



## What is Functional Saddling?

It is an alternative approach to saddling that was 'discovered' by the founders of the BALANCE Organisation in 1990 and has helped thousands of horses around the world since then.

This method of saddle 'fitting' works by respecting the ridden horse's structures and biomechanics in correct, safe movement.

It involves the use of well-designed saddles, in conjunction with a layered and therefore, adjustable Padding System, made with a particular combination of materials.

Saddles are **not** fitted to match the static posture and width of the horse, because the shape and width of the horse has to be able to change (lift and widen in the saddle area) when the horse moves.

We have produced this leaflet to avoid conventionally trained saddle fitters and saddlers trying to flock a BALANCE saddle in a way that stops it being useable as part of a Functional Saddling approach.

## About Us & Where to Get Help

The BALANCE Organisation has been doing its own research into horse-friendly saddling for over 30 years, and BALANCE Saddles have been in production since 1990.

The 'Functional Saddling' method can be created with other makes of saddle, provided they have a combination of important, horse-friendly' design features and are available in widths that go well beyond a conventional 'Extra Wide'.

An appropriate Padding System is integral to this Saddling Method. For more information about how the pads and the saddles work together, the research behind Functional Saddling and the specifics of it, please make use of the BALANCE website.

[www.balanceinternational.com](http://www.balanceinternational.com)

For help buying small quantities of long-fibre white wool, or if you have any other query about flocking or repairing a BALANCE saddle, please contact us:

[support@balanceinternational.com](mailto:support@balanceinternational.com)



**FLOCKING GUIDELINES for BALANCE Saddles used as part of the BALANCE Saddling System (also known as 'Functional Saddling').**



***Please find out from the saddle owner whether or not they are using the saddle as part of the BALANCE Saddling System (aka Functional Saddling). If so, the information in this leaflet is very important.***

*If they are using the BALANCE saddle more conventionally (without the Pad System) then some of these guidelines will not apply.*





## BALANCE Saddles very rarely need flocking adjustments!

- Day to Day/Seasonal adjustments to fitting are made using the Pad System, not by changing the flocking.
- The Fitting Method and Pad System both ensure that the saddle panels are not subjected to high pressures as in conventional saddling (the horse is protected & so is the saddle!)
  - Many BALANCE saddles have foam or foam/felt panels, which cannot be adjusted (e.g., Felix, Matrix, most Nexus Dressage saddles, Horizon & Free Spirit. Please check stamp on the nearside flap).

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***“Many BALANCE saddles over 20 years old, still have their original flocking, and have never needed any attention! Yet horse owners are often told that they should have the flocking adjusted even when nothing needs to be done, and can end up with a saddle their horse is no longer comfortable in.” 😞***

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## Reasons to adjust flocking in BALANCE Saddles:

- Owners want to use the saddle on a narrower horse.
- Panels have compressed more on one side from crooked riding.
- The saddle has not been balanced correctly with the pads, and so panels have compressed too much at the front or back.
- Panels have become lumpy.

### ***Please contact BALANCE if:***

- ***You think that there is damage to the saddle tree, stirrup bars etc.***
- ***The saddle might be under manufacturer’s warranty (under 2 years old).***

## Key Points re. Flocking for Functional Saddling:

- The saddle must be wide enough to allow for thicker layers of saddle pads under the front of the tree. This protects the horse, allows biomechanically correct movement & creates comfort.
- Panels need to be flocked evenly front-to-back and side-to-side. ***Please don’t be tempted to match the panels to the horse’s static back shape!***
- The saddle needs to look unbalanced (too wide) BEFORE the pad system goes underneath it. Please do not try to make the saddle look balanced with flocking before the pads go underneath.
- The panels should have an even feel, without lumps or dents.



- The panels must be ‘springy’, even if extra flocking is added, so they are never harder than the feel of the horse’s muscles.
- If the saddle does not make contact with the horse’s back towards the cantle, please do not try to make the panels deeper or harder at the back. The Pad System is used to balance the saddle by increasing the lift under the front, and there are pads in the Pad System that can be used under the back if needed.
- It is important to use the same flocking materials as used by the original manufacturer (long-fibre, white wool) and do not mix with synthetic flock materials.
- The saddle must never be fitted so wide that it touches the spine of the horse before the pads go underneath, but please do not try to achieve the same amount of clearance as seen in conventional saddle fitting; the Pad System lifts the front of the saddle up.
- We know that it can be difficult to achieve a good result when adding new flocking to a very old saddle, so we usually suggest that saddles over 10 years old that need flocking added, are usually better having all of the old flocking stripped out and a complete re-flock with long-fibre white wool.