

CLASSIC EQUINE

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ADVANCED PROTECTION

A common thread is intertwined between equestrians regardless of discipline, location, or breed registry. This universal desire is an intrinsic part of the nature of any horseman or horsewoman. For some, it might be the reason they began their journey into the horse world. For others, it is part of an overall drive to excel in their sport. The desire to promote your horse’s well-being and performance is shared by all, but finding the right protection for each horse’s unique situation can be overwhelming, especially when looking at protection under the saddle.

With the seemingly endless variety of saddle pads available today, a conscientious buyer faces a mountain of research before the final purchase is made. Small differences in manufacturing processes or material selection can often drastically change the way a pad performs, and the advantages of premium materials often outweighs the cost—but not necessarily. One thing is certain, we have made great strides in understanding how different components work together and perform at the intense level demanded by today’s top equine athletes.

A TRADITIONAL APPROACH

Even basic materials such as felt can vary in performance when manufactured in a different way. Premium felt will be produced in layers, providing a softer finish and more cushion. One example of this type of felt is found in the Classic Equine® 100% Felt pad. When we look at impact resistance and compression reset, this premium felt performs better under the stresses incurred during intense competition and training, and continues to excel over the extended life of the pad.

The material against the horse’s back is a critical piece of the overall protection provided. In an ideal situation, it would be comfortable, durable, and allow heat to dissipate away from the horse as he performs. Wool fleece can be sourced from many places, but the Merino sheep is highly prized for the quality of their wool. The Merino produces an ultra-fine, tightly crimped fiber which is commonly blended with other premium materials such as silk and cashmere in high-end athletic clothing. The use of Merino wool helps wick moisture away from the horse’s back, drawing the heat away with it. Classic Equine uses 100%





Merino wool in their premium pads, such as Zone®, BioFit®, and ESP® fleece bottom pads.

BACKED BY SCIENCE

As the scientific community continues to research and develop advanced materials for applications other than equine protection, leading equine companies are taking notice and are adapting these technologies to create pads with protection properties we have not been able to achieve previously. Among the first adaptation was the use of open-cell foam, or memory foam under the saddle. This material was designed by NASA, but was quickly adapted in the private sector to everything from mattresses, footwear, and even saddle pads. One property that makes it unique is its ability to compress deeply, yet continue to return to its original shape. This gives memory foam an advantage when used in saddle pads, as it creates a more even pressure under the saddle. Pads such as the ESP Pad can help minimize pressure points, a quality that does not diminish over the life of the pad thanks to the unbelievably resilient nature of the memory foam inside.

Poron®, an advanced polymer used in the ESP Contour pads, has been used extensively in running shoes for marathoners, and in custom orthotics and prosthetics. This material is lightweight and resilient, providing many of the same advantages of Memory Foam in a more compact package. Impact resistance for Poron is incredibly high, even when used in thin inserts. Because of this, Classic Equine has been able to manufacture a pad with less bulk while maintaining many of the same benefits.

For several years, Classic Equine has utilized Zoombang® in their Zone pads. Zoombang is a material with several unique qualities which first found use in protective equipment for football players,



NASCAR drivers, and other high-impact sports. This polymer is viscoelastic, meaning it changes shape to conform to the horse's back, but resists impact at the molecular level. The Zone pad contains dozens of individual cells filled with Zoombang, creating close, comfortable contact with the saddle. As the horse moves, Zoombang continues to change shape to accommodate the ever-changing contour and pressure between the saddle and the horse, much the same way gel does. When Zoombang undergoes a sudden impact, however, it reacts very differently from other materials. This is when Zoombang changes on a molecular level, instantly becoming rigid and dispersing the pressure from the impact over a larger surface area. Once the impact subsides, Zoombang returns to its original, semisolid state. This shapeshifting quality has endeared the Zone pad to countless professionals in a wide variety of disciplines. The ability to conform under saddle and resist impact can reduce the incidence of soreness and days off, which can help increase performance toward training goals. Especially in aged events, there is no questioning the value of advanced protection materials such as Poron and Zoombang offer.

Whether you are trying to reach your horsemanship goals, or are simply concerned about your horses' comfort and well-being, the quality of protection you use can dramatically increase your chances for success. The competition is tougher than ever, and so are training regimens for today's serious equine athlete. By using all the tools at our disposal, we can more easily research and determine the advantages of different materials, both traditional and advanced. No matter your discipline, one thing is for certain: These new components will play an even greater role in equine protection in the future. As research advances, you can look to companies like Classic Equine to put them to work for you. ♦