



## Saddle Fitting Course for Equine Body Workers Why You Need It

Dr. Kerry J Ridgway, DVM

In a nutshell, the reason why those who do body work, massage, myofascial work, cranio-sacral work etc. need to understand saddle fit requirements are the same reasons that I, as a veterinary acupuncturist and equine chiropractor need those skills – **If the saddle does not fit my work will be to no avail.** The problems that I work so hard to correct will recur. The horse will again be in pain and the owner will have spent good money, will be frustrated and will be again missing competition or camaraderie with her/his horse.

There are many people selling saddles and too few who are fitting saddles. Many who sell saddles in tack shops have very limited knowledge. Other have some limited knowledge – most often provided by a manufacturer's representative. Often the information provided is more geared to marketing than to fitting. Still others selling saddles have quite a bit of knowledge but market a specific brand of saddle and are dependent on commission. They have an immediate conflict of interest. What is needed is a cadre of independent saddle fitters.

*A full saddle fitting should include:*

- 1) A postural and conformational evaluation of the entire horse with special attention to the back
- 2) An evaluation of the saddle off the horse to determine straightness, symmetry, gullet width, depth and many other factors.
- 3) An evaluation of the saddle on the horse (un-girthed first and then girthed) for basic fit, pommel and gullet clearance, straightness and panel contact.
- 4) An evaluation of the saddle with the rider up. The rider and his/her body type may radically alter the fit of a saddle that seemed to be a perfect fit without the rider.
- 5) An evaluation of the horse/saddle/rider harmony with the horse in work at all gaits and performing in its given discipline.

**Unfortunately 90% of so called saddle fitting is done with step number 3 only!** Often the primary focus is comfort of the rider. Proper fitting requires comfort and functionality for both the horse and the rider.

As body-workers you know well that posture and balance change when muscles are not in balance. People so often buy a saddle when and because the horse has a lot of problems with the existing saddle. The horse should always be fitted after correcting the existing muscle and myofascial problems. Who is in better position to prepare the horse for fitting and declare when a new saddle can be best fitted than a good body worker?

Even though nearly all horsepersons are aware that saddles can pinch or bridge the back, many, if not most, riders are not even remotely aware that *their* saddle does not fit. Bodyworkers, with knowledge of saddles are in a unique position to explain the progression of pathology and the damage that their horse is acquiring.

Saddles do much more than cause discomfort and lower the horse's performance potential. Since bones basically can do only what muscles tell them to do (under control of the nervous system, of course) and muscles can be severely impacted by saddle fit; saddles can indirectly cause damage to joints, tendons and ligaments.

A good body-worker that knows saddle issues, can identify problems and relate to the owner/trainer/rider how a particular problem may set up muscle issues leading to suspensory ligament, hock, stifle, and tendon problems. Poor fitting saddles shorten the performance career and sometimes even the life of the horse.

**So much of being a good therapist is being a good teacher**

**Expand your horizons with new and related skills**

**Become more valuable to your clients**

**Set your self above the rest by being able to do more for the horses in your care!**

**Learn high standard saddle fitting skills through Equinology with Dr. Kerry Ridgway**

### **Dr. Ridgway's 2007 Schedule:**

**Mar. 29- Apr. 1: EQ700NZ: Principles of Saddle Fitting and Shoeing Dynamics: Fielding, New Zealand**

**Apr. 6-9: EQ700A: Principles of Saddle Fitting and Shoeing Dynamics: Queensland, Australia**

**Sept. 28- Oct. 1: EQ700: Principles of Saddle Fitting and Shoeing Dynamics: Southern California, USA**



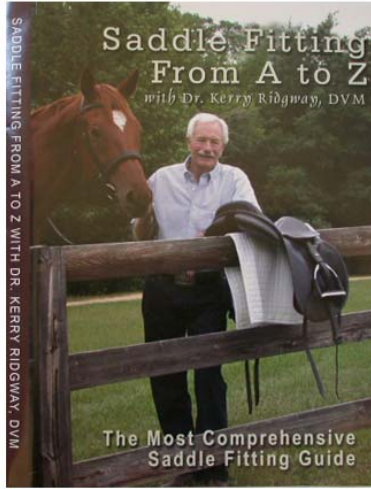
**June 17-20: EQ700E Principles of Saddle Fitting and Shoeing Dynamics: Essex, UK**



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For the Equinenergy (Equinology UK) details visit [www.equinenergy.com](http://www.equinenergy.com)

## Recently Released: Saddle Fitting A-Z with Dr. Kerry Ridgway



Make sure you visit Dr. Ridgway's site for more information on saddle fitting and DVD purchase by clicking on the image or visiting [www.ultimatesaddlesolutions.com](http://www.ultimatesaddlesolutions.com). This great DVD is also available on the [Equinology](http://www.equinology.com) site or during most USA workshops. You will not find a comparable DVD with this professional advise or information anywhere! Learn first hand from the experience of Dr. Ridgway.