

This girth's roller buckles are self-tensioning. The strap allows pressure to equalize on each buckle. The girth itself is made of PVC for easy care and light weight.

use and letting it air dry.

Because of the size of a cow, leather girth lengths hit a maximum of 56 inches. Fortunato said she gets requests for 58 or 60 in leather, "but they can't get it out of the hide. Sometimes, you can get the synthetic girth long enough for that big horse."

For the plus-size horse, you can always recommend a girth extender to "stretch" a too-short girth.

Advice on Fit and Care

Saddle placement affects the girth's position, typically about four inches behind the elbows. The saddle should fit behind the horse's shoulder blades.

Stevenson advises letting the saddle "sit" without the girth stretched tight.

"We never, ever tighten our horse's girth while he's in the cross-ties," Stevenson said. "Our riders use a mounting block. Then as they walk to the ring, they tighten the girth on the left side."

On a girth with split ends, the process is slightly different.

"We tell the rider to use the first and second billet, or the second and third, to help the saddle to stay in place," LeComte said. "If the saddle has a tendency to slip back, I advise the rider to use the second and third."

If a girth stays too loose, it can rotate and chafe the skin.

Tomlinson explained how a sweaty leather girth will slide against the skin.

"But when the seat dries out, that dry salt rubs against the skin," said Tomlinson. He recommends the string girth, which moves with the skin and doesn't bind.


Saddle soap can be an add-on sale to a new leather girth sale, and for a fabric girth, suggest a mild soap.

"Use a brand-name soap to wash, such as Orvis—a very mild soap that rinses out well," Tomlinson said. "Then, rinse, rinse, rinse."

Wool fleece absorbs sweat and fibers and can dry stiffly. For fleece of a web girth or girth cover, suggest washing with Leather Therapy Leather Laundry Solution. When the fleece is sewn onto a leather girth,

recommend that the rider use a slicker brush to restore the fleece's loft.

Even a regularly maintained girth will wear out with use. The studs of a jumper's shoes can tear the leather of a belly guard.

If a leather girth shows cracks, it's time for a new girth. Elastic ends lose their snap. A saddler may be able to install new elastic. 



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