

Genadek Saddle Fit Clinic Educates Owners

Saddle fitting isn't as easy or simple as most saddlers would have you think. That's why it was a full house at a May 23rd Miracle Mountain Ranch saddle fitting clinic with Dave Genadek, maker of Black Rhino saddles.

Dave started the day with a two-hour show and tell discussion of the history and biomechanics of saddle fit. By the end of the day, 25 horse owners walked away with a much clearer understanding of what makes a good fitting saddle. And, 27 relieved horses had their current saddles evaluated or were fitted for a new properly fitting one.

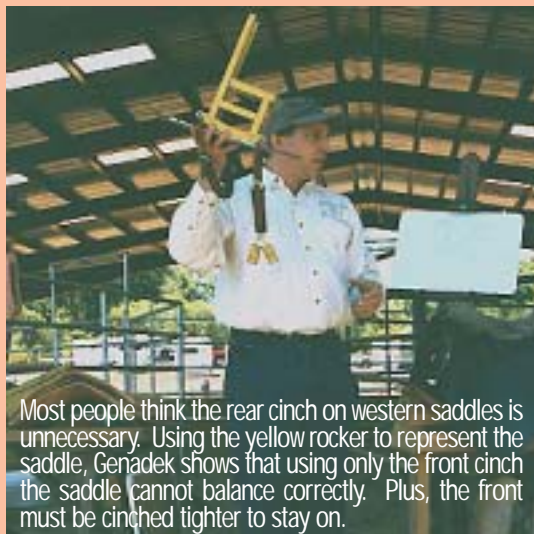
"This was really eye opening," agreed Karl Evans. "I knew I had problems fitting my horse, but now I understand them and how to fix them until I can buy a better fitting one."

Genadek became a saddle maker because he loved to create beautiful leather works of art. "But when my customers' saddles still pinched at the shoulders and rubbed, I went to the experts to learn why," he says.



Rhonda Petrovich plays the role of a horse so she and the audience can talk about what a rider (Genadek) on board.

Elements of Saddle Fit



Most people think the rear cinch on western saddles is unnecessary. Using the yellow rocker to represent the saddle, Genadek shows that using only the front cinch the saddle cannot balance correctly. Plus, the front must be cinched tighter to stay on.

The saddle should evenly rest on the sides of the horse's back leaving the spine dry and untouched.

TWIST accounts for angles/narrowness in the withers. Remember that the twist of the horse is different from the twist of the saddle seat.

You do not want even

pressure the entire length of the back. So you need enough FLARE in the front to allow movement of the scapula under the saddle. A flat hand should easily fit between the saddle and shoulder. Same with the back.

ROCK allows for the saddle to continue touching the middle of the back even when moving & rounding his back. Saddle should rock slightly front to back.

RIGGING is there to hold the saddle quietly on the horse. Center rigging or double rigging set at 5/8 is best. The rear cinch should be used to balance the front. With both, neither has to be too tight.

SEATING must allow a balanced, centered riding position. SKIRTING protects the horse from stirrup movement. In-skirt rigging should not be used.

PADDING is meant to keep the saddle clean. A balanced, fitting saddle does not need padding. Use foam to change the Twist, Rock and Flare. Pad away from where it hurts to relieve the pressure.

Since then he has been on a quest to build a saddle that truly takes the horse's needs into consideration.

Genadek eventually found out that no matter how many molds of a horse's back he made or what he offered to pay, tree makers just sent him one of two standard trees – for a flat, broad Quarter Horse or a narrow Arab. To add insult to injury, each saddle maker names these trees differently. So it sounds like there are many different trees.

In spite of industrywide resistance, Genadek has been able to get two trees made with a little more flair up front to allow better shoulder movement. This helps eliminate the most common fitting problem—pinching at the shoulders. He has another tree designed, but can't get a tree maker to make it, yet. "The only way to get more choices is to educate users on what to demand in a saddle." And that is exactly what he did at MMR.

"Being able to see and feel what he was talking about made a big difference," says participant Bobbie Taylor. She went on to buy a set of shims to use until her newly ordered saddle is ready.

Response to the clinic was so overwhelmingly positive that MMR plans to invite Genadek back again.

(Check the MiracleMountain.com calendar for the date of Dave's next visit.)

