



Fit as a fiddle

I'm looking for a new girth to go with my horse's saddle, but how can I tell whether it fits correctly?

Karen Russell

A Brita Rizzi answers: Girths aren't always given enough consideration – for most riders, it's simply a piece of tack that holds the saddle in place. However, just like with your saddle or bridle, the girth needs to fit your horse's specific conformation. Sometimes the wrong girth can make an otherwise well-fitting saddle uncomfortable. For example, it could

make the saddle slip from side to side or ride forward onto the horse's shoulder blades.

From a fitting point of view, symmetry is key. As saddle fitters we don't mind if your girth is elasticated or not, what we do prefer, though, is that the elastic is even, on both sides or in the middle. Having elastic on one side can create an imbalance and may encourage more movement to one side. Also, when possible girth up evenly on both sides – not five up one side and two on the other.

A too short girth will make it feel tight and rigid, not allowing the horse to expand his chest and breathe deeply. If a girth is too short it can also create more pressure under the saddle because it'll be pulled down with more tension.

The girth needs to hold the saddle firmly in place, but not be so tight that it limits circulation or breathing. A long girth should sit at the widest part of the horse's barrel and you'll need to make sure that you get the correct length for your horse. The buckles should sit in the middle of the saddle flap to give it the most stability and allow the horse room to breathe. If the buckles sit all the way at the top, it'll usually make the saddle roll around on the horse's back and not be as stable.

DID YOU KNOW?

An ill-fitting girth can make your horse reluctant to move forwards and even impinge on his paces.