

SADDLE PLACEMENT and BALANCE CUSTOM FITTING with Shims for the Theraflex™ Saddle Pad

HOW to KNOW you've done it RIGHT!



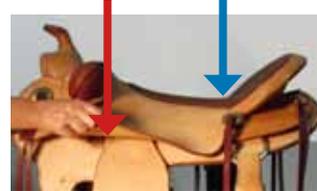
IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES

1. Be certain you know WHERE is the MAXIMUM BACKSWING point of your horse's scapula.
2. Place your saddle's STIRRUP BAR NO FURTHER FORWARD than at that point.



Stirrup Bar weight point is indicated by RED arrows (at the front edge of the stirrup strap, which you can see under the seat jockey)

The lowest point of the seat should be at BLUE ARROWS when you are sitting in the saddle. Read more inside for detailed information about how and where to place your saddle, and how to properly fit your particular horse.



The point from which your stirrup leathers hang from the "stirrup bar" or saddle tree is the first weight-bearing point of your saddle. It should not be allowed to obstruct/inhibit the full, free motion of your horse's scapulae if you desire healthy, balanced stride.

3. SHIM under saddle properly for YOUR HORSE'S BACK SHAPE (see guide on Page 4) so the LOWEST POINT of the SADDLE is TOWARD the BACK, enabling rider to easily access and stay on Balance Point. This keeps weight back and off your horse's front end, which is critical to engaging hindquarters for balanced stride and horse's health over time.
4. If in doubt...add a shim! Horses are actually more comfortable with more shims CORRECTLY PLACED and staggered/spread apart (not bunched up). (Examples and details inside) Caution: too many shims can make the saddle less stable.
5. Gather feedback from your horse and EXAMINE SWEAT PATTERNS after riding. Adjust shims and/or upgrade Fluid Riding techniques as needed. Also: make certain your horse is structurally balanced (See www.HealthyStride.com).
Reminder: As your horse's back develops, re-evaluate your shimming needs. Generally, less shims will be required sooner than you may think.
ALL of this is TERRIFIC for your Relationship, your Savvy and your Never-Ending Self Improvement...as well as your horse's!



WHY we SHIM: 1. SCAPULA CLEARANCE 2. BALANCE POINT 3. MUSCLE ATROPHY

CHECKLIST:

Use our SHIMMING GUIDE inside this brochure

1. Can I FEEL my horse's SHOULDERS when I reach under the front of the saddle all the way back to the stirrup bar (even when cinched)....it's not too tight?
2. Can I EASILY ACCESS my BALANCE POINT?
3. Is my horse STRETCHING DOWN and BLOWING as I circle him online or ride?
(It may take a few minutes... but horse should be obviously comfortable).
4. Do I see DRY SPOTS or RUFFLED HAIRS?

GOOD!
YES

GOOD!
YES

GOOD!
YES

See TROUBLE-SHOOTING GUIDE on page 2.
 YES

ADD a Shim to the front, unless horse's back is HOLLOW, which would need more center shim.
NO

ADD a Shim to the front, but be sure tilt angle is not so steep that it digs into horse's hips.
NO

ADD a Shim to the front, ...as per above
NO

GOOD!
NO

Theraflex™: The Revolutionary, Non-Slip, "Custom Fit" Saddle Pad System

HOW TO get the most out of its performance for you and your horse:

The checklist and hints below will be helpful to your understanding of important principles of use of this remarkable pad system. If you desire more thorough descriptions and instructions, you can find them online at ParelliSaddles.com / Theraflex Saddle Pad. You'll also see very helpful demonstrations on our complimentary DVD, which is available on that website for shipping/handling costs.

FEATURES/BENEFITS:

- Pad is constructed of a high-tech bonded felt which is BREATHABLE. Its top and bottom outer layers have an ANTI-SLIP property which helps saddle stay in place.
- The AIR CELLS fit INSIDE VELCRO POCKETS that leave the open/close valves exposed for easy access. The Theraflex air cells are of revolutionary, patented ThermaRest technology. They AUTO-INFLATE, and contain closed-cell foam, which slowly re-distributes air and allows the cells to re-shape as the horse moves.
- AUTO-BALANCING: Evenly distributes weight; Alleviates pressure points; FACILITATES CLOSE CONTACT and improves the feel of riding, especially for your horse.
- COOLING to the horse: allows skin to "breathe"; Improves air flow and heat release.
- IMPROVES SADDLE FIT, but can't be expected to do the entire job on its own. Years of dedicated research and testing in the development of this pad revealed that the pad and shims will help ANY saddle tremendously, but more help for the horse and rider was needed. The fact that many saddles were found to be causing serious problems for horses led to the development of the revolutionary PARELLI SADDLES that put the horses' needs first. Testing on thousands of horses under riders of all levels of skill and discipline has proven beyond doubt that Therapeutic Felt SHIMS (which fit into the velcro pockets on top of the air cells), help provide quintessential PERFORMANCE-EDGE-QUALITY comfort, balance and performance. They customize the fit to individual horses' back shapes, which allows the Parelli Saddles do their job of PROVIDING ROOM and FLEXIBILITY for the horse in motion.

TYPES of Theraflex Pads available: (For more dimensions, visit www.ParelliSaddles.com)
All pads have long, open center channel spaces to eliminate pressure along horse's spine

WESTERN:

- Parelli NATURAL PERFORMER SADDLE Shape:
Small size for 15.5" - 16" seats: 27.5" along spine
Large size for 16.5" - 18.5" seats: 29.5" along spine
- Parelli RANCH ROPER SADDLE Shape:
Small size for 15.5" - 16" seats: 30" along spine
Large size for 16.5" - 18.5" seats: 30" along spine
- TRADITIONAL WESTERN for big-skirted saddles: 31"

ENGLISH:

- Parelli FLUIDITY General Purpose SADDLE Shape:
Small size for 17" - 18" seats: 25.75" along spine
Large size for 18.5" - 19" seats: 26" along spine
- Parelli DRESSAGE SADDLE Shape:
Small size for 15.5" - 16" seats
Large size for 16.5" - 18.5" seats
- TRADITIONAL ENGLISH for any English saddle: 25.75"

TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE:

Our saddle systems will help improve your harmonic riding skills and provide valuable feedback when things are not right for your horse. When you examine your horse's sweat patterns after unsaddling, you will have an honest "report card" on your riding...and a "blueprint" for developing strategies for improvement. **SOME TIPS:**

RUFFLED HAIRS or RUB MARKS? A sign of disharmony with the horse. Could indicate too much weight/pressure on front end or back end...but more probably, it is caused by FRICTION, which is a Fluidity issue. Where were you stiff in your body? (for instance: ruffles at horse's shoulders could mean your shoulders were stiff...at the back, it could mean stiffness in your hips or heels. (In hollow backed horses, it's important to make sure the saddle isn't sitting down too low so that the pad runs into the horse's hips. Over-shimming in front could also create too steep an angle (see diagrams on website and shim pattern suggestions on reverse side of this brochure). Were you moving in opposition to your horse? Were you bracing in your stirrups? Driving with your seat? Such things CAN CAUSE A SADDLE TO TRAVEL FORWARD, too. "Saddles don't slide uphill", Linda says. Use your shimming, your fluid riding techniques, transitions exercises, etc. to get weight off the forehead.

DRY SPOTS in sweat pattern? Dry down the center of the spine where there is no contact (because of the open center channel) is ok. A dry spot can tell you about no pressure or too much pressure. Consider too much weight/pressure on front end...If unaddressed, white hairs may show up...which will go away if you adjust shims/remedy problem. If you feel under saddle and it is tight where the shims are, change their position / turn them sideways / add or subtract one...whatever it takes to release the pressure. In the case where you feel underneath and there is no contact at all with the saddle and pad, more shims would help the saddle "hug" your horse with even contact. This invites him/her to round his back, push up into the comfort and reach under farther from behind. (Just as you would do if carrying a backpack that was loaded softly/evenly, compared to having an uneven load with lumps or pinches, which would make you want to arch your back to get away from the pain.

LUMBAR PAIN? Should not be a problem with a Parelli saddle (unless, as with any saddle, it is placed too far forward on a horse, and the horse must carry too much weight on his front end, which forces him to arch uncomfortably). If a horse has a bit of a muscle ache in early stages of using a Parelli saddle system, it would be because he is using his back differently (FOR THE BETTER!) and pushing previously under-used muscles up into the pad. If you don't brace in your stirrups, arch/stiffen your back, sit too far forward. etc., any new-use aches should go away...as they would for you!

WHITE HAIRS vs WHITE MARKS? Flecky white hairs are evidence of friction or too much weight or pressure at the front of the saddle, which puts damaging weight on the horse's forehead. They are usually temporary and are evident on soft tissue areas, such as behind the shoulders. Adjust your shimming to make certain you don't feel pressure on that spot and you can also easily get on your Balance Point when in the saddle. WHITE MARK SCARS occur when the shoulder blade/bone is slammed/pinched into a hard saddle tree. These scars are usually permanent and are caused by a saddle that presses onto the shoulders because it is too narrow, far forward or downhill. (see shimming patterns on reverse side for downhill horses. These horses need extra attention re: pressure).

Pad feels too hard or bouncy? Too much air in the cells...open both valves at same time, and let out burst of air...DON'T LET IT ALL OUT. But, too much air makes you feel unconnected w/ horse.

Pad slips down/back/forward/goes crooked? Girth/Cinch too loose? (don't over-tighten it, though). Rider driving with seat can cause the saddle or pad or both to slide forward. Rider bracing in stirrups can sometimes cause the pad to slip backwards...this also dumps too much weight on horse's front end (feet should just be resting on the stirrups. When pad goes crooked, this can tell you about crookedness in horse or rider, tension or uneven muscle development. Major displacements could require re-saddling, but minor crookedness is not an issue. Check symmetrical placement.

CHECKLIST:

- AIR CELLS are INFLATED, and VALVES are OPEN when pad is stored and when pad and saddle are first put on the horse.
- Select and position SHIMS INSIDE pad's VELCRO POCKETS on each side of pad (ON TOP of the AIR CELLS) to accommodate HORSE'S PARTICULAR BACK SHAPE See instructions and photo comparisons on Page 4
- Make certain you know the furthestmost backswing point of your horse's scapula, so that you know how to position STIRRUP BAR NO FURTHER FORWARD than that. See IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES (Page 1) + watch Saddle DVD
- Place saddle on pad, making certain that it is centered left to right and front to back, so that saddle tree is centered over air cells.
- If horse has A-Frame shaped shoulders, pull pad's front web strap loop high up into saddle gullet so pad valves are approx. 1" apart at withers, and level. If your horse has round shoulders, leave valves wider apart, level with withers.
- Cinch/Girth up as usual (2 to 3 polite tightenings). Then, for western saddles, buckle/tighten rear cinch (closely hobbled to front cinch) See Saddle DVD
- On FINAL cinching, (Make sure horse is standing square), PRESS BACK OF SADDLE DOWN with your elbow, while you CLOSE the VALVES See Saddle DVD
- DOUBLE CHECK Balance Point accessibility by making sure LOWEST POINT OF SEAT is toward the back. See IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES and watch Saddle DVD
- BEFORE MOUNTING, play with horse on the ground, send over poles/jump to allow the air to distribute, and make sure horse is comfortable with the feel.
- Make certain you DO NOT HAVE TOO MUCH AIR, nor TOO LITTLE AIR in the pad's cells, or they can't do their job. See Saddle DVD
- CLEAN the pad regularly. Do not allow hair and sweat to build up, or pad will lose non-slip features, cooling/breathability, etc. See Saddle DVD or download detailed instructions off website from printable pdf file.



WESTERN and ENGLISH-shaped Theraflex Saddle Pads are all functionally constructed the same, with 2 panels connected. Much of the center channel is open, so horse's spine is not pressured. (Only left panels are pictured here).

CHECKLIST:

BASIC BACK SHAPE

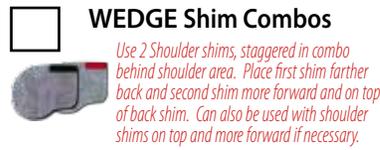
Observe and compare your horse to the examples and shim arrangement suggestions pictured at far right.

- UPHILL**
Withers higher than croup (top of rump)
- DOWNHILL**
Croup higher than withers
- HOLLOW**
Sunken/Concave in center
- LEVEL**
Withers/Croup same level

All shims come as a SET of 2 and are available in THICK (Black connecting strap) or THIN (Red connecting strap)

SHIMS NEEDED

1 Set = 2 identical shims, Thick or Thin (1 shim for each side of the Theraflex saddlepad).



MUSCLE CONDITION

- GOOD** → **LESS SHIMS**
- ATROPHIED** → **MORE SHIMS**

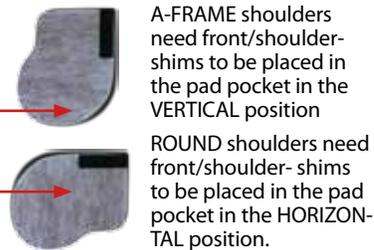
Remember to LIFT FRONT of saddle to ensure horse's shoulders are free and rider can EASILY access BALANCE POINT and KEEP WEIGHT BACK and OFF HORSE'S FRONT END

For all Atrophied areas, shoulder and back

SHOULDER SHAPE

Shoulder shims can be inserted in the pad pocket in 2 different ways, depending upon horse's shape

- A-FRAME** → **FLAT shoulders**
- ROUND** → **Bulging, pronounced or wide shoulders**



LENGTH OF BACK

- SHORT** → **NO DIFFERENCE in shimming**
 - LONG** → **Just shim for your horse's back shape and**
 - GAITED** → **NO DIFFERENCE**
 - NOT GAITED** → **in appropriate seat size of saddle for rider**
- Sitting on your horse farther back is better for him than sitting too far forward!

NO DIFFERENCE in shimming
Just shim for your horse's back shape and

NO DIFFERENCE
in appropriate seat size of saddle for rider

Sitting on your horse farther back is better for him than sitting too far forward!

A FEW TYPICAL EXAMPLES:

These illustrations show suggested patterns, relative positioning and order of placement for each of the common horse's back shapes pictured. Please note: Your horse may be a combination of some of these back types.

Have confidence: EXPERIMENT with shimming your Theraflex® Saddle Pad until it feels right! Also: You should actually place shims INSIDE the Theraflex saddlepad's velcro air cell pocket, ON TOP OF THE AIR CELLS.

Use this **GUIDE** and **CHECKLIST** to help get your *Shimming* **RIGHT!**

The 3 BASIC REASONS we SHIM:

1. **SCAPULA CLEARANCE**
2. **BALANCE POINT**
3. **MUSCLE ATROPHY**

"There's just something about the feel of these therapeutic shims that invites horses to push up and round their backs into the soft contact... provided the saddle gives them room to do it!"

Any Parelli saddle, teamed with the remarkable Theraflex Saddle Pad and Therashims, should feel like a "hug" that boosts COMFORT, BALANCE and PERFORMANCE to the Maximum! Your horse will tell you when it's right by relaxing, lowering his head, lengthening his stride and using his topline.

"Taking the time it takes" to analyze my horse's back (it is changing and getting healthier every time I ride), organize his shim pattern (so that I can see and feel he is comfortable and free to move) has brought results and pleasure to both of us that are incredible! This process has enabled me to be a better rider... and my horse and I are enjoying our partnership at a level I never thought imaginable! THANK YOU, Linda, Pat and the Parelli Saddle Team. K.C.



"WE DO NOT JUDGE HOW GOOD A SADDLE SYSTEM IS....OUR HORSES TELL US!"

Linda and Pat Parelli

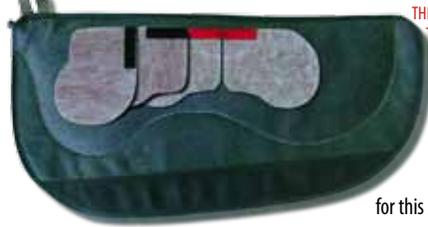


Catrina sent this picture (above left) of Kilby (Thoroughbred/Irish Draft Cross) in late 2008, asking for help with a shimming pattern for his new Fluidity saddle. We were thrilled to receive her note of thanks and Kilby's updated portrait (at right) in early 2009! Note the positive differences in his topline: Kilby's back is less hollow, he is more uphill and his neck is changing shape.

The shims will compensate for this horse's lack of muscle and help him build up.



UPHILL, with A-FRAME SHOULDER (also has ATROPHIED muscle behind shoulders and along back).



THICK Shims = Black strap
THIN Shims = Red strap

Suggest Experiment with either pattern for Western or English for this sort of back shape.

Note: it is always very important to stagger shims apart to create a gentle, gradual "ramp" of support.



Layer them from the back toward the front, so that forwardmost shim is on top of the pile, leaving room for scapula to swing underneath

Place shims horizontally (wedge) to make sure these wide shoulders are not restricted in any way.



UPHILL with ROUND SHOULDER, very wide, healthy back and shoulders.



Saddle must be lifted in front from further back, (behind shoulders) so front of saddle will cantilever out over round shoulders and rider can stay on balance point.

Note: Parelli saddles have lots of room underneath, so shims are usually advisable in order to lift the front for Balance Point access, even on well muscled backs



NOTE: For very wide-backed horses, put shims (especially shoulder shims) down LOW in the pad pocket to keep bulky pressure away from shoulders and spine.

By positioning the saddle slightly 'uphill', you will encourage this horse to bring his front end up.



DOWNHILL with A-FRAME SHOULDER, needs shoulder shim plus wedge. Front of saddle must be lifted so that rider can access Balance Point EASILY and keep weight back and off the horse's front end.



that rider can access Balance Point EASILY and keep weight back and off the horse's front end.

Note: if your horse is extremely Downhill, you may also need a shim at the back to make sure the angle required is not too steep, which would put pressure at the back of the saddle. You should be able to reach back under the saddle as you ride along, and it should not feel too tight.



which would put pressure at the back of the saddle. You should be able to reach back under the saddle as you ride along, and it should not feel too tight.

Slightly 'uphill' saddle positioning PLUS fluid riding techniques with lots of transitions will encourage this horse to bring his front end higher.



DOWNHILL with ROUND SHOULDER, wide back. All shims need to be horizontal (wedge), pushed down and shifted back, to maximize shoulder space. We have also found that staggering them upward (front shim lowest) further helps wide shouldered horses.



We have also found that staggering them upward (front shim lowest) further helps wide shouldered horses.

Make sure you can feel the back of your horse's shoulders as he walks. Check on this by walking along beside him before mounting.



Check on this by walking along beside him before mounting.

Specialized unriden exercises such as "Hill Therapy" recommended to restore topline.



HOLLOW: with LEVEL POSTURE and A-Frame Shoulder

Note: We have shown THIN shims in this diagram. Depending on how much "lift" rider desires in front end, as well as how much "sag" there is in the horse's center back, THICK shims could be used in center until back strengthens and comes up.



Note: before securing the girth, feel under the saddle-pad all the way back along the underside to make sure that shims and pad are creating comfortable, even contact along your horse's entire back (no tight pressure spots nor hollow gaps).



even contact along your horse's entire back (no tight pressure spots nor hollow gaps).

This horse is best not ridden with such a weakened back.



SEVERE ATROPHY: After doing Hill Therapy*, to strengthen his back, significant changes will be observed, ...but horse may still need this many shims at first.



Hill Therapy program is available as a download on www.Parelli.com and www.ParelliSaddles.com

Note: this many shims will not fit into pad's velcro pockets. Some will need to go on top of pad.



Place the forward-most shims on top of other shims, to build "ramp" toward front, leaving room underneath for scapula backswing.