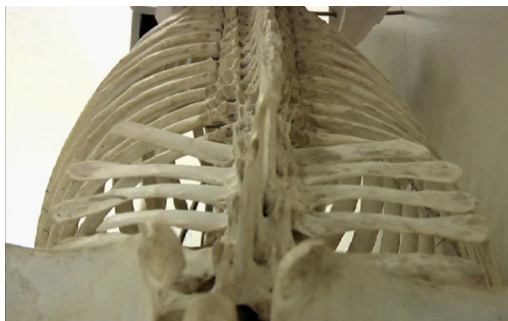


Saddle Fit Q and A

by Jochen Schleese Certified Master Saddler, Saddle Ergonomist

Q

Why is the width of the saddle gullet so important? Does it really matter?



10 (lumbar) clearly recognizable are the long transverse processes of the lumbar vertebrae which start past the saddle support area (you never want your saddle panel to sit on here!)

A

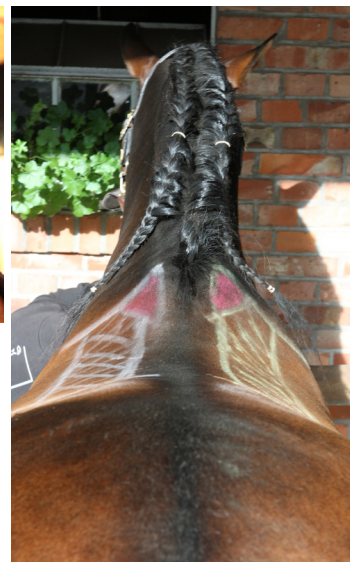
Many saddles at first glance look like they're fitting really well, but when I turn them over, the gullet width is too narrow - maybe 1-2 fingers. A saddle with a channel or gullet that is too narrow (or too wide!) can cause permanent damage. The width of each horse's spine will determine how wide his saddle's gullet must be, and the width of the gullet should be the same throughout the entire length of the saddle. Some saddles may have gullets that are the appropriate width at the front, but then get progressively narrower towards the back. The horse's spine and surrounding ligaments do not get narrower over the length of his saddle-support area, and neither should the gullet of the saddle.



Saddle twisting on spine: a saddle with a very narrow gullet channel (has slipped to the right and sits on the spinal processes).

A saddle that is too wide in the gullet will have inadequate weight-bearing surface, may start to strip muscle away from the top of the ribs, and the back of the tree may actually rest on the spine.

A saddle with too narrow a gullet will sit on the horse's spine and/or ligaments. This is especially noticeable when the horse goes around a corner: if the horse is tracking to the left, you will see the saddle shift to the right, so that the left-side panel rests on the horse's spine/ ligaments. This will cause him to tighten his back muscles and hollow his back, producing exactly the opposite of the nice rounded back that we want to see.



P 170 chalk drawing on horse's back clearly shows the saddle support area (white cross-hatching) and the necessary width of the gullet channel

*Rider
straightness
from back:
well-fitting
saddle with
adequate
channel
width.*



WATCH MY VIDEO ABOUT GULLET CHANNELS

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