that not everyone can afford the cost of new saddles that are sold at shows !)

Try Ebay Germany - search under "westernsattel" and then add the saddle maker you like.

I knew that my horse needed a super wide saddle with oval skirt - I found a good used wide Continental saddle. The cost of the saddle and the shipping was very reasonable priced (I did not pay any import tax). To assist with translation (my GCSE German was not up to much) I found a free translation service under Google which helped me with the basics. You may find that the seller also speaks english.

Re: American saddles

Posted by REINMAN - 2006/12/14 15:20

I just returned from Futurity in Oklahoma where I bought yet another saddle. OK fitting is a worry but the way round it is....make a full sized cardboard pattern of your horses saddlepatch.

All you need is a wire coat hanger cut it and straighten it, Lay it along your horses back topline making it fit from the withers to where the saddle stops, transfer that to stiff cardboard and cut out the shape. Then do the same across the horse in three places. Snip a slit in each piece from the top to halfway down and slide the pieces together so you have a

crude sort of honeycomb but exactly the same as your horses back.

This will fold flat, go in your suitcase and when you find a saddle you like just get out your pattern, up end the saddle and try in your pattern to fit.

This is exactly what I have done and brought back a gorgeous used, handmade Jim Taylor reining saddle total cost ?1516.

Re: American saddles

Posted by hunterrookie - 2006/12/14 16:15

Don fitted a saddle to our horse at a QH2000 on the weekend we bought her and I have to say it was a fabulous buy (even if she did pull some horrid faces at him when he was fitting it!) It fits her, OH and even me, and looks good despite no TLC from OH and minimal from me when I get the tiem

Think the peace of mind is worth paying a bit more - even if it meant restricting myself to buying a scrubby second hand headstall and using a hand me down pad until we could afford new!

Still, should the lottery ticket come up I've got my eye on a fabulous Dale Chavez show saddle on Ebay USA.....

Re: American saddles

Posted by BLACKJACK - 2006/12/18 13:14

Hi has anyone had any dealings with the saddles from riders choice on ebay?

Re: American saddles

Posted by sixfootblonde - 2006/12/22 00:11

Hi there,

I would like to add to this interesting thread...

I am a trained western saddlemaker that, at the moment, has no vested interest in selling anything (as I have no business atm - hopefully going back into it next year though in the south of GB).

To buy from America in the hope that the saddle might vaguely fit is taking a huge gamble on your horses comfort and wellbeing. Please see link below - it is SO interesting and nicely written. I feel it is a MUST for all riders so at least you are aware of how to recognise discomfort.

<http://www.equethy.com/saddlefit.htm>

I saw MANY horses with severe muscle wastage around the withers, horses in severe discomfort and pain because saddles were used that simply did not fit. Would you buy a pair of shoes for your child from the internet and force them to wear them whether they fitted or not? Only difference is - your horse cannot 'tell' you if the saddle does not fit!

I could pussy foot around and not say it as I have experienced it - but then I would be lying. It is 100% VITAL to get a saddle that fits 100% properly. I do not mean to offend anyone. :) I am a nice person who has seen alot of horrors :) Thanks for reading :)

Re: American saddles

Posted by Roland - 2006/12/22 09:13

Thanks for that Sixfootblonde, maybe I worry about things too much and doubt myself when it comes to horses. I just know I still have a lot to learn, hopefully you are good at your job and can help us and our horses :)

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Re: American saddles

Posted by Bit of Both - 2006/12/25 14:54

Are there any western saddle fitters in Scotland? I don't have a clue what size my mare would be; she's 17" wide in an english saddle.

I don't have loads of spare cash (that time of year and just bought a TB ex-racer :o to hopefully event which is why I would like to convert my current mare to western) so if I knew the size she needed would I be better buying the make/size from America...or is that really cheeky to saddle fitter?? :-[

Also, what are good makes of western tack? I've spent the past 3yrs reading up on western on this site, the internet in general, books & magazines and watching videos & DVDs but I don't think anything compensates for actual practice and experience and I'm still none the wiser about tack; seems to be a bit of a grey area? ???

Bored before xmas dinner so excuse my rambling... :- I will no doubt be posting again soon re how the frig do I convert my mare!!

MERRY CHRISTMAS to you all!! :-*

Jill x

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Re: American saddles

Posted by Roland - 2006/12/26 07:08

Hi bit of both, Maybe you could get a few like minded folk together for a saddle fitting clinic ,I would guess one of the tack shops would load a van with saddles etc and visit if there was a chance of selling a saddle or two ????? ;D

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Re: American saddles

Posted by sixfootblonde - 2006/12/26 18:59

Hi there Bit of Both :)

I am not sure of availability of good saddle fitters around the country :(Regarding the fit of western saddles - because they are so rigid (no flocking like an english saddle) they MUST reflect the shape of the horses' back. So it is not just the width but the dippiness (rock) and how wide the shoulders are (flair). I have a template - looks like a centipede that you mould to your horses back as accurately as possible. This can be tried into saddles without your horse present to get a pretty good rough idea of what saddles will fit. Then they just need to be tried on and evaluated :)

Regarding cheekiness - I personally charge ?40 for a saddlefit plus travel so I would not have a problem with you using my knowledge to purchase one from somewhere else. In fact I think it is really important to offer that service so people have choice :) I would caution about buying direct from America though as the cost is very high if you wish to return it. Could you not find second-hand in this country?

Re. makes of tack - I really like the Continental range as they make them for our european breeds not just the wide flat backed QH's. This is really important as all our horses do look very different in conformation. They are also very good quality. As are Circle Y etc but these are more generically made.

If you want to PM me I can give you my tel no if you wish to talk about this in more detail :)

Happy Christmas and good luck :)

Re: American saddles

Posted by HarmonyHorses - 2006/12/28 12:33

A very interesting thread with some good advice given, but as an American and one who has grown up riding western there is something I wanted to add. While it is very important to find a saddle that fits the horse and rider, western saddles are made with a very different way of fitting from an English saddle. The theory behind western saddle sizing (why we size them by seat and width) is because of the way they are designed to be fitted. The rock and flair certainly come into play, but the real 'art' to saddle fitting in a western saddle is also in the pads used. Having a rigid tree with weight distributed over a greater portion of the horses back allows the saddle fit to be more forgiving. To use the shoe analogy, a typical english saddle would be more of a high heel- form fitting and exact, whereas the western saddle would be a hiking boot with the saddle blankets/pads being the insole and sole of the boot. Having a comfortable upper is all well and good, but you're not going on much of a hike without the proper bottom! While not every saddle fits every horse, and some horses are particularly difficult to fit, a custom saddle is NOT necessary. I hear many people being convinced that because of the shape of their horse (often these are very average sized/shaped horses) that they need something custom done or to buy a \$1500-\$2000 european saddle. Just remember, like any other industry people often do have their own interests ahead of they buyers- many times it's worth trying several saddles from several vendors if need be in order to find something you and your horse is comfortable with.

Additionally, while it's important to check the tree and skirts with your horses back, you should NOT be riding in your western saddle without proper padding. I see many people in this country riding English without pads, something that can be done with that style of saddle, it is not appropriate for a western saddle. The fastest way for your horse to have pinching, irritation or other discomfort is to not have proper and adequate padding. In fact, the padding is so important that there are many horses who's conformation is compensated for with the padding NOT the saddle. For example a horse that is a bit high withered and thin through the shoulder and front such as a finer build TB or narrow chested stock horse. This horse doesn't need a specially designed saddle, usually finding a quality semi quarter tree saddle with a cutback or even built up cutback pads will even out the pressure and weight distribution.

I would recommend considering a QUALITY used saddle over a questionable new one any day, and many times you can buy a better saddle for half to a quarter of the price. In America we take for granted the availability of good second hand saddles, here I know they are harder to get hold of. Ebay or private sellers is always an option, there are some excellent saddles to be bought off ebay as long as you're willing to take the chance of the need to sell it on if the saddle is not right or not as described. Another option is a tack seller who deals in second hand saddles. I've found that my students have had such a difficult time finding good saddles that I've started importing them myself, as I have the resources and connections 'back at home' to get them. I am always happy to be on the lookout for special requests, and try to bring saddles over several times a year at the very least. Normally good used saddles run \$450-800 after factoring in all shipping, duties etc.

Good luck to all of you, and happy riding!
Harmony

Re: American saddles

Posted by sixfootblonde - 2006/12/28 21:51

Hi Harmony :)

Thank you for your post. It was very interesting reading your post. It is always good to read other fitters' experiences. :)

I have a question - if you don't mind - maybe you could expand a little on your post. In my dealings in fitting saddles I have come across a great number of horses who were fitted with saddles that were too tight over the shoulder or bridged the back a little without a pad on. When the pad was fitted the saddle, over the shoulder was even tighter. This particular horse was in a lot of discomfort and had a large degree of muscle wastage and was certainly much more comfortable with a saddle which had greater rock and greater flair over the shoulder. I also fully agree about padding with a western saddle. After all the pads are the flocking! The way I always fit is to get the saddle that fits the contours of the back, then add the right padding :) I always fit wide over the shoulder too allowing the horse to have freedom over the shoulder. Does the way you fit differ from this?

Thanks :)

Re: American saddles

Posted by HarmonyHorses - 2007/01/10 18:11

I hope everyone had a good new year, and maybe soon we'll all get a break in the weather!

Sixfootblonde-

It sounds like the horse you are talking about had extreme long term problems with saddle fitting; it is certainly an extraordinarily bad case! One thing that springs to mind in your descriptions is where the saddle is placed- I find that many times people want to fit their western saddles too far forward, right over the shoulders. Since a western saddle is made to sit further back than a forward seat or jumping saddle, there shouldn't be an interference problem with the shoulder in a properly fitting saddle, even when there is fairly significant weight gain in an adult horse. Most often problems and discomfort are caused when the pommel is up over the neck, or the saddle sits too low over the withers. The weight needs to be distributed evenly along the back, so trying to fit too wide to compensate means that a built up pad ends up being needed or else the saddle will often tip forward and still put pressure along the front.

The biggest key to fitting is checking that the angles of the tree and skirts are compatible with the horse. Since the tree in a western saddle has a larger surface area and is not made to fit as tightly as an English saddle, it should not be expected or required to find a saddle that exactly conforms to the contours of the horse in the same way as an English saddle.

The next important factor that I rarely if ever hear mentioned in this country is the rigging. The positioning of your latigos in relation to the balance of the saddle on the horse can make a huge difference to fit. A saddle may be the correct tree size widthwise in the gullet and the bars, but if your cinch is too far forward it can effect the balance of your whole saddle and lead to an uncomfortable ride.

Re: American saddles

Posted by hunterrookie - 2007/01/11 22:48

This really is a fascinating thread. Despite a lot of experience with English saddles, I'm pretty much in the dark with Western saddles, and have relied on Don Fechner to find good saddles for our current horse, and also for one we had on loan - both are pretty sensitive, not over wide QH mares and both seem extremely happy with Don's efforts!

To the saddlers, I ask if anyone has had any contact with the Society of Master Saddlers in the UK? They are exceptionally keen on education - due to the master saddler based at our yard, they hold fitting seminars with our horses annually (just english saddles at the mo!)

They have also grasped the idea of training saddlers to fit, refurbish and even make new side saddles, which like western saddles, have very specific fitting criteria.

I'm sure they'd be delighted to have a talk by a western saddler or maybe even to set up some training sessions -most 'english' saddlers must get asked about western saddles from time to time.

If you would like any contacts, let me know and I'll see what I can find out.

Re: American saddles

Posted by HarmonyHorses - 2007/01/12 10:19

I would be very interested in that. It really does seem to be an excellent program through the Society of Master Saddlers, and I appreciate the variety that they try to train in. I have some involvement with our local sidesaddle chapter, and I know that the fitting can be quite problematic due to the short supply, and the nature of the ride, so it's nice to hear the Master Saddlers train in that as well. If you know anyone who would be interested in a western saddle fitting lesson just let me know. I do travel to do clinics etc, so it'd be possible for me to come up to your part of the country if needed to put a session on. That's great information and thanks so much for the post! I can be reached at harmony@harmonyhorses.com

Re: American saddles

Posted by sixfootblonde - 2007/01/16 00:48

Hi Hunterrookie,

I too would be very interested in this. Any info we can share to help the horses have a better life can only be good.
Looking forward to hearing from you :) maria@western-saddler.co.uk

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