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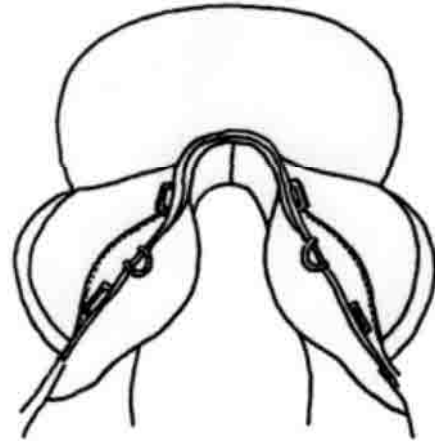
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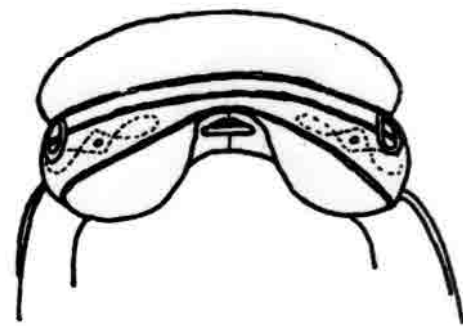
WHAT IS AN AUSTRALIAN STOCK SADDLE?

An Australian stock saddle is the working saddle of the Australian stockman or “cowboy” of Australia. It is a deep seated, well-balanced saddle designed to provide great comfort for both horse and rider. The saddle has a high cantle (usually 4 ½ inches) for security, much like the working saddle of the cowboy in America’s Southwest in the 1880’s. It has forward hung stirrups to help in placing the rider’s weight over the horse’s withers. This balances the horse and assists him in making quick moves or changes of direction over irregular terrain. For long or difficult rides, proper placement of the rider’s weight is much less tiring for the horse. This is an advantage over most western saddles which have stirrups hung nearly mid saddle. Western stirrup leathers are often quite rigid, making it difficult for the rider to push his legs forward to brace against those sudden spins or shying situations frequently presented by the spooky horse.

To further enhance the secure seat, an Australian stock saddle also incorporates a pair of high knee rolls, or “poleys” as they are commonly called. These stiff projections of leather are placed high on the pommel of the saddle to allow the rider to place his leg, just above the knee, against them. Seated in this manner, with a high cantle and knees braced against the poleys, a rider is virtually assured of staying with the horse even in extremely exciting situations.



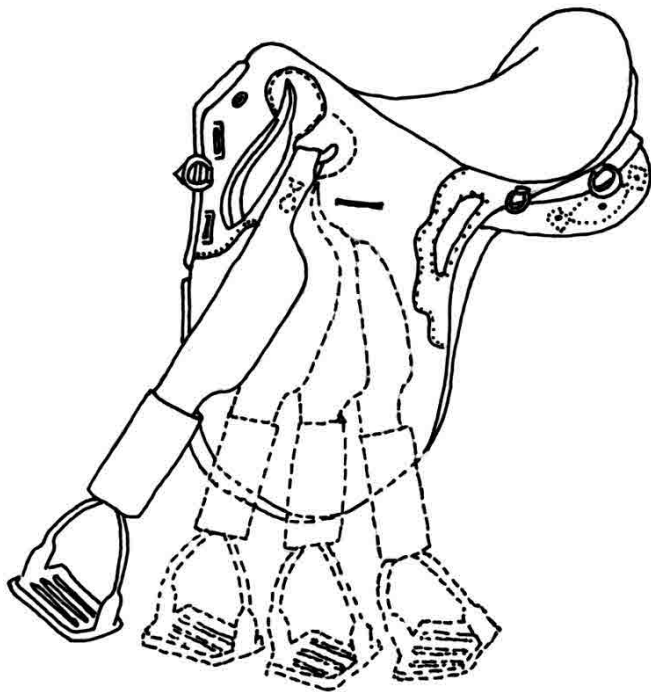
On the underside of the saddle, along the bars, which bear the rider’s weight and distribute it along the horse’s back are the “panels” of the saddle. The panels run the full length of the saddle and are, in effect, pads which cushion the horse’s back against the weight of saddle and rider.



They are made of a very durable fabric which breathes and is stuffed with pure wool fleece. This construction allows the panels to mold to fit each individual horse’s back. It also allows sweat dampened panels to dry out rapidly so that even with daily riding, you need not put a wet saddle on the horse as is often the case with leather paneled English saddles.

You will notice that the two panels do not come together on the center along the top of the horse's spine. This channel or tunnel is provided so that no weight is carried directly on the back bone at any point. It also allows for a constant circulation of air along the length of the back bone. This cools the spine and is vital in keeping the back from breaking down. Horses with non-congenital back problems have invariably been ridden with weight bearing directly on the back bone and in saddles that do not provide proper cooling of the back bone. The Australian stock saddle, properly fitted, takes care of your horse's back. To help the saddle do it's job properly, make sure the saddle pad is pulled up into the gullet of the saddle and not pulled tightly across the horse's back.

The stock saddle's unique fender stirrup arrangement is hung onto the saddle to give the rider a sense of a new leg freedom.

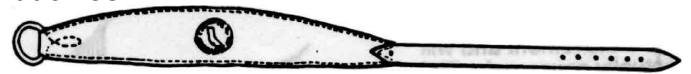


A side view of the saddle reveals a long sweat flap and outer flap with billets for the girth in between. The sweat flap provides protection for the horse against chafing by the girth or girth buckles. It also protects the rider's legs from sweat from the horse. The outer flap serves to further protect the rider's leg from the girth buckles and billets, and provides a smooth surface for the stirrup leathers to ride against as they move forward and backwards in the course of a ride.

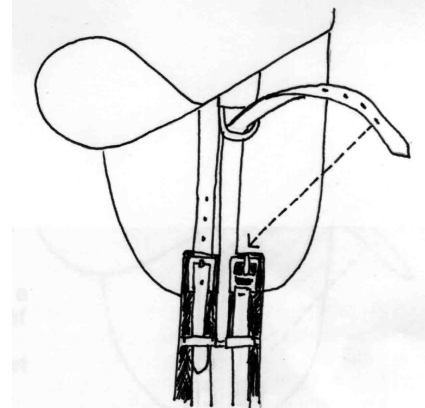
The girthing or cinching system of an Australian stock saddle differs from both the Western and English saddles. The girth itself is a four to five inch wide strip of nylon web, reinforced synthetic fabric covering a closed cell foam interlining. It has two buckles at each end and a billet attached to one end of the girth. This makes a very sturdy, durable, comfortable and machine washable girth.



The surcingle is the second part of the girthing system. The surcingle is a leather strap approximately 38" long, which is placed across the seat of the saddle with each end fitting into a slot in the outer flap of the saddle. One end of the surcingle has a two inch dee ring stitched to it. The other end terminates in a leather billet with holes punched for girth buckles.



The girth is attached to the saddle on the "off" side, by buckling the saddle billet and the surcingle billet to the two end buckles. Coming to the "on" side and lifting the outer flap exposes one saddle billet and a large dee ring attached to the end of the surcingle. (Remember that the other end of the surcingle had a billet attached to it.) Picking up the free end of the girth, take the billet attached to it and run this billet behind and through the dee ring attached to the surcingle end. This billet is then pulled down, like a rope through a pulley, and buckled to the rear buckle on the girth. The saddle billet is now buckled into the front girth buckle. If tightening is required, both sides



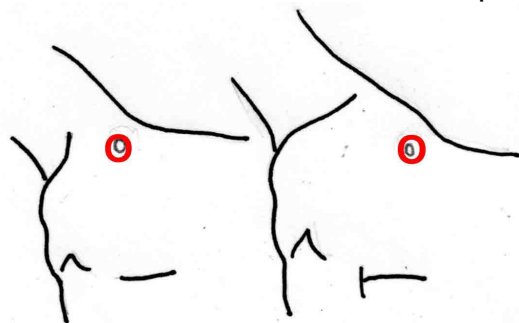
of the saddle should be tightened evenly so that the buckles are the same height on both

sides of the saddle. This will place the center dee rings of the girth directly between the horse's front legs where the breast collar can be attached.



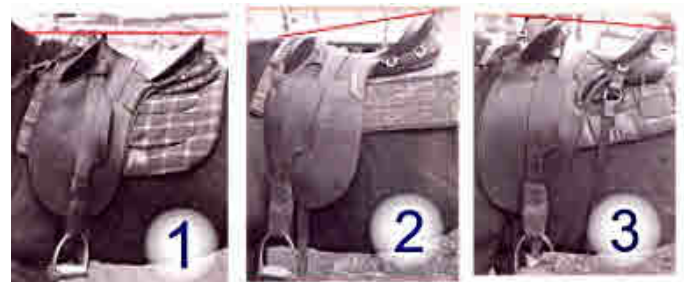
SADDLE FITTING

The first step in fitting a saddle is proper placement of the saddle on the horse's back. The horse's shoulder joint (the uppermost point of the shoulder) determines the placement of the saddle. The leading edge of the panel (the fabric pad underneath), is placed directly behind the shoulder joint. This means that a horse with a long sloping shoulder will give the appearance of placing the saddle further back than on a horse with a very upright shoulder. Avoid the temptation to place the panel on the shoulder joint. Placing the saddle panel on the joint inhibits the horse's movement, and will eventually cause pain. Fitting a saddle which is improperly placed on the back will result in an incorrect fit because the back will appear to be wider than it actually is. If the saddle appears to be the proper width when placed on the shoulder, it will be too wide when it slips back



behind the shoulder to its proper place. A saddle that is too wide for the horse tips forward, making the rider feel like he is riding downhill. More importantly, when too wide, the saddle gullet transfers almost all of the rider's weight directly to the horse's wither bone. This is extremely painful and potentially crippling for a horse.

A properly fitted saddle, properly placed, will leave three fingers of clearance between the saddle gullet and the wither bone, when securely cinched and a rider aboard. After checking for sufficient gullet clearance, run a flat hand, palm down, along the horse's back under the entire saddle panel. (You won't be able to reach the center.) The panel should press against the horse's back evenly from one end to the other.



Saddle #1 fits perfectly. The front is about level with the back. A balanced rider would exert even pressure on the horse's back, indicated by an even sweat pattern. Saddle #2 is too wide. It will put pressure on the withers, and also slide back. The front is down, the back is way up. Saddle #3 is too narrow. It is up in the front, and down at the back. It will slide back and wobble and pinch the horse at the withers. The pad on the front end of the saddle should sit right in the dip right behind the shoulder of the horse. Be careful that the saddle isn't too far forward; interfering with the horse's shoulder and action.

Check the leading edge of the panel. It should contact the horse's back with even pressure from top to bottom. More than three finger's of gullet clearance means the saddle is too narrow. A saddle that is too narrow will pinch the horse's back and create pain and subsequent poor performance. A "too narrow" fit will leave two small dry spots, one on each side and high on the wither. Continued riding will cause the hair at these spots to turn white as the color follicles are killed. The hair may also completely disappear and calluses or open sores appear.



Examples of three different tree sizes. From the left they are wide, standard and narrow.

After establishing the proper fit, you will see that the girth is a bit further back than what most Western riders are accustomed to seeing. This assures that there is not binding behind the elbows and avoids girth galls (sores behind the elbows). This girth placement also helps to keep the saddle from slicing back. An extremely forward girthing arrangement on a saddle pulls down on the front of the saddle causing it to slide down the horse's withers and move backwards. This places the saddle cannot effectively carry weight and causing him to be out of balance. A more nearly "center-fire" rigging on a saddle allows the girth to pull down from the center of the saddle (which is behind the horse's withers) and thus the saddle is not forced backwards.

FAQ

1. Where is the back cinch?

The back cinch is not needed or recommended with this saddle. The stock saddle is closer to a center-fire rig than most Western saddles – more like a Western endurance saddle.

2. How do I know the saddle fits me?

The saddle fits you when you can sit comfortably down into the saddle seat and you have a space the thickness of your palm between thigh and poley.

3. How do I know if the saddle fits my horse?

When the saddle is properly placed on the horse, with the leading edge of the gullet or fork resting behind the shoulder joint, girthed securely and rider aboard, there should be three fingers of clearance between wither bone and the inside arch of the gullet. Additionally, an assistant should be able to run his hand

under the flap all the way to the back of the bars under the cantle and feel even pressure, thus indicating an equal distribution of the rider's weight along the length of the panels.

4. What kind of saddle pad do I use?

Only a thick blanket, to keep the saddle clean, is required on a properly fitted Australian stock saddle. We recommend a hospital fleece pad (single thickness) which is cut to fit the particular model of saddle. This protects the flaps of the saddle as well as the panels and reduces saddle cleaning and maintenance.

5. What is the right stirrup length?

The stirrups are generally adjusted somewhat shorter than most Western riders are accustomed to yet longer than the conventional jump seat English saddle. Stirrup length, is greatly influenced by the individual comfort of the rider. A stirrup adjusted inordinately high will, of course reduce the space between thigh and poley causing the thigh to be pressed into the poley.

6. Won't the material under the saddle wear out quickly?

The wool serge lining on the panels is very durable and is expected to last 20 -25 years. The fleece saddle pad or light blanket used under the saddle takes most of the wear.

7. Why do I feel like I'm high and off the horse's back?

The air channel under the saddle running along the spine keeps the saddle approximately 1 ½ inches off the horse's spine. This is a bit higher than most English saddles, but not really higher than all the layers of leather, wool, and wood of the Western saddle. One factor contributing to a higher feel than a Western saddle is the fact that the Australian saddle is much narrower in the grip than a Western saddle thus giving closer leg contact with the horse.

8. Do I need a breast collar?

A breast collar is recommended for trail riding or gymkhana work when any saddle might tend to shift position. Ring work usually does not require a breast collar.

9. What is a surcingle?

A surcingle is a leather strap running across the seat of the saddle and terminating in a slit in the outer flap of the saddle. The ends of the surcingle are attached to the girth. The surcingle helps to hold the saddle in place.

10. Is the surcingle uncomfortable to sit on? Does it pinch?

Since the surcingle is held snugly in place by the girth it is seldom, if ever, noticed while riding. Again, once snugly in place, the surcingle cannot pinch.

11. Do the long flaps on the saddle make it hot for the horse?

Any surface area of the horse which is covered contributes to heat accumulation. However, since heat rises, and the area of the back which is covered is quite small in comparison to Western saddles, the heat build-up is much less than most Western saddles, yet slightly more than most English saddles.

12. Can I use Western stirrups?

Any type of stirrup may be used with the stock saddle.

13. What is the crupper bar for?

The crupper bar, at the base of the cantle, is used for attaching the crupper strap which runs under the horse's tail and keeps the saddle from sliding forward on very steep downhill runs.

14. I rode English once and the leathers pinched me; will these pinch?

Most stock saddles are equipped with wide stirrup leathers that include a four inch wide fender (much like Western saddles) that prevents pinching.

15. Can you put saddle bags on this saddle?

The lashing rings, both front and rear are designed for saddle strings or for buckling saddle bags to the saddle.

16. Can I rope with this saddle?

If you have an Australian stock saddle equipped with a horn, the chances are that the

horn is really for appearance only. A few models have very sturdy horns and could be used for roping. The general design of the stock saddle however does not lend itself well to roping.

17. Is the wood and steel tree good or bad?

The wood and steel tree is the traditional construction of Australian and English saddles. It is light weight, durable, and has a degree of "flex" which adds comfort for horse and rider. Some fiberglass and foam molded saddle trees have the advantage of being impervious to moisture, but are inordinately heavy and do not flex. Probably the best option is the new generation nylon tree which is strong, lightweight, unaffected by moisture and yet has flex.

18. How much does it cost to re-stuff the saddle when it needs it?

The cost of re-stuffing depends upon the construction of the saddle. Some are easier to re-stuff and thus less time consuming.

19. How often does the saddle need re-stuffing?

A new saddle may need re-stuffing within six months depending on how it is used and how firmly it was stuffed initially. After its first re-stuffing, a saddle should not need stuffing again for three to five years.

20. How much does this saddle weigh?

Australian stock saddles range in weight from fourteen to twenty-eight pounds. Some of the largest saddles equipped with horse and rear cinch, may weigh more.

21. How often should I clean or oil my saddle?

Cleaning and oiling is a matter of judgment and how often the saddle is used and the conditions under which it is used. In moderate use, and with the use of a dust cover, it is recommended that the saddle be cleaned and oiled four times a year.

22. Do you have seat savers for this saddle? Seat savers are available for most Australian stock saddles.

23. Can I get suede seat for this saddle?

Some saddle are available with suede seats at extra cost.

24. The saddle feels confining; is it comfortable for long rides?

The seat does feel more confining than most Western riders are accustomed to. However, the stirrups are free moving so that the rider can change his position easily and this allows a great deal of comfort since the rider's legs can be positioned forward, down or back.

25. Can I get out of the saddle in a hurry if my horse falls or rolls?

Again, since the stirrups are free swinging the saddle is easy to get out of if the horse should fall.

26. Will this saddle fit every horse?

No! There is no one saddle of any kind that will fit every horse. A variety of saddle trees and gullet widths are available so that any horse can be fitted with one model or another.

27. How can a saddle fit a horse and also fit me? We both have to be comfortable so who do we fit?

It is important that the saddle be comfortable to both the horse and rider. This means that the rider should first sit in a number of saddles until he decides which is the most comfortable. As a rule of thumb, when sitting in the saddle with stirrups adjusted properly there should be ½ inch of clearance between the thigh and the poley. If there is more than this amount of space between the thigh and the poley, the saddle is too large. If the thighs are pressed firmly against the poleys while relaxed in the saddle, the saddle is too small.

Next, the saddle must be fitted to the horse. When properly placed on the horse's back and securely cinched, the rider should mount the horse and an assistant should check the clearance between the saddle gullet and the horse's wither. There should be three fingers clearance between the gullet and the wither. The panels should evenly distribute the weight along the horse's back.

28. I've heard that Western horses can't use this saddle. Is this true?

Any horse can use an Australian stock saddle if the saddle is properly fitted. The new fleece lined designs are particularly excellent for the wide flat backed horse.

29. What kind of riding style do you use with this saddle, Western or English?

Riding an Australian saddle is neither like riding English or Western. The saddle has a naturally balanced seat which allows a great deal of leg freedom while maintaining a secure seat. At the walk, the rider often sits back in the saddle with legs forward, heels down. At the trot, the rider can post or sit the 5trot at will. When moving at speed, the rider will feel comfortable raising himself in the stirrups, leaning forward over the horse's neck and resting into the poleys. At this point it might be noticed that the rider's heels are up and toes are down; this is perfectly appropriate in an Australian saddle.

30. Will my horse be able to go up and down steep hills like he does in my Western saddle?

The horse will be better balanced than in most Western saddles. The rider's weight will be carried over the shoulder thus allowing the horse to more easily carry the weight. Since the saddle is lighter than most Western saddles and shorter, the horse will have more back freedom and will therefore be able to negotiate steep trails and hills with ease.

31. My friend bought an Aussie saddle second-hand and it sored his horse's back. Why?

The source of almost all sore backs with Australian saddles is from a saddle that is not properly fitted.

32. Doesn't the front edge of the flap cut into the horse's shoulder?

Most Australian stock saddle flaps fall straight from the gullet much like a dressage saddle and there is no binding of the horse's shoulder. On some Australian stock saddles with very forward flaps, the leading edge of the flap does tend to bind the shoulder on the first ride. By

the end of the ride, you will notice that the leather has rolled up and is no longer binding the horse.

33. How do you clean the wool material on the bottom of the panels?

If the bottom of the panels became excessively dirty they can be sponged with soap and water and dried with a terrycloth towel. They should never be submerged in water as this may require several days drying time. If the panels become stained with oil, a small amount of dry cleaning fluid on a rag and rubbed briskly on the wool should clean it.

34. Do you know of anyone who fixes these saddles if mine gets broken?

Yes, call Barbara at Ophir Hill Station (775) 849-0676, or email: softgaits@aol.com

35. What kind of leather is the Australian stock saddle made of?

Some stock saddles manufactured in India are made of water buffalo hide. Some stock saddles are made of English leather and some are made of leathers tanned in the U.S. or other countries. The premium leather is from New Zealand.

36. Can I get matching saddle bags, breast collar, bridle and riens?

Yes.

37. What is the difference between an Australian stock saddle and an English saddle?

The Australian stock saddle is similar in construction to an English saddle. The seat, however, is deeper, wider and more comfortable. The saddle also has longer flaps and the distinctive high knee-rolls known as poleys.

38. Is it as strong as my Western saddle?

Yes, stock saddles are very sturdy pieces of equipment. If your stock saddle is equipped with a horse, it should not be used for roping unless it has been especially stressed for this purpose. This is also true of Western saddles.

39. What do I do if I take the saddle home and it doesn't fit my horse?

Bring the saddle back and exchange it for a saddle that will fit or for a refund.

40. Can I show my horse in this saddle?

American Horse Show Association rules allow the use of this saddle in shows. However, some breed Associations specify certain types of saddles in specific classes. Therefore, it would be best to consult your breed Association rule book.

41. Why can't I get a bigger saddle, as I'm used to more room?

A seat length that provides more clearance than the recommended ½ inch distance between the poley and the thigh will not be as secure as a properly fitted saddle. One may feel perfectly comfortable in a larger saddle, however, some of the benefit of a secure seat has been lost.

42. I'm getting saddle sores with my Australian stock saddle; why?

Saddle sores resulting from use of an Australian stock saddle could come from an improperly fitted saddle or a saddle in which the panels are inadequately stuffed. After approximately eight months of regular use. The rider should take note of the clearance provided at the wither. If the clearance has diminished significantly, thought should be given to having additional stuffing added. This is a common practice with all English and Australian saddles.

43. Why can't I rope with my Aussie saddle?

Some Australian stock saddles are stressed for roping. This means that the trees have been especially strengthened and the horn reinforced. However, the stock saddle by the nature of its design, is not well suited to contest roping.

44. Why an air channel?

The air channel serves to keep the rider's weight off of the horse's spine. It also provides free flow of air over the spine, keeping it cool. Heat build-up and weight directly on the spine,

will eventually cause the horse's back to break down.

45. How can the Australian stock saddle improve my riding?

When placed in the proper position on the horse's back, the rider is in balance with the horse. When the horse spins or shies the rider is much better able to stay with the horse.

46. Are they new?

Australian stock saddles were first developed in the early 1800's. Few were seen in the U.S. until the late 1970's. They are now an established favorite of trail riders, pleasure riders and endurance riders.

47. Who invented them?

The Australian stock saddle was first developed by English convicts escaping from penal colonies in Australia. The saddle gave the convicts a decisive edge in riding through rugged country at high speeds while escaping their mounted guards. Since that time, it has been the working saddle of the Australian stockman.

48. Are they expensive?

They are comparably price with saddles of equal quality, whether Western or English.



Colin Dangaard from Australian Stock Saddle Company, riding barrels **WITHOUT REINS!** It's all in the legs.



The JS Champion with the conventional padding.



The JS Champion with the fleece underside.

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