

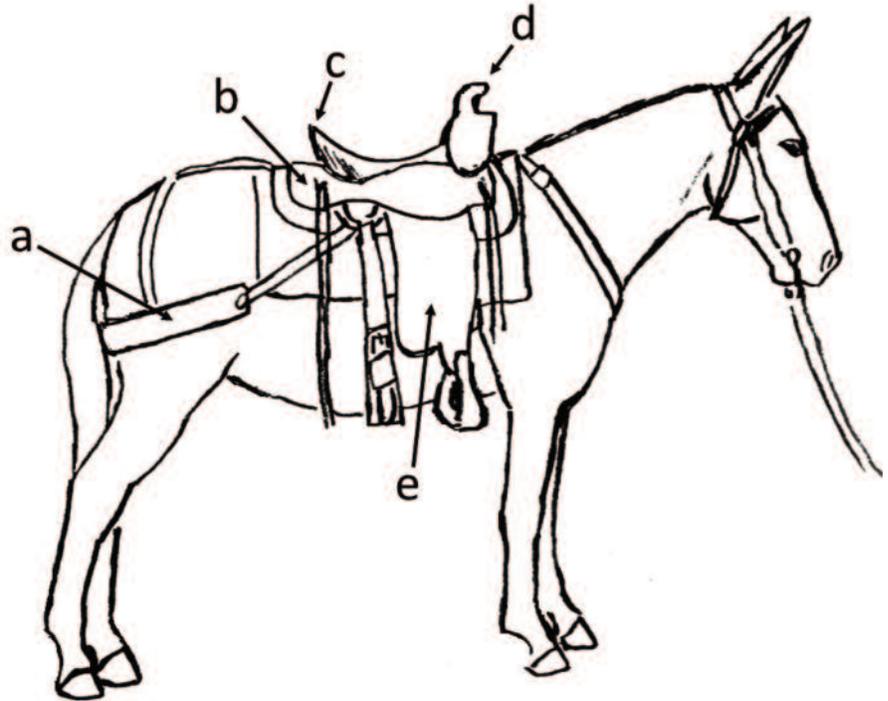
Quiz Your Mulemanship

Part Two: Tack

By Monica Erman



In this seven-part series, we're giving you a chance to test your bank of mulemanship knowledge. We'll ask a series of questions on Anatomy, Tack, Psychology, Breeding, Health Care and Training. We'll conclude the series by testing your knowledge of topics that pertain only to mules! Let's see how much you know about your mules. Using the Diagram presented, choose the correct answer for the following questions.



1. Where is the saddle horn? Ok, yeah - we start with an easy question!
Your answer: _____

2. The shape and angle of the cantle has a large impact on a rider's comfort and effectiveness. Where is it? Your answer: _____

3. Where is the fender of the saddle?
Your answer: _____

4. The skirting of a saddle affects a mule's freedom of movement. Where is the skirt of the saddle?
Your answer: _____

5. A special piece of tack used especially by mule and donkey riders is the breaching. Where is the breaching? Your answer: _____

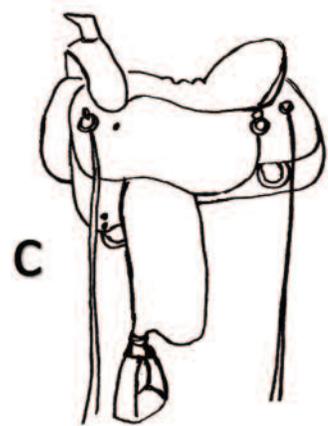
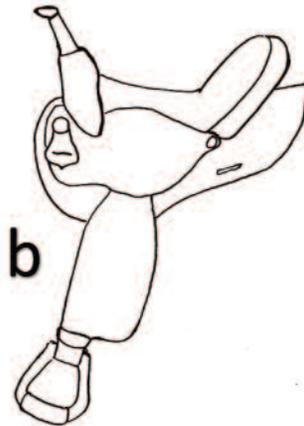
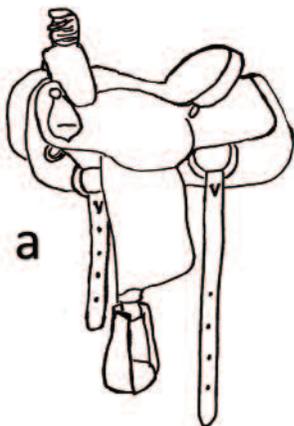
6. Here are three types of western saddles. While their specifics can vary in some ways, which saddle most closely matches the characteristics of:

A Barrel Racing or Gymkhanna Saddle: _____

A Roping or Working Ranch Saddle: _____

A Trail Riding Saddle: _____

(answers on next page)



Answers:

1. - d - The saddle horn isn't just for holding on to. Different saddles have saddle horns of different sizes and shapes. A cutting saddle has a very tall and skinny horn, while a western pleasure show saddle horn is quite short. This makes sense because a cutting rider would use the saddle horn for balance and support. A western pleasure saddle horn is likely never to get used at all. It just needs to look pretty.

2. - c - Again, the shape of the cantle has a purpose. A barrel racing saddle has a tall, steep cantle, giving security for the rider. A roping saddle's cantle is angled backwards and is relatively short, making it easier for a cattleman to swing off quickly when he needs to.

3. - e - The fender serves to protect the rider from the mule's sweat. Their shape should match the purpose of the saddle. Read on in this article to learn more about fenders in the next section of answers.

4. - b - The skirt of the saddle can be shaped in many ways. A saddle can have a single or double skirt design. The size of a skirt can affect the mule's performance, specifically his ability to bend around turns. A trail mule or a western pleasure mule will keep their body relatively straight. But a gymkhana mule will be asked to do lots of tight turns, which requires them to bend in the rib cage. The saddle skirt needs to be shaped in accordance with those requirements.

5. - a - The breaching is one of the most important pieces of equipment a mule rider may ever own. Because mules will often have lower and a more round set of withers than a horse, the breaching helps keep the saddle from shifting too far forward, especially when going downhill on a trail.

The Barrel Racing or Gymkhanna Saddle - b - A barrel racing saddle has a high and steep cantle to help provide security for the rider during fast turns and starts.

The top of the fender is quite narrow, allowing the fender to swing forward and backwards freely, giving the rider the ability to shift their legs during a turn or speed change. The barrel saddle's horn is tall and skinny, perfect for its use as a stabilizer.

The Roping or Working Ranch Saddle

- a - The saddle horn of a roping saddle is fat and of medium height. It is often wrapped with rubber or leather to protect it from the lariat. The cantle of a roping saddle is laid back and moderately short. This gives the rider the freedom to get in and out of the saddle easily. The rigging D rings on a ranch saddle are extra strong and thick. The stirrups are often wide and heavy, giving support to a rider who is in

the saddle all day long.

Trail Riding Saddle - c - The design of a trail riding saddle is all about comfort for the mule and rider. The seat is often thickly padded and can be flat or contoured depending on the rider's preference. A trail saddle will often have a lower than normal rigging D for the cinch, giving a little more security for the saddle. Extra long saddle strings are used to tie on camping equipment or saddle bags.

Obviously, we've only touched the surface of all there is to know about tack. But I hope you've learned a little something new and had fun in the process. Next month, we'll quiz about mule psychology.

If you have questions about this article or have topics you would like to see Monica address in her articles, please contact her through Western Mule Magazine at: ben@westernmulemagazine.com

About the Author:

Monica has offered quality equine training consultations to mule and horse owners for more than 25 years. She is a graduate of the 1999 John & Josh Lyons Certification Program and completed the course with a mule and an Arabian. Each year, she takes advantage of any opportunity for advanced equine education, including multiple Lyons Advanced Trainer Courses.

In 2012, she competed with two mustangs in the Extreme Mustang Makeover held in New Jersey, receiving 1st in Horse Pattern, 4th and 6th in Legends Finals as well as taking home the trophy saddle for the Double Downer Championship. At the 2010 Extreme Mustang Makeover, her mustang, Danny, carried her to 1st in Trail and 4th in the Legends Finals before he was adopted by the Kentucky Horse Park Mustang Troop.

Since 1998, Monica has served trainers, riders and owners across the country with monthly training, boarding, teaching clinics, riding lessons and problem solving. Her facilities in Missouri and Pennsylvania offered colt starting, harness training, show and sale preparation and injury care. She has written articles for Western Mule Magazine, John Lyons' Perfect Horse Magazine, InfoHorse.com and others.

Today, Monica lives in southwest Missouri, giving owners the knowledge and support they are looking for to build their own equestrian goals. Find her on Facebook or contact her through ben@westernmulemagazine.com.



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