



Equine anatomy plays a growing role in design of bridles and girths.

Not long ago, a story on track trends in the english world was short. The hunters, equitation and dressage disciplines are steeped in tradition and things hadn't changed dramatically. While many core traditions prevail, innovative, horse-centric design elements have made this topic more interesting of late, says Laurie Stein, an english tack expert for Southern California superstore, Mary's Tack & Feed.

"The biggest trend is all these crazy anatomical designs," she observes.

Equine anatomy accounts for the most significant influx of new horse wear, Laurie says. Saddle design has always taken anatomy (horse and human) into consideration, and now such concerns are becoming widely seen in design of bridles and girths.

Micklem Bridles pioneered the idea many years ago with headstalls designed to alleviate pressure on the horse's facial nerves and bones. They looked unusual, and still do compared to a conventional bridle, but the idea of bringing more comfort to the horse has been embraced in lines suitable for show use in most arenas. Several manufacturers include information on whether their equipment is allowed for competition by the various discipline governing bodies, an important point when contemplating the purchase of a new piece of tack that might push

traditional boundaries in look and function.

Today, bridle makers at every price point have some variation of an anatomically-designed headstall, some to more extreme extents than others. The PS of Sweden line is one brand that's at the forefront of these trends. Dy'on of France is another, along with Schockemohle, Passier, Collegiate and Prestige Italia, just to name a few.

Common components include padded nosebands (cavesons), brow bands and sometimes crown pieces. Crown piece and brow band placement contours are advertised to alleviate or distribute pressure on the poll, and leave ample room for the ears. Options in noseband placement accommodate both anatomy and training objectives. The line between where these design details add comfort versus style is a little hard to tell, Laurie acknowledges. "We all want to believe that they benefit the horse," she observes. "And if they are cool looking, too, that's good. We're all trying to do the best we can for our horses."

To illustrate the range of options, here are three bridles with their manufacturers' description of each design and its benefits.



The Pioneer Revolution from PS of Sweden.

The noseband's height is adjustable in three positions for a guaranteed perfect fit. Thanks to this, the risk of the bit locking is minimized. Additionally, the sensitive infraorbital nerve at the horse's cheekbone is left free of pressure. Thanks to the cross-sectional design of the noseband, the risk of the cheek pieces being too close to the eyes of the horse is minimized.

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In the noseband's highest position, it works like an English noseband but with Pioneer's other benefits. The noseband has rawhide on the inside to hold its shape and also features a built in soft pillow to increase the noseband's stability. The snap hook of the upper part of the noseband can easily be removed and then closed as a pull-back in the traditional way with leather.

The patented neckpiece is softly padded and leaves plenty of room for the ears to move freely. The cheek pieces have our patented and selectable elastic Cradles™, which allows the bit to suspend in the horse's mouth. This also helps to even the pressure across the neck. Our elastic Cradles™ are designed so you can easily hook them on and off.

The Pioneer bridle is suitable for jumping, dressage and eventing.



The Prestige Sport Windows Figure-8 Bridle blends intricate workmanship and stylish design with supreme horse comfort. Made in the EU with high quality leather, the Windows Figure-8 has graceful lines and a lightweight feel. Based on advanced anatomical studies, Prestige developed the grackle (or grakle) style noseband that sits comfortably on the horse's head and doesn't require rings on the sides. The anatomical noseband and cut-away anatomical crown are used to improve the comfort and well-being of the horse.

The crownpiece is crafted from one piece of leather in a wider shape to reduce pressure points at the sensitive poll. The padding is a soft, perforated leather for even more comfort.

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Preparation for the winter season is a key focus for many riders, with a focus on ensuring their horses are well-prepared for the colder months ahead.