



Horse Friendly and Rider Comfortable

New designs and saddlemaking materials are beneficial for both horses and their riders.

SADDLE INNOVATIONS take hold because riders want comfort and style. Riders today care about the horse's well-being—understanding their concerns helps you sell saddles that meet their needs.

Saddle fitters have promoted the art and science of saddle fitting, along with the consequences of poorly fitted saddles. Saddles that press into the horse's withers or back can cause discomfort, resistance to the rider's aids and even injury.

Today's rider recognizes the need for a saddle change—either to improve fit on the horse she has or to match a new horse. She shops with her horse's needs in mind, along with her comfort and style. "People are so much more educated now, with the clinics at the Equine Affaires," said Karla Schmidt of Thornhill Enterprises Inc.

At the 2004 KOP show, manufacturers showed models that address riders' concerns and promote equestrian skills. "Our major concern is that the horse has well-fitting equipment," said Ruth Hanks of Smith-Worthington Saddlery. "For the best performance, we fit horse and rider."

We visited mainstream product exhibitors and also investigated some alternative designs marketed directly to riders (see sidebar on opposite page).

Promoting Better Performance

"The saddle has to be balanced for the horse to create balance for the rider," explained representative Kitty Garrity

about the L' Apogee saddles. "You want the tree to balance and not interfere with the horse."

The Pessoa Legacy XP Pony (1) targets junior riders showing in the pony hunter and jumper ranks at the "A" circuit level. "A lot of children are riding fancier ponies with more blood," said Pessoa representative Peggy Murray. "So we made a narrower horse tree with a more forward flap." Built on a spring tree with foam panels, the saddle comes in sizes 15 and 15¼.

Murray said, "Both Nelson and Rodrigo Pessoa are very actively involved in this company. The Pessoa saddles are a very good fit, with molded panels on the Pessoa tree."

Prestige showed the Nona Garson Elite, which is built on a polycarbonate tree. The saddle has a hard leather flap and integrated panels. The integrated panel has the flap directly inside the panel and stitched to the inner flap for better contact with the horse.

Jumping saddles can feature a deeper seat. "Most have gone to a semi-deep seat," said Schmidt.

JPC has added the Rivella DJ (Deep Jumping) saddle (2). "It has a wool combination panel and is not a super deep seat or a really forward flap," said JPC's Nina DePetris. "It's in between a close-contact or stadium-jumping saddle, with the seat of the stadium jumping and the flap of the close contact."

Amerigo's Cervia product line en-