



# The Road Apple Gang

January 2010

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Volume 1

## MEMBERSHIP

Dues are \$40/yr, January 2010 thru December 2010 for riding members and \$30/yr for non-riding members. The dues for couples are \$60/yr. This includes the \$10 national dues. Members' insurance coverage for the year is an additional \$7 per member. Additional insurance may be available. Please contact Melinda White for more information regarding your insurance options.

## Officers of the Road Apple Gang

### President: Molly Gerber

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### Treasurer: Melinda White (330) 495-8737

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### Membership Coordinator: Stephanie Kame

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## *A Word from our President...*

Hello Road Apple Gang!!!! Welcome to a new year!

With a new year comes new Officers. I am happy to introduce Stephanie and Butch Hawthorne as Vice Presidents, Melinda White as Treasurer, and myself as President. Stephanie and I are working close together and have already been bouncing ideas around!

Which brings me to a great point... participation! This club is what we make of it, so lets have another fun year!

Details in the following pages, but please join our friends for a tack cleaning party and lets discuss new activities (or returning favorites).

*Molly Gerber  
Happy Trails!*

## Known Events In the Area:

Feb 13<sup>th</sup> Fun Show (Indoors)  
Summit County Fairgrounds  
\$5.00 a class  
Submitted by Melinda

Feb 21<sup>st</sup> Tack Swap (Huge)  
University of Findlay  
[www.glaphc.com](http://www.glaphc.com)  
Submitted by Melinda

April 25<sup>th</sup> St Jude's Trail Ride  
Bear Creek Stables  
Submitted by Molly

\* Let Molly know if you are aware of any events you would like to share with the gang.

# Let's Make That Tack Sparkle and Shine!

When : *February 7, 2010*

*Time 2:00 Pm*

*Where: Walsh Stables, Doylestown  
(Melinda's Barn - Corner of State Rte 21 and Grill Road)*

*Items to Bring:*

*Tack*

*Rags , Washcloths, Towels, Sponges*

*Saddle Soap*

*Leather Conditioner*

*Toothbrush*

*Silver Polish*

*Small Bucket*

*Saddle Rack*

*Chair*

*Pizza will be provided. Feel free to bring a side dish or dessert.*

*Please call or send Molly an e-mail if you will be attending.*

*[mgerber@kent.edu](mailto:mgerber@kent.edu)*

# Tack Cleaning Tips

Protect your investment. A little maintenance can go a long way to keep your tack in good condition.

By Leslie Potter

Photos By Lesley Ward

Riders put their tack through a lot of abuse. The dirt, sweat and horse slobber that saddles and bridles are subjected to in their daily use can break down the leather and stitching over time. While few riders have the time to give their tack a thorough cleaning after every ride, it's important to make sure you don't let the dirt get out of hand.



Pay special attention to parts of tack that are subjected to a lot of wear, such as stirrup leathers.

Leather cleaners and conditioners are available at most department stores, auto parts stores and of course, your favorite tack shop. [Read on](#) to learn about the ingredients that go into most cleaners and conditioners.

## Daily Care

If you take a few steps to get rid of some of the superficial dirt after each ride, it will save you time and effort when you do attempt a major cleaning.



Make sure you keep your tack dry. Mold thrives on damp leather.

After you take off your horse's bridle, wipe off the bit with a clean rag or towel. Some riders dunk the mouthpiece of the bit into the horse's water bucket to rinse it off, but this is not as effective, and can subject the leather part of the bridle to regular soaking if you're not careful. Cleaning the bit after each use will prevent the caked-on, dried slobber that can be a challenge to scrape off. A clean bit is also more pleasant for your horse to wear.

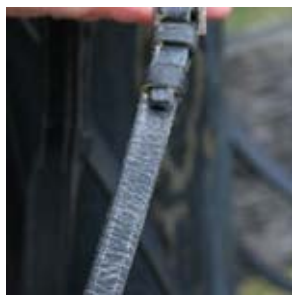
Many riders like their horses to work the bit in their mouths. The resulting foam around the mouth is often considered a sign that the horse has accepted the bit. However, when that saliva reaches the leather bridle, it can be damaging. Water weakens leather if it has a chance to soak in. Dried saliva can attract dirt, which will wear away at the leather, or it may cause mold over time. If your horse is a drooler, make sure that you wipe down the reins and cheekpieces near the bit on your bridle after each ride.

Similarly, if you've given your horse a solid workout or the weather is warm and your horse has worked up a sweat, be sure to at least wipe down any part of your tack that contacts the horse's body. Generally a saddle pad will protect the underside of your saddle, but take the time to check. Sweat and the dirt it brings with it can cause irreparable damage to your tack.

Horses tend to sweat in the girth area even if they don't break a sweat anywhere else, so it's a good idea to make wiping off your girth after each ride a regular habit.

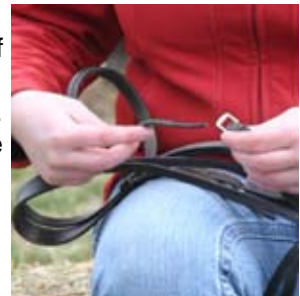
## Thorough Cleaning

If you compete with your horse, you already know that it's important to give your tack a thorough cleaning before you enter the show ring. Though the condition of your tack alone probably won't change the outcome of the class, judges do notice which exhibitors take the time to put that extra polish on their appearance.



Regular conditioning can help prevent leather from cracking, but too much can weaken your tack.

However, if you don't compete, it's still important to take the time to clean and condition your tack. Dirt, sweat, dust and damp weather can damage your tack if left unchecked, and the last thing you want is tack that fails when you're on a trail ride miles away from home.



Unbuckle every buckle to give your tack a thorough cleaning.

## Cleaning

When you can commit the time to a thorough cleaning, you'll need to unbuckle each and every buckle. If you've used your bridle on the same horse for a long time, there will probably be a crease in the leather at the hole where the buckle goes. However, if the tack is relatively new or if you adjust it frequently, you may want to count the holes to where the buckle was set and write it down so that you know you're putting the bridle back to the correct adjustment.

Start by wiping off any excess dirt from the surface of the leather. Then use a damp—not wet—sponge or cloth to work your soap into the leather. Small tack sponges, available inexpensively at any tack shop, are ideal because they are soft and non-abrasive, and small enough to get into all areas of the tack. Make sure you concentrate on the areas around the buckles and the folds in the leather by the reins and in your stirrup leathers. Wipe off any excess soap residue with a damp cloth.



Apply conditioner after cleaning while the leather is still slightly damp.

### Conditioning

Before your tack is fully dry, work in a conditioner or leather oil to keep the leather supple and prevent it from drying and cracking. Many riders overuse oil with the intention of preventing the tack from drying out. There is such thing as too much oil, and over-conditioning your tack can make it flimsy. Avoid getting oil around the stitching on your saddle as it can rot away the thread over time, leaving you with unsafe tack and costly repairs.



Use a toothbrush to make sure no soap residue remains in the tooling.

If you have a western saddle with decorative tooling in the leather, you'll need to take some extra time to clean it properly. Using a soapy sponge can leave residue in the tooling. Some riders choose instead to use a toothbrush to provide a thorough cleaning.

Besides just getting your gear clean, a thorough cleaning is a great time to check your tack for problems. Most wear and tear on your tack occurs at the buckles or where the leather folds back in a loop, like where your bit connects to your bridle, so be sure to check for cracks and tears. Conditioning can help prevent leather from cracking, but it can't repair tack that is already damaged. If you find serious tears in your tack, it may be time to repair or replace it.

### Mold and Mildew

In a perfect world all tack rooms would be climate-controlled with dehumidifiers running full-time to protect leather from mold-friendly moisture. In the real world, damp weather in less-than-ideal storage situations means mold and mildew are a reality for many riders. Moldy leather has a white or greenish powdery substance on it. If left for a long time or in especially damp conditions, the mold can take root and cause serious damage.



Tack kept in damp conditions will often grow mildew and mold.

If your tack is a victim of mold, dilute rubbing alcohol with water in a 1:1 ratio. Dampen a cloth with the mixture and wipe down the affected areas. Condition the leather afterwards and make sure you let your tack dry completely before putting it away, especially if you expect to store it for a while. Be sure to clean your moldy tack in a well-ventilated area so that you don't have to inhale a heavy concentration of mold spores.

~ \*Coming in March\* ~  
Horse Identification Workshop

Possible Events in 2010

If you have any wants, ideas, or suggestions, please e-mail Molly at  
<mailto:mgerber@kent.edu>

Games Day

Natural  
Horsemanship Clinic

Melissa Hare Jones

Western & English Clinic  
With the focus on safety.

Trail Rides:

St. Jude's Ride-A-Thon  
Scavenger Hunt Trail Ride

A Letter from the Editor ~

Can you believe it's.....2010

I think we owe a huge thank you to our new President! Thank you Molly! Thank you for taking on the new task of leading our club. We can't exist without generous souls like yourself. Thank you also to Melinda for keeping track of our finances and to Stephani Kame for handling the membership. I hope we all have a fantastic year, I look forward to the fun days ahead and improving my horsemanship with my gang!