

Module 1: Harness Fit

Harness Fit Checklist



- ☐ Back saddle: doesn't put pressure on the spinous processes, no pressure points or tipping, no screws or hardware protruding. Set back behind withers, not too close behind the front legs.
- ☐ Crupper: not loose so it flops or rubs, not pulling the tail up. About an inch of droop under the tail when buckled is usually appropriate, but is personal to the horse. Ensure no tail hairs are caught, and check for rubs regularly.
- ☐ Breast collar: Sits above the point of the shoulder, but below the base of the neck. A shaped breast collar can help with fitting and comfort, especially depending on conformation. Narrow breast collars are only appropriate for driving on level, smooth surfaces. This is how they move the cart – needs to be comfortable.
- ☐ Breeching: Should be set just below the point of the buttock, and be level towards the flank. Ring to ring should be flank to flank or close to it.
- ☐ Bit: Placement is personal to the horse – start with “a wrinkle and a half” but be prepared to defer to your horse's comfort; some will prefer less and others more.
- ☐ Bridle: browbands can often be too short, causing the bridle to pinch their ears.
- ☐ Noseband/Cavesson: shouldn't be used to hold their mouth shut – keep enough space to get a finger under the noseband at the bridge of the nose. Placed one finger below the cheekbone.

Cart Balance checklist

- ☐ There should be minimal weight in the shafts when the cart is balanced with the driver in the seat – approximately 2 pounds. Adjusting the height of the shafts can remove weight from the horse's back.
- ☐ Shafts should be at or behind the point of the horse's shoulder for safety. If straight shafts, make sure they aren't too short to allow the tug (shaft loop) to slip off.
- ☐ Check they are “in draft” – pulling off the breast collar and traces, NOT the back saddle and overgirth. Watch for singletree movement.
- ☐ There should be minimal play in the shafts once the wrap straps/overgirth are attached – I like ¼ inch of movement at the most, but also don't want them so tight as to be restrictive.
- ☐ Watch the overgirth isn't tighter than girth = pinches.
- ☐ Breeching should have about 3 fingers of space – so it doesn't interfere but will engage when needed.
- ☐ Check that tugs (shaft loops) hang straight down and don't pull back when in draft.