

This oilskin parka from
Outback Trading
Company offers durable
yet extremely lightweight
protection from the
elements.
www.outbacktrading.com

by SONJA CASSELLA



High Tech Outdoor Wear

for Trail Riders

We want new technology. We want comfort and unique function. But let's face it: we also want to be stylish. Consider this article as an attempt to direct you towards functional and technologically advanced riding clothes and equipment, all with panache. There is continuing innovation in riding clothes these days. Now, we can find both form and function.

Breathable fabrics are the backbone in technologically-advanced athletic equipment today. Whether for sport tops, socks, breeches or boots, how fabrics are woven and what they are made of is changing the look and feel of equestrian clothing.

It's been years since my eyes nearly bugged out of my head at the ad for Damart long underwear in an issue of Equus magazine. It wasn't the advertiser's slogan – "laugh at the cold," that got my attention, though I still remember it. It was the cool look of that guy wearing the underwear. Where did they find him? Was he out there, riding the trails of the north? Thus, the advertisement showed the multi-purpose nature of high tech riding wear for equestrians.

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Consider the innovations in breeches and riding pants. Trail riders have long used jeans as their everyday riding garb, though breeches have several advantages, such as comfort for the rider, and contact with the horse.

For those who wear high, English-style boots, FITS (Fun in the Saddle) breeches might be just the thing. The FITS breeches are a twist on more old-fashioned full-seat breeches.

"We analyzed the spectrum of fabrics and sewing technologies and looked for the design that would help every rider perform and feel better," according to Sheryl Rudolph, founder of the company.

The result is a unique look (see image) in which the manufacturer claims offers unique comfort and saddle contact. Rudolph reports the breeches are a hit with trail riders.

Another high tech choice for riding breeches is the Enduracool™ offered by Tropical Rider. This breech is made with a four-way stretch microfiber and is designed for maximum comfort and durability. It is now available with UV sun protection finish.

For those who use paddock-style boots, Equisentials has a new line of riding pants called Icelandic Jods. These are not your grandmother's jodhpurs – more like a cross between breeches (above the knee) and



This women's cooling vest from Cool Medics will help keep you cool in the heat.

www.coolmedics.com

your stomach with a front yoke.

What about boots? Could there be anything new here? Of course, the answer is yes. One manufacturer is getting attention in the high-tech arena – Mountain Horse.

Though not styled for high fashion, these boots are above all, practical. For wintertime, try the Rimfrost Rider. Mountain Horse pioneered their insulated winter riding boot more than ten years ago, and they've refined their technology.

For summer outings, the Mountain Rider II is a "breathable waterproof" boot. Hard to believe, but these boots are made not out of leather but of stretch fabric. Toe and heel protectors and padded ankles to prevent chafing are also part of the design. When they're dirty, you just throw them in the wash.

What will you wear under the boots? Foundations are important and you should consider wearing high-tech socks. There are enough brands and varieties to fill an entire article.

People are buying \$10-15 high-tech socks for a reason – superior cushioning and ventilation. For summer, try boot socks

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shotgun chaps (below). Unlike breeches, they have coverage down to the ankle, and a wide-enough cuff so you can wear low boots. Originally developed for Icelandic riders and cross-country trekking, the fabric is breathable and designed for wear in warm or cold weather.

For those who wear cowboy boots or riding sneakers, Smooth Stride Riding pants are billed as the most comfortable leggings you'll ever own. With a boot cuff and full-seat leather patch, you could think of them as the ultimate hybrid of East-Meets-West. You get a choice of high-tech fabrics, including Polartec Wind Pro, a four-way stretch fabric with water repellent as well as insulating capability, and Dry-line, a "hydrophobic" (i.e. water-phobic) fabric. The Smooth Stride pants also flatten

Smooth Stride pants offer western styling and a front yoke to keep your tummy flat.
www.smoothstride.com

