

guide to

TACK & FINE LEATHER

cleaning and maintenance



FINE LEATHER & BOOT CARE

Your paddock boots are one thing – wipe 'em off with your tack sponge, spray 'em off when you're washing your horse, that's fine (please remember to put some conditioner on them). Your fine leather boots and tall boots require different care. It's less work than you might think.

TOOLS OF CHOICE

- Towel or cloth
- Bucket of water
- Sponge
- Leather Cream (non-oil based)
- Boot polish
- Boot buffer (optional)

Process:

- If not muddy or particularly dirty, simply dust or dry off boots with a clean cloth
- Spray off boots with clean water, and clean sponge. *Don't rub* if gritty – it will scratch leather and eventually lead to cracking.
- Dry with towel/rag
- Apply leather cream with a rag (**some good choices:** Leather Milk, Effax Creme Soap)
- Spot-color worn areas with polish
- Buff with fleece buffer (or shoe shine style with a soft rag)

There, wasn't that easy?

NOTE: NEVER use glycerin or oil-based products on your fine boots, it'll take away the shine and can crack leather. With custom boots it may also void the warranty.

EVERYDAY TACK CARE

The process below is intended for tack, saddles, and paddock boots or oiled leather boots and half-chaps. The fine leather of custom tall boots and many higher end stock boots should not be cleaned with glycerin or any other oil-based product.

Dirt, sweat, and salt are the enemies of leather – not water. Don't worry about getting tack wet, be more concerned about leaving dust, oils, or perspiration on it. Or worse, conditioning those things into the leather instead of cleaning them off!

TOOLS OF CHOICE:

- Bucket of water
- Tack sponges (not kitchen scrubby sponges)
- Terrycloth towel or rag
- Nail brush or toothbrush
- Saddle soap (my favorite: **Fiebing's Saddle Soap** or **Leather Therapy Wash Spray**)
- Conditioner (we recommend **Belvoir** and **Leather Therapy** - they're great deep conditioners)
- For an intense conditioning, use something like **Stubben's Hammanol**

Process:

- Gently wipe the tack/saddle with a clean, dry towel to remove dust
- Apply soap generously with dampened (not wet) sponge; work up a lather
- Rinse lather with damp sponge until none remains
- Remove excess moisture with cloth, paying particular attention to stitching
- Apply conditioner with bare hands or with different sponge /cloth
- Allow to set while cleaning bit with sponge and/or brush
- Rinse stirrup irons with water; apply soap and rinse if necessary
- Wipe tack with cloth. This will remove excess conditioner, "pulling" it from stitching to avoid thread breakdown.

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7600 Lakeville Road • Petaluma, California
at Sonoma Horse Park

guide to

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cleaning and maintenance continued...

THOROUGH TACK MAINTENANCE

Intended for use once every 2 months or so (but definitely before & after summer), this treatment is the basis for re-conditioning, coloring, correcting damage or removing mildew. Think of this as stripping down / eliminating deposits then restoring moisture and suppleness and adding a layer of protection.

NOTE: *For saddles, begin with the saddle turned upside down and work upwards. This assures all surfaces are treated and, in the final steps, ensures the protection is undisturbed once applied.*

TOOLS OF CHOICE

(in addition to Everyday Tack Cleaning tools)

- Small artist's paint brush / basting brush
- White vinegar (for metal and any mildew)
- Neatsfoot Oil (it's denser and gives you more control than Hydrophane)
- Mink oil paste (the ultimate ingredient for weather proofing and softness)
- Diamond Paste

Process:

- Gently wipe the tack/saddle with a clean, dry towel to remove dust.
- Apply soap generously with dampened (not wet) sponge; work up a lather.
- Scrub, with the sponge, areas that have oil buildup, discoloration, or deposits – this is the “stripping down” phase. Do not panic if some color is “lifted out” of tack during this phase, it will return with oil and conditioning.
- Use the brush on metal surfaces: buckles, stirrups, etc. Try soap first; if deposits remain or there is a sign of mildew (usually white on leather or green on/around metal), use vinegar.
- Clean all metal with Diamond Paste (use a damp sponge or rag) on stirrups, stirrup bars, buckles, and especially the bit!

- Rinse with damp sponge until no lather remains.
- Wipe away any excess moisture with a cloth, paying particular attention to stitching.
- Allow saddle to dry and prepare to oil; identify particularly dry or discolored areas.
- Apply oil using a basting brush. Take care not to pour oil drops onto tack directly (it will cause inconsistent coloring). Oil will be applied like paint, in coats, and may require a “touch up” in areas.
- Where oil has not produced the desired result, use finger, paint brush, or corner of cloth to apply a spot amount.
- Allow oil to dry (in the sun for about an hour is appropriate).
- Wipe excess oil with cloth, paying particular attention to stitching.
- Apply conditioner (Belvoir or Hammanol) with bare hands or with other sponge/cloth.
- Allow to set for several minutes and wipe excess oil with cloth – again, pay particular attention to stitching.
- Using your hands, apply Mink Oil paste as if applying lotion, with a gentle rubbing action but not “rubbing in” or “cracking/bending” leather.
- Wipe excess paste away with cloth, paying particular attention to stitching and crevices; do not allow excess buildup to remain.
- Leather should be supple and extremely soft – and resistant to moisture and dust.

Congratulations, you're done!

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