**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.

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 STRECHING 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?

ADD a Shim to the front, unless horse’s back is HOLLOW, which would need more center shim.

ADD a Shim to the front, but be sure tilt angle is not so steep that it digs into horse’s hips.

ADD a Shim to the front, ...as per above

See TROUBLE-SHOOTING GUIDE on Page 2.
THERAFLEX™: The Revolutionary, Non-Slip, “Custom Fit” Saddle Pad System
HOW TO get the most out of its performance for you and your horse:

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.

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 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

DREAM 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 and 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 you’re 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/shift 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 forehand. 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 scapula/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 unequipped/w horse. Pad slips down/back/forward/goes crooked? Birth/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 braking in stirrups can sometimes cause the pad to slip backwards...this also dips too much weight on horse’s front end (feet should just be resting ion 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.

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**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 |

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

| □ THICK or THIN, can be placed in horizontal or vertical position in pad |
| □ Use 2 Shoulder shims, staggered in combo behind shoulder area. Place first shim farther back and second shim more forward and on top of back shim. Can also be used with shoulder shims on top and more forward if necessary |
| □ Use Shoulder shims, (Thick or Thin, depending on depth of hollow) in pairs turned opposite... or, purchase one of our larger, special Center Shims |

**MUSCLE CONDITION**
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.

| □ GOOD | LESS SHIMS |
| □ ATROPHIED | MORE SHIMS |

**SHOULDER SHAPE**
Shoulder shims can be inserted in the pad pocket in 2 different ways, depending upon horse’s shape.

| □ A-FRAME | Need front/shoulder-shims to be placed in the pad pocket in the VERTICAL position |
| □ FLAT shoulders | ROUND shoulders need front/shoulder-shims to be placed in the pad pocket in the HORIZONTAL position |
| □ ROUND | Bulging, pronounced or wide shoulders |

**LENGTH OF BACK**
Just shim for your horse’s back shape and

| □ SHORT | NO DIFFERENCE in shimming |
| □ LONG | NO DIFFERENCE in appropriate seat size of saddle for rider |

**GAITED**

| □ NOT GAITED | Sitting on your horse farther back is better for him than sitting too far forward! |

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**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

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.

“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!”

“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

Catriona 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.

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

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.

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.

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

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

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.

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.

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

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.

HOLLOW: with LEVEL POSTURE and A-Frame Shoulder

Hollow horse needs a shoulder shim plus wedge. The front of the saddle must be lifted so that rider can access the Balance Point easily and keep weight back and off the horse’s front end.

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.

THICK Shims = Black strap
THIN Shims = Red strap

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

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.

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

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

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