

Introduction

I wrote this book for your horse.

My goal in writing this book is to share with horse owners some of the elements of saddle fit: how the saddle looks on the inside, how the saddle's tree is meant to function, how to tell if you have one of the common, obvious saddle fit problems.

Additionally, there are so many problem horse behaviors that might be associated with saddle fit. A saddle which pinches, presses, digs, grinds, or otherwise makes your horse uncomfortable, can be responsible for a number of different misbehaviors. Misbehaviors may be major or minor; some may be so subtle that you would never associate them with the saddle. However, when you relieve the discomfort, the horse may well lose his resistance! I will describe a number of behaviors and explain how they may be related to saddle fit. Give your horse the benefit of the doubt; if you don't know that his saddle fits, it could be well worth the investigation.

The horse doesn't know that the saddle should fit. Throughout the horse's life, we insist that he stand for things that he would rather avoid; we make him put up with things he finds uncomfortable and even painful. He has no idea that saddles are meant to be comfortable! As with many other things, the horse may simply grit his teeth and cooperate, allowing you to use a poorly fitting saddle because he doesn't know there are any other options. A horse who allows you to saddle him and even cooperates may simply like you and want to behave for you, or be too intimidated to object. It's up to us to make sure they don't suffer in silence.

This book will not tell you how to become a saddle fitter. This book will also not tell you how to determine if your saddle's fit is exceptional; it is always important to have a professional examine your saddle, on your horse's back. This book will give you an introduction to saddles and fitting, but refined fitting can not be squeezed into one book. Sometimes the fit issues are complicated or obscure.

You can, however, learn to recognize some of the common fitting problems, and also some of the behaviors associated with fitting problems. And sometimes, realizing that there could *be* a problem is the start of finding the answer. Your horse works hard for you; shouldn't you make sure that he has the opportunity to do his best?