



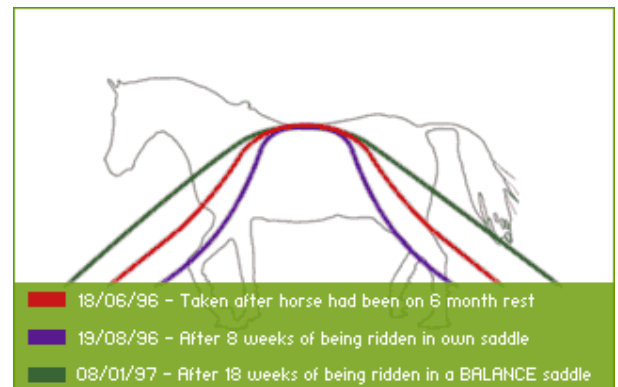
During the process of purchasing your BALANCE Saddling System, it may have been suggested that you spend some time on the 'Remedial Programme' with your horse.

We have compiled this information sheet to summarise some of the aims of the programme and to suggest ways to achieve these aims. However, if there is anything here that you want to discuss in more depth or are not happy about, please do contact the BALANCE office or a BALANCE registered Saddle Consultant to discuss it.

Below/right, is an example of how much a horse can change and also demonstrates how inappropriate custom saddle fitting can be if only based on matching the saddle to the way the horse looks on the day of the measuring/fitting!

The diagram shows the recovery of muscle mass once this particular horse was relieved of his old saddle and ridden in the BALANCE Saddling System. This horse had to wait till he was 20yrs old before getting his BALANCE Saddle and having his first taste of being ridden free of the discomfort and restriction he had come to associate with the act of riding.

Provided the horse is supported by a healthy environment, good recovery is totally possible in older horses and BALANCE has helped many in their late teens and early 20's, the oldest so far being 35yrs old!



Because so many horses have saddle related muscle wastage, or under-development, this horse's problems were not recognised for most of his life. He was simply described as having "high, narrow withers" as if it were part of his conformation.

When you look at the **green** profile which is his healthy, well muscled shape, one could hardly describe this as "narrow" and his withers were well covered and 'hidden' by strong, healthy muscle, as they always should have been. No one in their right mind would suggest using a narrow fit tree on him, but at the point where the owner contacted BALANCE (when her horse's back matched the **blue** profile), her own saddle fitter had just suggested that he try to make her narrow fit saddle a bit narrower still because it was sitting too low on his "high & narrow withers"!



If a client sends us pictures/video of a horse with the kind of muscle wastage that this horse has (left) we will always suggest that the horse is allowed time on the **Remedial Programme** as outlined in this information sheet.

Once the horse has recovered to a place where he is closer to the shape nature intended him to be, it becomes more appropriate to look at supplying them with a saddle.

The idea is to firstly assess, identify and remove, where possible, any sources of stress or discomfort in the horse's environment. Some examples are:

- 🕒 a restrictive/uncomfortable saddle
- 🕒 a demanding competition schedule
- 🕒 training/riding methods that do not respect equine bio-mechanics
- 🕒 discomfort in the feet due to poor hoof care or farriery
unnatural postures in the horse created by past lifestyle i.e. pelvic misalignment,
muscular spasms (outside professional help usually required to deal with such issues)
- 🕒 lack of provision for regular access to pasture, or at least, some turnout
- 🕒 lack of proper nutrition
- 🕒 discomfort in the mouth due to sharp/misaligned teeth

In taking an honest and objective look at the way your horse is living, it is sometimes possible to make some simple changes that will make a big difference to the quality of his life and more potential for success. Certainly, it makes sense to remove as many obstacles as possible on your horse's road to full recovery and towards his (and your) full potential.

It often makes sense to set aside at least one month, and if your horse has a lot of muscle wastage to extend this time frame in order to give your horse the best chance of recovery. Although this might seem like a long time, it is still, in our experience the quickest way to get your horse into good shape.

What we are suggesting is that you do some of the exercises described, every day or most days while on the programme. It is important that unless the horse is actually lame, in which case you should be getting instructions/advice from your Vet., he gets to regularly move his body in a relaxed, rhythmic, consistent way. This helps him to explore and re-discover a more efficient way of using his muscles, joints etc. which, in turn improves oxygenating blood flow to all of his muscles and the organs. It also improves the flow of lymphatic fluid through the important lymphatic system which relies on mobility in the muscles to work. A compromised lymphatic system puts the horse's immune system under stress and slows the removal of toxins and debris from the horses system.

Remember the **Remedial Programme** is not designed to make the horse 'work hard'. It is more about paying attention to the quality of the movement the horse can give, rather than quantity. Having said this, owners are often amazed at how fit their horses can be after a month or two on this programme because the horse is using his body in an efficient way.

Hand Walking.

Just taking your horse for a walk every day for 15/20 minutes can be very beneficial. Divide the time you spend equally between leading from the off side and the near side (make sure you are in a safe place to do this) Encourage a good positive walk, but try not to influence the head and neck position of the horse other than to keep it laterally straight. It is the relaxed, rhythmic use of the horse's whole body that helps the horse to recover.

Lungeing

Encouraging relaxed, rhythmic movement on the Remedial Programme. Please note that it is advisable to use some form of comfortable leg protection for the horse when lunging, particularly with young, unbalanced and/or tense horses.



Where at all possible, use no equipment other than a lunge cavesson or comfortable head-collar, comfortable boots or Polo wraps if necessary, together with your lunge line and whip (no saddle, rollers, side reins or gadgets). The idea is to get the horse to walk and trot on as large an area as you can manage (you may need to walk around with the horse rather than standing rooted to the spot). The walk needs to be rhythmic and unhurried. Be sure that you don't bustle the horse along as he needs time to put each foot down separately in the natural four beat sequence. The head and neck position should not initially be interfered with by you, rather, observe the place/s that the horse wants to carry his head and neck and notice how this complements what the horse is doing with his body. Also, notice that the speed of the horse in each pace has a significant influence on how much he can 'let go' of tension throughout his body and this is often most easily spotted in the trot. You may need to allow or encourage your horse to walk/trot quite slowly in order to find the speed that allows the fullest range of movement through all the joints in the limbs, encourages the horse to experiment with his head/neck position, and be soft and relaxed through his body. What you are trying to achieve now is a 'therapeutic trot' with a degree of elasticity and ease.

If you speed up the trot in an attempt to make it look more active you will notice that the horse will, indeed, be more active in the limbs, but will also have to stabilise his loss of balance by making his body more rigid. The head/neck position also tends to become higher and stiffer in an attempt to balance. With this kind of trot you are only reinforcing undesirable patterns of movement in the horse. Again, the horse must spend equal time on each rein. Do not lunge for more than 20 minutes, with 5 to 10 minutes only at the beginning of the programme. Try to keep a consistent, positive, elastic feel down the lunge rein all the time. Just as you would for a good rein contact. If the horse habitually bends his head/neck to the outside of the circle on one rein you can then start to ask him to keep his neck straighter so as to help him to let go of this habit and explore a different, and more even way, of organising his body.

Note: some Chiropractors, Osteopaths etc. may tell you not to lunge the horse because their experience of lungeing is for the horse to be worked hard on a small circle in, often restricting, equipment. In this respect we would agree with them, but if you explain the type of lungeing you are doing and show them this sheet they may well be happy for you to continue.

Loose Schooling



If you have the facilities to loose school you may want to use this option as part of your **Remedial Programme**. Follow the same principles as in the section on lungeing. The speed of the trot and walk must be such as to encourage the horse to be soft, elastic and rhythmic in the use of his body. The work must be done for an equal time in each direction. Remember to keep the sessions short so that you stop before the horse gets tired.

Bareback Riding

It may have been suggested that you consider this option. For some of you the idea of riding without a saddle will be fun, for others it will fill you with terror! Do not ride your horse bareback if you do not feel confident. However, if you have the facilities and the desire to have a go, even if only at walk, you will probably discover how wonderful it can be.

Always wear the correct headgear, have a neck strap around the horse's neck and, if you feel more secure, wear a body protector. The use of a thick saddle pad and/or a gel pad and a stretchy surcingle protects you and your horse from each other's bony bits!

This rider (right) is literally riding bareback but the use of a thick pad and a stretchy surcingle can make things more comfortable for horse and rider when done as part of the **Remedial Programme**.



Here are some occasions when we would suggest you do not ride bareback.

During the first 10 days of your programme.

There may well be deep bruising in the saddle area of the horse's body which needs a little time to heal. It is better to have no pressure in this area during this time.

If the horse has a pronounced hollow/sway backed posture.

If the horse has, for some reason, habitually contracted its back muscles to create a dip or hollow in the centre of the back, riding with no saddle can concentrate your weight in a small area at the base of this dip. In many cases, the other remedial work will start to change this pattern within a few weeks, at which point you may want to start sitting on the horse for a few minutes only, preferably on top of something soft and cushioned (e.g. a thick 'Puffy' or fleece pad or a gel pad) to see how the horse copes. Remember if you do so much 'work' that the horse begins to tire, he will fall back into old undesirable patterns. So, keep it 'short and sweet'!

Out on the Public Highway.

Although you may feel quite safe riding bareback, it is quite possible that should you be in an accident you will not be covered by insurance, if you are not using a saddle. The benefits of occasionally riding with no saddle can be significant. With nothing solid between you and the horse, you will be able to really feel how much is going on in the area you are sitting on. You will be able to get an idea of how the horse can move when unrestricted. For example, you may find that the horse offers you a longer stride. The horse may be more willing to move than usual. Remember to follow the same 'rules' of keeping the horse as straight and even in his/her body as possible. It is obviously easier to do this when riding in a straight line! For this reason, do not get stuck on 20 metre circles in the school. Make more use of the long sides and diagonals. Do not use your reins to fix the horse's head/neck. Instead, give your horse an even, elastic feel down both reins all the time and allow the horse to experiment with his head/neck position while you keep giving the same feel down the reins. You will need to have a good range of movement in your arms, shoulders and upper body to achieve this, because many horses like to stretch right down with their necks for a while. We call this action 'Hoovering the ground'.



Ask about the BALANCE '[Eeezy Reins](#)', which are a simple and effective 'horse friendly' gadget that give your horse the opportunity to teach you what good contact needs to feel like. Riding bareback can help you to let go of your own patterns of crookedness. It is possible to ride in a very lopsided way when in a saddle, even without stirrups. This makes the horse crooked as he tries to compensate. When bareback, it is very difficult to be lopsided without sliding off! If you take things slowly, your body will instinctively make the tiny adjustments needed to stay in balance on the horse, thereby helping to correct any habitual patterns of crookedness.

Trotting can be done if and when you are ready, aiming for the same 'therapeutic trot' feel as on the lunge. Some of our clients, having discovered the joy of riding bareback, continue to spend a lot of time riding without a saddle even when cantering, jumping, hacking (off the road) and having their dressage lessons! It may have been suggested that you do some simple hands on work with your horse during the **Remedial Programme**, such as TTEAM. If you do not know about this work, there are several good books available on the subject .

To find out more about the BALANCE approach to training, order a copy of our Straight Forward Riding book, or ask about our Straight Forward Riding workshops and clinics (details and dates can be found on our Web site).