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It amazes me in this day and age of advanced technology that 99% of the saddles being manufactured can NOT be fit to horses ! When a saddle doesn't fit properly it interferes with muscles and bones causing pain and resistance ! The horse is just expected to tolerate this.

This is Unacceptable !

So how do we create true shoulder and back freedom ?
Get out of their way !!!

We hear a lot today about "shoulder relief" or "shoulder freedom" but to accomplish this we need to be able to stay out of its way.

When a horse is moving the scapula/shoulder needs to be able to easily rotate under the saddle panel/tree point. The bigger or longer stride a horse has the farther back the rotation, it moves back 5"-6" or more every stride. In motion the scapula fills the wither pocket so their needs to be no pressure in this area. The only way to create this relief is by having the contact of the tree point 9" below the top of the wither. The reason this is important is that the top part of the trapezius muscle has a horizontal grain and therefore not a weight bearing muscle. When saddles with these type of tree points are used the tree and panels are pulled into the wither muscle on both sides when girthed . This pulls this muscle apart and restricts its ability to move and causes pain and discomfort to the horse.

The saddle should bear weight with the tree points 9" down bringing it below the shoulders rotation and making contact with the vertical muscle of the thoracic serratus which is a working weight bearing muscle. Even if a saddle has a cut away panel it still is bearing wrong pressure if the tree points are short. And that being said the cut away panel must sit on the upper part of the tree point not below the shoulder blade as this has no effect or relief to the shoulder.

Its of the utmost importance for the horses comfort and therefore performance to have sufficient weight bearing surface in the panels of your saddle. Most all saddles with a cut back panel sacrifice this by shrinking there panels so where contact is needed most as this is where these panels are lacking.

We are having a similar problem with girths, claiming to create shoulder freedom . The girthing system is very important for the forward motion of our horses shoulder. The thoracic serratus muscle which grows in motion is connected to the bottom of the scapula and runs down and connects to the lower rib cavity. If the billeting system of your saddle is on top of this muscle we once again have restriction . Causing a loss in movement and resistance.

So to conclude the only way to truly create a free shoulder is in the tree points not in the panel or girthing system !