

Adjustable Trees and Adjusting Trees

Why It May Not Work

Although an appealing concept, adjustable trees and adjusting trees may not solve your problem, and may actually create some new ones. Here are some things to consider.

Adjustable Trees or Interchangeable Gullet Plates

Because the shape of a narrow horse's withers is very different than the shape of a medium, wide, or extra wide withers, simply replacing the head (front) of the tree with a wider version of the same shape does not solve the problem. For example, if a narrow horse's withers are shaped somewhat like a triangle and a wider horse's withers are more rounded, simply widening the triangle shape is no solution. Not only does the shape not conform to the withers shape, but the result is often rocking or uneven contact along the points and legs of the tree.



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The Problem with Spreading or Narrowing Saddle Tree Points

Using a vice-like tool to open or close a tree can result in some of the problems previously described. Other problems that can occur are broken, weakened, or uneven tree points. Spreading or narrowing the angle of the legs/bars of the tree can create a fulcrum at the base of the withers which can cause pressure and rocking. Changing the angles of the points and the legs of the tree after a tree has been finished with webbing and seated may also change the tension of that webbing and alter the feel of the seat.

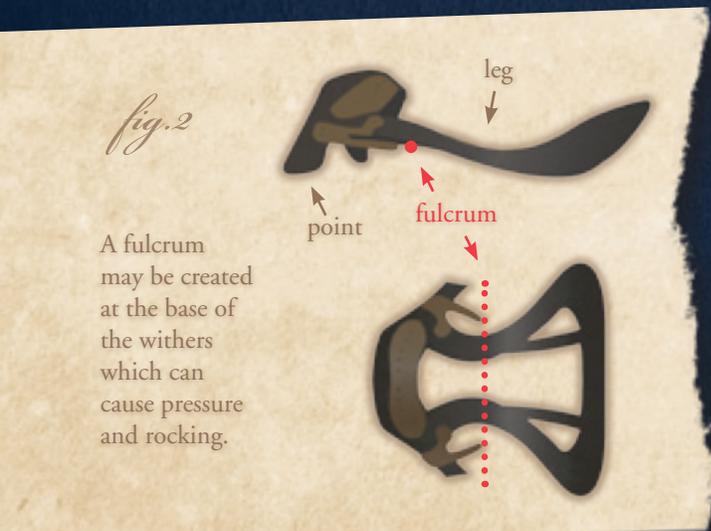
While adjustable trees and the practice of altering trees after they are made is an option for any manufacturer, many choose not to do it for the negative reasons cited here. Other manufacturers may agree to do it, but the alterations may invalidate the warranty.



fig.3

Horses change over time for many reasons. Change of season, training techniques and intensity, feed, injury, and age are just a few of the variables. When a horse changes, the width of the tree is only one of many factors to consider when fitting a saddle.

Remember, if your horse changes enough that you need to change saddles, your old saddle still has significant value. Often times, the difference between the value of a new saddle and your current saddle is little more than the cost of trying to adjust the tree and deal with the problems that may result.



A fulcrum may be created at the base of the withers which can cause pressure and rocking.