



### ***Care for show tack of any color.***

*by Michelle Kopp*

Are you sitting on some high-end leather in your show saddle? Caring for everyday tack is easier than ever with all the leather care products available today.

But in the show ring, many equestrians choose to splurge on the elevated look of light blonde tack or darkly dyed leathers, and both of these pose some significant maintenance challenges, due to their striking color.

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Light leathers are particularly problematic, because most leather cleaners and conditioners will darken light leathers, even after a single use. Black or other dyed leathers pose a similar challenge; leather care products can sometimes strip the dye from the leather, leaving uneven color. Some horse owners choose to skip cleaning and conditioning altogether to maintain the original color of their show tack for longer. But regular cleaning and conditioning is critical for keeping your tack soft, supple and looking amazing.

Dry leather is a serious safety concern because instead of giving slightly under pressure, the leather can crack or even break. Natural moisture in leather evaporates over time, especially when subjected to sunlight or dry conditions, leaving it more brittle. Regular conditioning replaces the moisture and oils to keep it pliable. Keeping leather clean and conditioned also maintains the appearance and extends the life of the tack. After all, what good is a beautiful color when the leather looks dull and dry?

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The irony is that the lightest and darkest leathers may need to be cleaned more often, because they show dirt, dust and stains much more clearly.

Prevention is key to keeping them looking pristine. Immediately wiping off salty sweat and oily spills with a soft cloth helps avoid staining. It is also important to remove dust and dirt before they can scratch or get ground into the leather. Traditional bar saddle soaps and water will usually discolor light leather and may strip dyes, so a swipe with a dry, cloth is the often the first step toward cleaning tack.



### **Air Cleaning**

A less conventional tool for cleaning delicate leather is air. Yes, air! A concentrated blast from an air compressor will gently but thoroughly remove debris and dirt particles, even getting into all the stitching, tooling and crevices that a cloth cannot reach. For quick cleaning on the go, you can also use a hair dryer on the cool setting or a can of compressed air duster, found at office supply stores for cleaning computers. A vacuum cleaner with a soft brush attachment may also be used in a pinch.

But there is just no substitute for regular deep cleaning and conditioning for long-term leather care, and this is where things get challenging. The wrong product choice will completely change the look of the tack if it darkens or strips the leather's color. Worse yet, the wrong product can damage the integrity of the leather, making it weaker and potentially unsafe. It is important to look for a cleaner or conditioner that is labeled as "color safe," such as Farnam® Leather New® Total Care 2-in-1. Color safe leather care products are specially formulated with ingredients chosen to help keep from altering the coloration of any leather. But they also provide the deep clean and conditioning so essential to maintaining moisture and keeping leather soft and supple.

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Of course, the most important rule in picking the right leather care product for your light or dyed tack is to test and confirm before cleaning or conditioning.



Read the label instructions completely and use exactly as instructed in a hidden spot first to confirm that the product is truly colorfast for your leather. Make sure your test spot is someplace that you will be able to see subtle changes of color and inspect the treated area under a bright, natural light.

The more different products you use, however, the greater likelihood that one of the products will affect the color of your leather. To provide the best protection with the least risk of changing the color, look for a one-step or 2-in-1 cleaning and conditioning product. A product like Leather New® Total Care 2-in-1 conditions every time it cleans, so with regular use there is no need for a separate conditioner. And that means mean more time in the saddle with less change in color.

For more information, visit [www.farnam.com](http://www.farnam.com).