

Tack and Leather Care

Think of your tack as an investment. You've spent time and money in selecting the best quality leather goods for you and your horse. With diligent and correct care, including proper storage, you can get the maximum return on your investment through its long and safe use.

Saddles, Bridles, Martingales, Breastplates and Girths

Leather is skin. Just as your skin suffers abrasions and dryness from irritants like sweat and dirt, your leather does too. The key to tack longevity is the practice of daily cleaning after every ride.

The traditional method of leather care is to wipe dust and sweat from your tack immediately after use with a sponge or cloth that is barely moistened with cool water. Then rub a thin layer of glycerin soap on the leather to seal the pores and keep it soft but not sticky. Newer methods involve convenient and easy-to-use tack cleaning and conditioning products—a wide array of which exists on the market today. You can choose from one-step cleaning and conditioning creams, such as Supple or Leather CPR, or two-step systems with a cleaning solution followed by a conditioning agent that restores moisture, such as those from Belvoir Cleaner and Conditioner and Leather Therapy Wash and Conditioner.

Note: Almost every saddle and tack manufacturer has a recommendation or product preference for cleaning and conditioning products. Some tack manufacturers produce



their own products. Always follow manufacturer's guidelines when considering commercial cleaners and conditioners.

Be sure to clean the parts of your tack that are under pressure during use or where sweat or saliva may collect. These areas include the curves near buckles where reins and cheek pieces attach to bit rings, all parts of girths, billet straps and the creases in stirrup leathers where irons rest. The cleaning process is also a good time to check that stitching is tight and intact, and that the leather has not ripped or cracked.

For tack that has been neglected over time or that is extremely dirty, use warm water and a soft brush to remove collected grime. You may choose to use a pH-balanced cleaner, such as Lexol Cleaner. Because warm water is extremely drying to leather, immediately follow it with a fine layer of glycerin soap or a leather conditioner, such as Lexol Conditioner.

Very dry leather may need to be treated on its underside with a thin coat of warmed Neats-foot Oil or fed with a thick saddle food such as Effax Lederbalsam, Passier Lederbalsam or Stubben Hammanol.

Cleaning Bits

Rinse your bit in water or wipe it thoroughly after every use. Dried food particles on a bit are abrasive to your horse's mouth. And, it is far easier to clean a bit on a regular basis than having to scrub off accumulated grime.



Over time, bits may become tarnished from use and storage. Products on the market, such as Herm Sprenger Diamond Paste or Nevr-Dull Wadding Polish, remove layers of tarnish. Non-toxic, non-acidic and developed for use on mouthpieces and all types of metal, HS Diamond Paste helps prevent tarnish from recurring. (You can also use it on your spurs and metal stirrup irons!) Nevr-Dull is easily used by pulling a wad of the saturated cloth from the tin and rubbing until black can no longer be seen on the cloth.

Wash the mouthpiece of the bit thoroughly to remove any trace of the product after polishing.

Related Topics

[How to care for tall riding boots](#)

[How to prolong the life of boot zippers](#)

For more assistance or to request a catalog, call 1-800-989-1500 to speak with a Dover Saddlery product advisor, or stop by any of our retail stores.

Visit DoverSaddlery.com for a complete store listing and full product offering.

Tack Storage



Leather tack can be attractive to rodents when food sources are scarce. Try to secure your tack room from these unwanted visitors. Tack is best maintained with daily use and cleaning. However, if your tack has to be stored for an extended time, try to place it in a temperature-controlled environment. Extreme cold and heat are detrimental to leather.

MORE STORAGE TIPS

- Check unused equipment occasionally for mildew.
- Cover stored tack in fabric or newspaper so the leather can breathe rather than in plastic that does not allow for air circulation.
- Condition regularly to prevent tack from drying out.

Synthetic Saddles, Halters and Horse Boots

To clean a synthetic saddle, use Wintec Saddle Cleaner or sponge it with a mixture of gentle soap and warm water. You can soak smaller synthetic articles like nylon halters or neoprene splint boots in a gentle soap and warm water solution to loosen grime. Stuck on dirt can sometimes be removed with a soft brush while the item is still wet. Rinse or hose thoroughly, and allow the items to dry naturally in the sun.