

*What are you waiting for?! Now's the perfect time to get back in the saddle, or start riding for the first time. Dreamridge Tack Shop offers a Starter's Package which has everything you need to start riding! Over the next few weeks, I'll be posting articles detailing the construction and use of the elements in the Starter's Package. This week ...*

## **Boots**

The second most important piece of safety equipment you'll use will be your riding boots. Much like your helmet, they are mandated for riders under the age of 18 by Bill 12, The Horse Riding Safety Act of 2001, which requires that they be hard-soled and have a heel of no less than 1.5 cm. I'll go a few steps further and recommend the following:

- narrow enough to slip in/out of the stirrups
- never, ever sandals
- closed toes and heels
- hard toes, but no steel toes

The reason you want your riding boot to have a 1.5 cm heel, hard soles, and be narrow enough to slip in and out of the stirrups easily is simple: to reduce the risk of getting your foot stuck in the stirrup and you getting dragged, should you fall off the horse.

You never EVER wear sandals in a stable, much less while riding. What you *do* want to wear is a boot with closed, hard toes and heels. Horses are heavy, and while they're generally kind and careful, they sometimes make mistakes and can step on your toes. 1500 lbs of horse crushing a bare toe means a broken toe, so protect yourself!

However, I don't recommend steel toes for use in the stable. Steel toed boots are actually made with steel capped toes and designed to be worn on hard surfaces, like concrete factory floors, whereas most of our time spent working with horses is spent outside in a paddock, or in the riding arena where the ground is soft. What can end up happening is when a large horse steps on the steel capped toe of your boot, the cap is driven into the soft ground (like

a staple) and your toes remain on the surface of the ground, crushed inside the steel cap ([for more info click here](#)).

So, with these guidelines in mind, what kind of riding boots should you get?

Here are some of the choices you'll need to make when selecting your riding boots:

- knee-high or ankle length?
- lace-up or pull on?
- leather or synthetic (rubber)?

There are pro's and cons to each.

Knee-high boots have definitely come back into everyday fashion, when they used to be only worn at shows. They offer lower-leg protection from rubbing against the saddle and often great ankle support (if you go for a leather, or leather-like material), and they look great. However, they tend to be SO HOT in the summer time, don't stand up to a lot of wear and tear, and many people don't fit the standard sizes. **I prefer ankle length 'paddock boots'.**

I also like a little bit of ankle support, by way of a **lace-up boot for beginners**. A lace-up boot is also easier to fit on narrow, wide, and growing feet – plus it will accommodate a thicker sock in the fall, or swelling feet in the heat of summer.

My advice is to choose a **leather boot** over a synthetic, or a rubber one. Leather will be more comfortable, and while it won't repel water the way rubber will, you can always change into wellingtons when you're mucking around the barn yard!

*Next week ... breeches!*