MODULE 6
The CAIR Cushion System

Topics include
- Overview
- Evolution
- Benefits
- Myth busting
The CAIR Cushion System

The CAIR Cushion System replaces the traditional fillings in the saddle panel with air cushions. While saddles look the same whether they feature CAIR, flock (wool), synthetic fibre or foam they behave very differently. CAIR provides significant performance advantages in the way it distributes the rider’s weight and cushions the horse’s back.

Distributing the rider’s weight

Once the rider’s weight is in the saddle, the air cushions are effectively sandwiched between the tree, and the horse’s back. Under the rider’s weight the air becomes dynamic, continually moulding to mirror the horse’s moving muscles. This achieves an even contact over a much larger footprint, or weight-bearing area on the horses back. Increasing the weight-bearing area results in significantly lowering the pressure (per sq cm/inch). Even weight distribution over the weight-bearing area of the saddle panel maximises the comfort of the horse and increases their freedom of movement.

Use the CAIR clear panel to demonstrate the dynamic nature of air, compress the front of the air panel, using the full length of your hand to demonstrate how the air cushion thins under the pressure and thickens in the middle.
Cushioning the horse’s back

The dynamic nature of air ensures it is working in synergy with the horse’s muscles, rather than the horse’s muscles working around a static panel (flock, wool, synthetic fibre or foam). Additionally, air provides the ultimate shock absorption, reducing trauma to the horse’s muscles in work.

Naturally, horses will demonstrate a marked improvement in performance when changed to a saddle featuring CAIR.
Understanding the CAIR Technology

The CAIR cushion is made of open cell foam, optimally shaped for each individual model and sealed in a plastic casing. This open cell foam captures the air at atmospheric pressure. Once sealed, the foam inside the air cushion has in itself no cushioning function, as it is of such a low density. It is the trapped air inside the foam that forms the basis of the air cushion.

There are two independently sealed air cushions within each saddle panel. Having two smaller shaped air cushions enables greater control of the air movement and optimum, even weight distribution.

This method of manufacture enables the air cushion to be shaped and refined at the point of manufacture and ensures an even thin cushion for optimal performance. This eliminates any potential for bounce, or excessive movement due to the thinness of the air cushion ensuring consistent performance.

It is this break-through manufacturing method that is patented worldwide and exclusive to Bates and Wintec Saddles.

Remove an air cushion from either a saddle or your CAIR Clear Panel, show the customer how they can stand on the air cushion and feel how their weight is supported by the air.
Key Benefits of CAIR

Since the launch of the CAIR Cushion System in 2001 it has continued to win awards and gain global advocates. The significant performance benefits have been documented by veterinarians, equine remedial, chiropractic, and massage therapists, saddle fitters and not least of all riders. CAIR is regarded as the world’s leading performance system in saddles.

It has been independently accredited with the following key benefits:

- Even weight distribution over full bearing surface of the saddle panel
- Superior shock absorbency
- Increased saddle stability
- Enables muscle redevelopment due to the reduction in pressure per sq cm
- Promotes freer movement and better carriage
- Increases comfort and willingness to work

When independently tested against other panel types, the CAIR Cushion System has always produced the best results. The phenomenal success of this system in Bates and Wintec saddles is indicative of a changing market, whereby riders are more informed on the importance of saddle fit and are rightly demanding more from their saddle.

Invite your customers to share their experience with you. Create testimonials from happy customers and share these in-store — perhaps with a ‘People who CAIR for their horse’ display board, or via your facebook page.
Myth busting

Critical to the sales process, is the ability to earn the customer’s trust, always avoid confrontation in challenging customer’s opinions, or fears. Treat each saddle sale as a means of establishing trust through education and open communication, whereby you have their interests at heart.

Welcome open communication, whereby the customer feels comfortable to raise any concerns, misinformation, or myths they may have acquired on saddle design and the fitting process. Never criticise the source of their information, this industry is full of opinionated people and they are all valid. Relate their perceptions back to typical experiences of other saddle designs and in doing so you validate where that opinion has come from, putting the customer at ease and then clarifying how the systems and designs in Bates and Wintec address the challenge described.

These customer questions have been created to mimic real scenarios you may come across where customers have been misinformed on the system at some point.

example 1

I have heard that the CAIR system causes bounce for the rider...

Customer

Sales person

• Empathise with the customer that as a rider ‘bounce’ is the last thing you want from your saddle
• Show the customer how thin the air cushions are – allow them to stand on one and feel how the air works, so that they understand it is not capable of bounce.
  » CAIR cushions are sealed with the optimal volume of air to ensure consistent performance and stability
  » Some other air systems in saddles and saddle cloths enable individual adjustment of the air cushions, which if overinflated can cause bounce
• Reinforce positive attributes of CAIR that in some instances riders feel that their horse is more ‘bouncy’ as their movement is more free with CAIR – it is a good idea to recommend their instructor be on hand to observe them in the saddle with CAIR.
  » In some instance mentioning some of the elite sponsored riders can reinforce that this is a performance system and bounce is a myth
Handling customer objections

example 2

Customer

"I have heard that saddles with CAIR create heat under the panel that may cause discomfort to the horse..."

Sales person

- Share in and acknowledge their concern that heat could cause discomfort for the horse
- Explain that the CAIR Cushion System does not produce heat
- Any evidence of heat is indicative of there being friction, or movement of the saddle and indicates a fit issue
- Enquire as to whether the saddle was fitted by a CAIR specialist
  » Unfortunate that the heat has been attributed to the system, where the underlying issue is fit
Handling customer objections
example 3

Sales person

I have heard that the air panels lose air over time...

• Confirm that while we could never guarantee that this wouldn’t happen, you would have to be extremely unlucky.... It is virtually unheard of, but if there was a fault, it would be covered under the saddle warranty
  » In excess of 250,000 saddles with CAIR are in use in the world today
  » Warranty issues recorded are much less than 1% of saddles sold

• Explain that in the unlikely event that the customer had any problems it would simply be a matter of replacing the air cushions, either within, or outside the warranty period.
Handling customer objections
example 4

CAIR hurt my horse and it definitely caused damage to my horse’s back.

Customer

- Empathise that the customer has had a negative experience with their saddle with CAIR
- Reinforce that it would not have been CAIR that hurt the horse’s back, but more likely the result of the saddle not fitting their horse
  » No amount of technology can make up for an ill fitting saddle
  » Reinforce that CAIR is the best saddle panel system they could offer their horse
- Enquire as to whether it was fitted by a specialist
  » Unfortunately it seems the horse has evidence of damage from their saddle with CAIR, however, this damage is not caused by CAIR, rather the result of a poor fit

Sales person
Conclusion

A saddle is perhaps the most important investment a rider makes, second only to their horse. All riders foster a special connection with their horse and rightly place the needs and welfare of their horse above their own. The CAIR Cushion System is the first innovation 100% focused on equine comfort and performance and is a rider’s guarantee that they are giving their horse the very best of care.
Appendix

Air Loss Test
Place the saddle on a firm surface and press down firmly with as much pressure as possible on each of the 4 air cushions with both hands for around 15 seconds.

Scenario 1
If the CAIR® Cushions are faulty or damaged this will be evident, as the cushion will become flat and you will feel the bottom of the tree with your knuckles.

**ACTION!** Replace CAIR® cushions and assess if covered under warranty.

Scenario 2
If the CAIR® cushions are still performing, despite their thinner appearance, the panel will not flatten out and you will not be able to feel the tree as both hands will be supported by the air.

**ACTION!** The saddle will then need to be re-balanced as required using the EASY-CHANGE Fit Solution.