



The Use and Care of your English Hunting Breastplate.



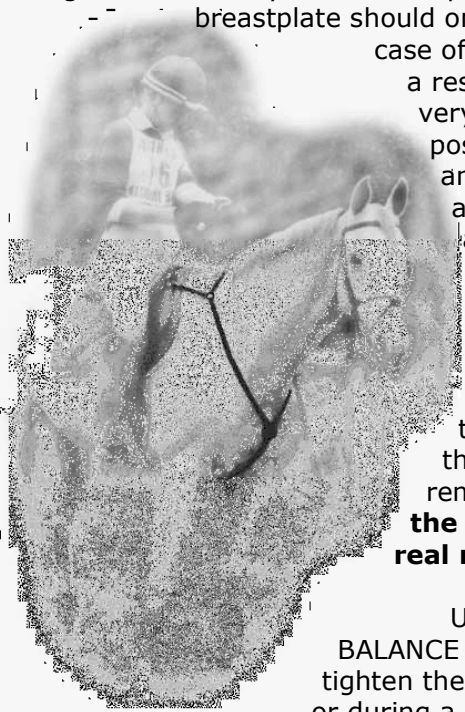
You may already be familiar with the use and fitting of this piece of equipment, but for those of you who are not sure, here is a reminder of how to put it on, fit it and look after it.

This breastplate is of a proper adjustable and traditional design. This means that the length of the straps, which extend from the breastplate to the saddle itself, are long enough to fasten to the actual billet straps. This creates much more lateral stability than is possible when attaching the straps to the metal staples or 'fall downs' at the top/front of the saddle as has become the fashion in more recent years.

Putting it on the horse and fitting.

Put the breastplate around the horse's neck like a necklace, with the thicker single strap hanging down in front. Make sure the saddle and pads are placed correctly on the horse, attach the girth to the off side girth straps (billets). Then take the long double strap between the horse's front legs and pass the girth through the loop at the end of this strap, before fastening the girth in the normal way on the near side. The straps, need to be set at a combination of lengths, which brings the base of the Y shaped join below the base of the windpipe (see picture left). It should not be tight enough to be putting constant pressure on the horse's chest, but not be so long as to hang down loosely between the legs. If you can just get a fist between the strap and the horse, it is a good guide.

Having done the girth up, take the long thin straps back to the top of the billet straps on either side of the saddle and loop them around the girth straps (billets), adjusting their length as necessary. These straps should not be pulling tight at this stage, because the breastplate should only come into to play should the saddle slide back, in the case of working in hilly terrain, or gets shifted over to one side as a result of the rider's loss of balance. Obviously, if they are very slack, the breastplate will have little affect. It should be possible to easily slide a flat hand between any of the straps and the horse when everything is done up and the horse is at rest. Once you are mounted, you can make some adjustment to the tension on the straps which go from the top of the breastplate back to the girth straps (billets) if necessary



When you have finished riding, remember to undo the thin straps which attach to the billets first, then undo the girth and make sure you release the breastplate from the girth under the horse's belly, before attempting to remove the saddle. **Failure to undo all of the straps on the breastplate before undoing the girth can result in a real muddle!**

Using the breastplate tends to allow riders new to the BALANCE Saddling System to have the confidence to not over-tighten the girth, particularly on horses with a very round body shape or during a remedial phase where you might be using the maximum

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amount of padding under your saddle until the horse's improved body shape allows you reduce it. It is also a useful piece of equipment for those of you who ride over hilly terrain, or ride cross country at speed, particularly over jumps.

If you have any problems or questions regarding the use of the breastplate, please to contact the BALANCE office immediately and we will be glad to call you to discuss it.

Looking after your breastplate.

Once you have checked that you have the correct size of breastplate by putting it on a clean dry horse once with the saddle, you will need to condition the leather before you use it. We suggest that you use **pure** Neatsfoot oil (check the container to ensure that is pure and natural) to soften and condition the leather and then clean it regularly with a good glycerine based saddle soap. **DO NOT USE PETRO CHEMICAL BASED PRODUCTS ON THIS EQUIPMENT AS IT WILL BREAK DOWN THE SURFACE OF THE LEATHER.**

The fittings on these breastplates are made of brass in order to avoid rust in damp or humid conditions. These can be cleaned with brass cleaners, but make sure you do not get any of this on the actual leather as it will dry out and damage the leather.

If the horse gets sweaty when ridden, it is good practice to wipe all the salty sweat off the leather as soon after you get off the horse as possible. The same applies to your bridle and girth.

If you live in a hot, dry climate, you may need to condition the leather more frequently. If you live in a climate where you need to moisturise your skin to keep it from drying out and wrinkling.....you will need to moisturise the leather in your riding equipment.

Whilst the Neatsfoot/Glycerine combination is very effective when used correctly, you may want to consider other products. One product that we do suggest and is used by the manufacturer of your breastplate is Effax Lederbalsam which contains beeswax, lanolin and avocado oil. This product can be used on the BALANCE saddles as well.