

# Guide to Padding for Sensation Saddles

## **The most important features of a saddle pad for a Sensation:**

- Contoured to the Horse's spine
- Padding on either side of the spine, not directly overtop
- Breathability
- At least ½" of padded support
- Non-slip

To determine what kind of padding you need, there are several factors to look at.

### **1) What kind of riding do you do?**

For regular pleasure riding, trails, or dressage, a HAF, Skito or pad of similar construction, or an interpad which provide a soft support would be sufficient. These activities do not require a great amount of shock absorption, so a softer foam is acceptable and gives the benefit of being very close to the horse.

For Endurance riding or Jumping, or other high impact activities, a firm support pad is required, such as an interpad, or a "beefed up" Skito with felt inserts.

### **2) How much do you weigh?**

If a rider is very lightweight, they can often successfully use a less supportive pad even in a high impact sport, without issue because they are not putting as much pressure on the pad itself as a heavier rider would.

Heavier riders, especially when riding a mount that may be a bit small for them, are better off to go with a firm support pad even if they are just spending a few hours on the trail.

### **3) Free swing or Hard Use?**

Because the Hard use distributes weight better than the free swing method, riders have more freedom in choosing their pads when using this stirrup attachment method. We do recommend that riders use the hard use method as much as possible.

When riding free swing, the weight of the rider is centered over a smaller area of the saddle, and so especially with a heavier rider, the pressure directly underneath the stirrup leathers is greater, and so should have a firmer support beneath it to help keep saddle from putting pressure on the spine.

### **4) The Horse's individual build:**

#### **The med-high withered horse with a broad back:**

In this case, the rider will need to have a pad with a firm support at least on either side of the wither, to help the pommel stay off the wither. These horses are very difficult to fit to any saddle, so often, despite having a higher wither, the treeless can be the only option with a horse like this. Often a pad with more padding at the wither is ideal for these horses.

#### **The very round backed, no withered horse:**

With a horse like this, almost any pad can be used but the rider may enjoy a non-slip element with these "wine barrel on legs" horses. Neoprene girth liners are also popular with this type of horse.

#### **The atrophied shouldered horse:**

Shaped inserts that can be added to a regular pad are the best for this type of horse.

The inserts can be placed in the pad, and removed as the horse begins to rebuild his muscling.

#### **The average withered, average backed horse:**

Almost any pad can be used on a horse like this - the decision between a soft or firm support will lie in the other determining factors.

#### **Narrow back with a med-high wither:**

While treeless saddles of any kind are not recommended for this type of horse, the borderline "maybe" horses with this conformation will benefit from a firm support pad undoubtedly.

## **So what are my options?**

There are many pads available on the market, and some work better than others. Use your judgement when choosing a pad, knowing which deciding factors should influence your decision. These are some of the pads that we have used and recommend for use with the Sensation.

**Skito Pads:** Skito ([www.skito.net](http://www.skito.net)) has designed a pad specifically to fit the Sensation treeless saddle models. Skito foam is an open cell, slow recovery foam. This means it is breathable, and has a “memory foam” feel to it, which is great for shock absorption and really sinking into the horse. Skitos have a 100% wool bottom-side, next to the horse. They feature velcro closed pockets for holding the foam, accepting inserts and making them easy to clean in a regular washing machine, or by hand.

**Interpads:** These are an excellent option for riders who are showing. Interpads is a relative term for a pad that fits just underneath the bar area of the saddle.

## **Material pros and cons:**

Generally, the more natural the product, the better off it will be against the horse’s back, with the least reaction. Some horses are sensitive, and can have allergic reactions to synthetic products, and excessive heat can cause rash.

**100% wool or Sheepskin** - Breathable, soft, natural and shock absorbing. This is an ideal material to have against a horse. Its only disadvantage is that it is more difficult to clean. It has a gentle grip on the horse’s coat.

**Wool/Polyester blend** - Soft, shock absorbing. The wool/poly is partially natural, partially synthetic, so it breathes and is somewhat non-slip, but less so than the 100% wool. Easier to clean, less likely to “pill” up.

**Wool Melton** - Soft, thin, easy to wash, breathable. Wool melton is a good material to have against the horse’s coat.

**3M Nomad** - Extremely breathable, non-slip, shock absorbing. Nomad material allows the sweat to run down the sides of the horse instead of soaking up into the saddle pad.

**Open Cell Foam** - breathable, dissipates heat well. Shock absorbing. Most open cell foams are slow recovery.

**Closed Cell Foam** - Non-breathable. Most closed cell foam is fast recovery, meaning it has quite a bit of rebound and “bounce” when pressure is applied.

**Gel pads** - Shock absorbing. Tend to trap heat. Heavy.