

Comfort is the biggest driver of slowly shifting preferences for horse gear in the hunter/jumper and dressage worlds.

It may be slow, but the design and appearance of tack and horse accessories in the english riding world does evolve. Most of all in the jumper ring, where anything goes and a little bit in the dressage arena, where bits of bling and personalization are permitted. Style evolution even happens in hunter tack, where some detectable differences seem to show up about every five years.

We checked in with two top California retailers to find out what trends they are seeing at their stores.



Jill Waterman, Dressage Extensions in Moorpark

The largest trend that we are witnessing is the demand for comfort in bridling. Bridles featuring wide, softly padded cavsons and cut back, padded crown pieces are in high demand. Beyond comfort, many dressage riders are gravitating toward the bridles with white padding. Special browbands, whether they are metal clincher styles or Swavorski embellished, continue to be favorites, as they allow riders to personalize and coordinate the visual connection between horse and rider attire.

Genuine lambswool and dense neoprene padding options for crown and cavsons are very popular. Sure Grip Reins, crafted from a very soft and non-stretchable synthetic for maximum grip, are very, very hot.

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Written by CRM

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For saddles, soft buffalo leather with patent accents, often custom, are the latest rage. Mono and single flap styles seem to be leading in customer preference lately, but not by a large margin.

Girth demand is gravitating toward those designed to evenly distribute pressure, ensuring comfort. Our Mikmar girth is getting the most attention, and Hilda Gurney keeps sending her clients in to get them. Traditional styles, such as the leather girth produced by Germany's finest - Otto Schumacher - remains very steadily requested.

Generously-sized wither relief pads, such as those manufactured by LeMieux, are a must. The Acavallo gel pads, designed to dissuade slippage, are very popular. Both of these products are endorsed by Charlotte Dujardin and are pure gold!

Protective horse boots with micropore interiors are the latest craze (LeMieux, Back on Track). These boots will go to the show with you and will not allow warm-up dust to leave that dreaded "dirt ring around the cannon bone." Bell boots with lambswool tops are #1.

Waffle weave coolers are often being selected, and Horseware and Weatherbeeta both have nice options. Many of our customers appreciate blankets designed for larger breeds, with gusseted shoulders and generous cuts.

All in all, we are delighted to see riders doing their best to keep their horses comfortable and happy!



Heather Guercio of Da Moor's Feed & Tack in Glendale

Wider nosebands and modestly priced neoprene girths are the most distinct trends Heather sees in the show barn-oriented hunter clientele at Da Moor's. The wider, and sometimes also thicker, nosebands are mostly an aesthetic preference and one she suspects West Coast riders brought home after seeing what was popular on the Florida circuit. For all of California's cutting edge social stances, we are followers when it comes to tack trends, Heather laughs.

Old school thinking dictates that the width of the noseband relates to the horse's head shape and size. A small, delicate head is not well-served by a wide and/or thick cavesson, the thinking goes. But with entire training barns opting in on a certain bridle style, it seems that individual horse head shape is not part of the decision making process.

Professional's Choice's brown neoprene girths are an item that's relatively new in the hunter world. Modestly priced, they are brown and look like leather, but the stretch factor makes them super comfortable for the horse and they're easy to clean. Lately, Da Moor's buys them in bulk to meet demand.

Bridle adornments are sneaking into the hunter/jumper world. Sometimes they double as nametags and sometimes they are purely for fun. "We've noticed more people adding little charms," says Heather. "They're not obvious.

It's more something that only the rider would know is there."

As for bits, the Beris and Stubben lines have both seen an uptick in popularity at Da Moor's.

Wild colored saddle pads are all the rage for schooling, but come showtime, tried and true styles from Medallion and Fleeceworks continue to dominate the market.