



FITTING AND USE OF YOUR BALANCE BREASTPLATE

More information and pictures can be found in the *BALANCE Saddling User's Manual* and on the *BALANCE Website*. www.balanceinternational.com

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 the horse fit it and look after it.

This breastplate is of a proper adjustable and traditional design. This means that the lengths 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.

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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 effect.

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 follow this procedure can be dangerous; because it can make it difficult to remove the saddle without getting in a mess!**

Using the breastplate tends to allow riders who are 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 amount of padding under your saddle until the horse's improved body shape allows you reduce it. **It is also to be advised to get into the habit of using a breastplate when riding over hilly areas, when jumping and/or when riding a young or spooky horse.**

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.

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.....you will need to moisturise the leather in all of your riding equipment.

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Whilst the Neatsfoot Oil/ Glycerine combination is very effective when used correctly, you may want to consider other products. Products that we are happy to suggest are the Sedgewick Leather Care that we try to keep in stock in our online shop, or Effax Lederbalsam which contains beeswax, lanolin and avocado oil. This product can be used on the BALANCE saddles as well and seems to be easily found in many tack stores or online.

We are here to help you as much as we can, so please do contact us at the BALANCE office if you want some help with this product.

Keep it Constructive!



PLEASE NOTICE how your breastplate has been made.



As with all products that carry the BALANCE logo, we are always looking at ways to improve the degree of comfort that they provide for the horse, as our priority.

When you look at horse most bridle-work, you will see that it has been made with all of the 'lumps and bumps' on the horse's side! Even when well made, you will see that the smooth side is facing outwards, because it looks neat and the ends of the straps are folded onto the horse's side.

The horses' right to comfort comes higher on our list of priorities than the way the equipment looks and so we have this breastplate made with the ends turned out so that the horse gets the smooth side against his skin.

You might be told by other people that the breastplate has been made incorrectly, to which you can honestly reply that that depends on what they consider more important!