

## TACK CLEANING

**Instructor:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Club/Center:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Region:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic:** Learn reasons and steps for cleaning and caring for tack      **Level/Certificate:** D-1/D-2

**Class Size:** 4-6      **Time:** 40-60 minutes (allowing for time to take bridles apart and put them back together!)

**Objective:** Students will be able to explain why they need to keep their tack clean & the steps to accomplish it

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| <p><b>Equipment Needed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• samples of dirty tack and supple, clean tack</li> <li>• samples of rotten stitching</li> <li>• students' bridles</li> <li>• several small sponges, small buckets with warm water, leather cleaner, leather conditioner, leather protector, table, small plastic containers for conditioner, 1" foam paintbrushes, small rags, toothbrushes, toothpicks, sponges</li> <li>• "Tack Care" handout</li> </ul> | <p><b>References:</b></p> <p>USPC D Manual, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, pg 268-272<br/>         USPC Horse Management Handbook</p> |
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| <p><b>Safety Concerns:</b></p> <p>Not damaging working surface or being messy</p> | <p><b>Safety Check:</b></p> <p>Medical bracelet/armband<br/>         Appropriate footwear</p> |
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## Lesson Procedure

### 1. Introduction of Self/Students

*"Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a \_\_\_ member from \_\_\_\_\_ Pony Club or Riding Center. I would like to go around the room, and have each of you tell me your name, certification, and a hobby or something that you enjoy doing in addition to riding."*

As the students do this, hand a name tag to anyone who has not already taken one. Repeat the names.

### 2. Verbalize Objective of Lesson

*"Today I would like to discuss with you the importance of cleaning your tack, and the steps that you will be taking in the process of caring for your tack."*

### 3. Ask Prior Knowledge of Topic:

*“Before we get started, let’s talk a little bit about tack. What is tack?”*

[Sample answers: bridle, saddle, pads, girth, bit, boots]

*“How often do you clean your bridle and bit?”*

[Possible answers: once a day, once a week, once a month]

*“How often do you clean your saddle?”*

[Similar responses]

*“Who can give me an example of something that can cause your tack to be ruined?”*

[Call on several. Possible answers: Sweat, dirt, dust, mold/mildew, excessive water, rain, excessive heat, chewed by animals]

### 4. Demonstrate/Discussion:

*“There are several reasons for cleaning your tack. Obviously, clean tack looks better and more professional than dirty tack! Perhaps more important, though, cleaning your tack will contribute to its longevity, or how long it will last. Another important aspect of cleaning your tack is that going through the procedure gives you the opportunity to examine the condition of your tack, and when something might need to be repaired or replaced.*

*Keep in mind the following:*

- *Sweat- can rot your stitching and dry out your leather*
- *Dirt – can make the leather rough and harsh on your hands and your pony’s skin*
- *Dampness, especially with poor ventilation—can cause mold and mildew to grow on, and into, your leather*
- *Excessive heat- can make the leather dry out and crack*
- *Dirty bits—are uncomfortable to the pony’s mouth*

*Remember that dirty, dried-out, or cracked leather is uncomfortable to you and your pony, and that dried-out and cracked leather is prone to breakage.*

*I have some samples here of clean, supple leather, and of dry and cracked leather. I am going to pass around these \_\_\_\_\_ [stirrup leathers or whatever you have brought to demonstrate] as well as this \_\_\_\_\_ [whatever you have brought to demonstrate] showing stitching that is coming out, possibly due to rotting. Please notice the difference between the feel, and the flexibility, or suppleness, of the dried-out leather and the well-cared-for leather.”*

### 5. Application of the activity: (30 minutes)

*“Thank you for bringing your bridles today. Now that you understand how important it is to keep your tack clean, we will take apart your bridles and clean, condition and protect all the pieces. Please take a handout on Tack Care. [pass out the handout “Tack Care”] I will demonstrate and explain the steps—clean, condition, and protect as we go along. First you need to take apart your bridles, and keep all of the parts together” [depending on the set-up of the room, and the number of students, you may consider passing out a paper grocery sack to each of them so they can keep their “parts” together].*

[The following is from the handout]:

*“The three steps, again, in cleaning tack, are **Cleaning, Conditioning, and Protecting**. There are different products available for each step.*

- Cleaning should be the first step if the tack is dirty. [demonstrate the cleaning as you talk]
- Some good cleaners are: Lexol Cleaner, Kirk's Castile Soap, LeatherCare, and Ivory Soap.
- Glycerin Soap or Glycerin Saddle Soap is NOT a soap for cleaning! We will discuss those later.
- Try not to use too much water as you apply the soap. Too many suds means too much water, and this can dry out your tack. A toothbrush can help with difficult areas and a Q-tip to clean out holes.
- Use a slightly damp sponge to wipe the soap off your leather. Again, too much water, or not removing the soap, can both dry out the leather. You can use toothpicks to reach areas you can't.
- Conditioning is the second step, which helps to keep your leather soft and supple, and helps to prevent cracking
- There are several different brands of tack oil/conditioner
- If oil is needed, use a 1" to 2" foam paintbrush to apply in thin layers to the rough side of the leather, then work it in by hand [demonstrate gently bending and rolling of leather]
- Use oil sparingly. You can ruin your tack by making it soggy
- Protecting the leather, which is the same as "sealing" the pores of the leather is the last step in cleaning. Common protectors are bar glycerin soap, Fiebing's Saddle Soap, Belvoir Glycerin. They are called "soaps" but they will not clean your leather! They protect and nourish the leather. Do not apply oil after applying the protectant, as it will not be absorbed, and it will make the saddle look dull and absorb dirt.
- Once you have finished with all three steps, you can put your bridles back together. Let me know if you need help.

**6. Additional Ideas if time allows:** There will probably not be extra time; the students will need help putting the bridles back together and maybe name the bridle parts. Circulate around the students to see who needs help. If there is extra time, review the cleaning hints on the handout.

### **7. Conclusion:**

*"Who can tell me the three steps in cleaning tack? (clean, condition, protect)*

*Can anyone give me one reason why it is important to clean you tack? (looks better, feels better, will last longer, and it gives you the opportunity to give it a close inspection for safety).*

*Today you have cleaned, conditioned and protected your bridle, so now check your saddle and other leather horse equipment such as a leather halter to see if they need care. Keep this handout as a guide to cleaning, and to help you purchase the supplies that you need. The better you take care of your tack, the longer it will last!*

*Does anybody have any questions? [address the questions]*

*Thanks for your nice clean tack!"*

## Tack Care

Good tack, when properly cared for and fitted, can give many years of service. The process of cleaning tack can be broken down into three stages.

1. Cleaning - If tack is dirty (use a sponge and cleaner to remove dirt). Care should be taken not to allow the soap to foam - this indicates the use of too much water, which will dry out the leather. The tack is then rinsed off with a slightly damp sponge to remove the cleaning agent, which is too harsh to be left on the saddle or bridle. Some good cleaners are: Lexol Cleaner, Castile Soap (Kirk's), LeatherCare, Ivory Soap.
2. Conditioning - Leather should be soft and supple, with no cracks, and should not squeak while you're riding. If oil is needed, use a 1" to 2" paintbrush to apply in thin layers to the "flesh" or rough side of the leather, then work the leather by hand, bending it back and forth as well as rolling. The heat from your hands will help the leather soak up the oil or conditioner. Don't go overboard - condition your leather gradually!
3. Protecting - Bar glycerin soap is the traditional choice of protection, since it will seal the pores of the leather to protect and nourish it. It acts as a type of raincoat for the leather, but does not clean it. If oil is applied after this step the leather will be duller, lacking polish, and the oil will not get into the fibers of the inner layers of the leather, because they have been sealed. Some good protectors: bar glycerin soap, Fiebing's Saddle Soap, Belvoir Glycerin.

Other cleaning hints:

- Bits, stirrup irons, and spurs should be cleaned by soaking them in warm water and scrubbing them with a pot scrubber or steel wool. These all-metal items may also be put into the dishwasher to be cleaned. For a special shine, polish them with metal polish (except for the mouthpiece of the bit), and buff them with a clean, dry rag or paper towel.
- Washable saddle pads, girths, and girth covers should be laundered once a week. Don't use bleach, and be sure to rinse them thoroughly. Bleach or soap left in a pad can mix with the pony's sweat and irritate his skin

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