

A decorative border on the right side of the page featuring a complex blue and gold paisley pattern. The pattern consists of swirling, teardrop-shaped motifs filled with intricate floral and geometric details, set against a dark blue background with gold highlights.

The Ultimate Guide To **SADDLE CARE**

Introduction

Hey Ya'll! We are Ryan & Bridget Liggett of Cowboy Specialist. And, we are so glad you decided to join us on this Saddle Care adventure. But before we get started I wanted to tell you a little about Ryan and myself.

The Cowboy

Ryan is a writer, rider, roper, saddle maker, leather craftsman, artist, business owner, teacher, ordain minister, word and silversmith.

In addition, he went to horseshoeing, saddle making and auctioneering school. He also has a degree in Agriculture Science, but his passion is horses and anything that has to do with them. He hopes we can help you spend more time enjoying your horses and less time obsessing about them.

The Wife

Bridget (that's me) is a wife, mother, daughter, sister, counselor, artist, business owner, dancer, volleyball player, swimmer and list maker. I could have been a career student. I have two undergraduate degrees in Psychology and Studio Art. I played four years of college volleyball. In addition, I have a masters degree in counseling. I grew up in the country. My family always owned horses, however I loved them from a distance. Every time I got on one there was a mishap, which usually hurt my body or my pride. So, while Ryan's passion is leather, silver and horses, mine is western living, fashion, country life and finding simplicity.

Always, Bridget



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Cleaning 101

It's a good idea to clean your saddle around four times a year, depending on how much you use it and where you store it.

Cleaning your saddle is the basis of saddle care.

Three times a year you will do a basic clean. By basic clean I am referring to wiping down your Saddle or washing it with soap (basically hitting all the high spots, so that your saddle looks great).

One time a year you will want to do a full tear down and thorough clean.

How To Do A Basic Clean

If your saddle is really dirty you will want to knock off any big areas of dirt and debris with a saddle duster.

Next, you will want to grab your saddle soap, wet down your lambs wool, brush or rag and work up a good lather. At this point it just takes elbow grease to wash down your saddle.

Last you will dip your rag/brush/cloth in fresh water to rinse the soap off the saddle. Then step one in the cleaning process is done.

Cleaning 101

How To Do A Tear Down Clean

When you are doing your annual tear down thorough clean, you will remove all the conchos and parts. That way you can clean and oil underneath them all and get a really good clean. Often times debris, dust and dirt can get under there. Plus, we don't want to take a chance on that part of the leather drying out.

Then, you will follow all the steps of a basic clean stated earlier.

(Has your saddle been stored in a dusty barn? Does it have dirt dobber nests on it? If you have an extremely dirty saddle don't be afraid to take it to the car wash or use a garden hose to spray it off before properly cleaning.)

Product Recommendations

Fiebing's Saddle Soap: Fiebing's Saddle Soap is Fiebing's signature product. It is used all over the world on fine saddlery, boots, shoes and other smooth leather articles. It cleans leather and lubricates the fibers to prevent brittleness, all the while maintaining suppleness and strength.

Murphy Oil Soap: Murphy Oil Soap, advertised mostly for wood cleaning, can prevent staining that other types of soap can leave behind. They also advertise not having to rinse it.

We use Saddle soap or Murphy's Oil soap at the shop, and we really like the results we get.

Oiling 101

How To Properly Oil Your Saddle

Oil is your friend, because it will keep your leather conditioned and young.

At this point you have cleaned your saddle. Now with a clean cloth or lambs wool (our preference) generously apply Neatsfoot oil all over your saddle. It is important not to forget the edges of the leather as well. Don't worry as well, your saddle may really soak up the oil if it is pretty dried out.

Even if you are not doing a full tear down clean make sure to oil under those keepers.

You will then want to let the oil dry for at least an hour or two.

Product Recommendations

100% Pure Neatsfoot Oil: A pure, natural preservative, neatsfoot leather oils are used by saddle and boot makers to soften, preserve and waterproof leather goods. It lubricates the fibers, which restores suppleness to the leather. It is a 100% all natural oil product.

There are many different types of oil out there, but I like to stick with all natural. I am a big fan of pure Neatsfoot oil. This is what we use at our shop. However, any natural oil is a good idea.

Inspection 101

How To Properly Inspect A Saddle

The beauty of cleaning your own saddle is that you can thoroughly inspect as you are cleaning it. Isn't that great!

My first piece of advice is if you question it, replace it! Just look at it as insurance to saving your life. If something breaks on your saddle, it can go bad fast.

Here is where you will want to check your rigging and tie straps. Make sure you don't see any tears or rips.

In addition, check your wool to be sure there isn't anything buried up in there that could aggravate your horse's back.

Next check your stirrup leathers. Pull down on them. Roll them around. Make sure they are in good working order.

Make sure your blivins buckles are fitting well in the holes and have not stretched or torn your stirrup leathers.

If all these things are looking good you are in great shape! If anything needs replaced this is definitely the time to do it!

Great Job Inspecting Your Saddle!

Saddle Transport/Storage

How To Properly Transport A Saddle

Saddle Case: I know it isn't always possible, but I love using a saddle case to zip my saddle up in when I am traveling far or I have to put it in the back of the truck. They come padded and protect your saddle from the elements.

Tack Room in Trailer: If your trailer has a tack room, on the saddle rack is the best place for it. You can also have it in a case on the saddle rack as well.

Saddle Rack For Car/Truck: They do make a PVC rack that can fit into the back of your car if you are traveling with your saddle a lot. If it is only on occasion I would put the saddle horn and swell down in the seat, as not to mess up the leather.

Saddle Details: When you are transporting your saddle always attach the girth and the back girth to the carriers. They were put there for a reason. ;)

So, as you can see, saddle care can be easy. Just follow a checklist and the results will be a lot less trouble on the trail.

How To Properly Store A Saddle

Ideally, when you are storing your saddle in the barn an incasement would be the best option. If you don't have one, covering your saddle with a sheet or blanket is your next best option. We are trying to eliminate the amount of dust and debri that gets on your saddle.

Bonus #1 *How To Clean Your Conchos*

How To Clean Your Conchos

Soak in Beer: My favorite concho cleaning hack is to soak them in beer to release the tarnish and debris that is on them.

Silver Cleaner: For more expensive silver conchos you might want to use a silver cleaner.

Toothpaste: Whitening toothpaste is a popular option, along with the toothbrush to get into those little crevices.

Dawn: Dawn dish soap is the cleaner we use most in the shop. We usually always start with it and then move on to more aggressive measures if we need to.

Cleaning Steps

First, you will want to run hot water.

Next, with take a toothbrush with your chosen cleaner and scrub the concho all over.

Last, rinse and repeat if needed.

If there is gunk that still won't come off you might want to try our favorite soaking method.

Bonus #2

Saddle Clean Log Book

Saddle: _____

Quarter #1

- ☐ clean
- ☐ oil
- ☐ inspect
- ☐ tear down

Date :
Completed :



Quarter #2

- ☐ clean
- ☐ oil
- ☐ inspect
- ☐ tear down

Date :
Completed :



Quarter #3

- ☐ clean
- ☐ oil
- ☐ inspect
- ☐ tear down

Date :
Completed :



Quarter #4

- ☐ clean
- ☐ oil
- ☐ inspect
- ☐ tear down

Date :
Completed :



(Print a copy for each saddle)