

TACK & TRAINING

SADDLE FIT Q & A

By Jochen Schleese, Certified Master Saddler, Equine and Saddle Ergonomist.

Saddle Fit and Fluid Swelling

Question: What causes fluid bumps on my horse's back and how can I get rid of them?

ANSWER:

To explain this process we have to go into a little scientific detail. Often, it is a poorly fitting saddle causing a problem called 'ischemia' – which is nothing more than a local blood supply deficiency due to obstacles to the arterial flow – i.e., a pinching or pressure point under saddle. Correcting this (through proper fitting, eliminating this pinching or pressure) causes something called "reperfusion" – the re-establishment of fluid passing through the lymphatic system or blood vessels to an organ or a tissue.

When this pinching or pressure occurs to the point of ischemia, acidic metabolites accumulate. (examples include glucose in the metabolism of sugars and starches or amino acids in the biosynthesis of proteins). In the extreme, the acidic cell becomes atrophic and gradually loses its function. This is reversible – initially. If present too long, it can lead to complete cell degeneration. It will lose function, which cannot be remedied.

When the irritant is removed in time, the acidic metabolites are flushed into the bloodstream, in turn activating the white blood cells. They become 'sticky' and get stuck at the vascular walls, moving into the surrounding connective tissues. This triggers inflammatory reactions, setting substances like histamines free which can damage the inside cell layers – allowing fluid to pass inside and resulting in a visible swelling ('edema' or blister).





When the saddle is fitted properly, the horse immediately improves because there is no more pressure or pain. The blood supply to the atrophic muscle increases, but often a visible swelling due to the inflammatory reaction described above occurs. This may stay for a couple of weeks, until all acidic materials are gone, and the muscle has started to regenerate and is able to return to normal work. As it regains its normal shape, the swelling will go down and the horse will ultimately move better than before.

Jochen Schleese, German Certified Master Saddler and Saddle Ergonomist, teaches saddle fit principles to protect horse and rider from long-term damage caused by ill-fitting saddles. www.saddlefit4life.com 702-370-1199 info@saddlefit4life.com www.saddlesforwomen.com

©2015 courtesy of Saddlefit4Life®