

Gear Maintenance

by Wally Wersching

What do we do on a cold wintry morning? We dream about warm dry weather, and riding our motorcycles. At least, that's what I do. Yesterday was another winter mess with very cold temps. I was still dreaming about warm weather riding, but I did something that I had been putting off. I decided to perform maintenance on my gear. I always maintain my bike, but not always my gear. The gear in this case is my helmet, leather jackets, bibs, gloves, chaps, leather vests, rain suit and boots.

I bought my H-D open face "Quarter Mile" helmet a few years ago. I only paid \$45.00 for the \$200.00 helmet. It was on sale for half-price, and I had a \$50.00 rebate from the H.O.G. club for taking a Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) class. It was the first non-white helmet I bought in years. It was made by HJC, and is the AC-3 model. It is very comfortable, and fits great.

By now, the liner is worn and dirty from my bald head sweating inside the helmet on those long summer rides. The liner is replaceable, and just snaps in. I ordered a set of cheek pads and liner - all for a little over \$30.00.

When I got them, I wasn't sure how everything fit together, but within about five minutes, I had the new liner snapped in. When I put the helmet on, it felt just like it did when new - snug, and a perfect fit! After that, I cleaned and waxed the outside of the helmet. Then it was ready for the riding season. I washed the old liner to use the next time.

The next things I had to work on were my leather jackets. I have three - a brown Vanson that I've had forever, an all black one that I've had for over 25 years, and the Fast Company orange and black one I bought a few years ago. I like them all but the newest one is the warmest, so I wear it when it's really cold out - below 40 degrees.

The black one I wear the most. It had many spots where the bug guts stuck to the leather, so the first thing I had to do was clean the jacket with saddle soap, and remove all the spots - some were very difficult to remove. Next - after it dried completely - I applied a film of Mink Oil to keep it soft and weather proof. I noticed, on closer look, that the leather had thousands of small cracks in it. Maybe that's why it isn't as warm as it used to be.

The brown Vanson is very dried, and I don't wear it as much. I still oil it every year so that it doesn't start to split.

When I looked at the Fast Company jacket, there were no stains or small cracks. I applied



a coat of Mink Oil to keep it that way.

My chaps and leather gloves were also treated to a coat of Mink Oil to protect them from any rain, and to keep them soft. When I was oiling the chaps, I noticed that the seam was splitting at the base of each leg. I punched a small hole in each leg, and tied it with a black wire tie. That should keep it from splitting more.

I have two leather vests - a Victory vest, and a plain black leather vest. I use Mink Oil on both to keep them soft and looking good. I don't wear them as much as I used to but I want them ready when I do.

My warm set of insulated H-D textile bibs for cold weather riding is cared for by spraying them with tent waterproofing that I bought at Wal-Mart in the camping section. It makes the water bead up, and closes the pores of the material.

I did the same for my rain suit. It's an old light blue "Dry-Rider" that still works well in the rain even though it's getting pretty old, and discolored from the road splash.

The last things to take care of were my riding boots. I don't wear the standard black leather motorcycle boots. Mine are more of an ankle high hiking shoe. I again sprayed them with the tent waterproofing. It keeps the water from coming in when caught in a shower.

Now, I'm ready to ride. All I need is some decent riding weather. I can't wait!!!

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