



May 2019

Attwood Equestrian Surfaces, Inc

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Condolences to Roy Burek and his family

Roy revolutionized the helmet industry with his forward thinking and commitment to safety. It's a huge blow to have him taken away so young. Our condolences to his family.



Attwood Equestrian Surfaces and Kraft Horse Walkers come together

When Attwood comes in to do an arena, more often than naught, we have the pleasure of working along side some of the best equestrian professionals in the business. One of those is Frank Kraft of Kraft Horse Walkers. Check out their website www.kraft-horsewalker.com. Bespoke horse walkers completely engineered for your needs.





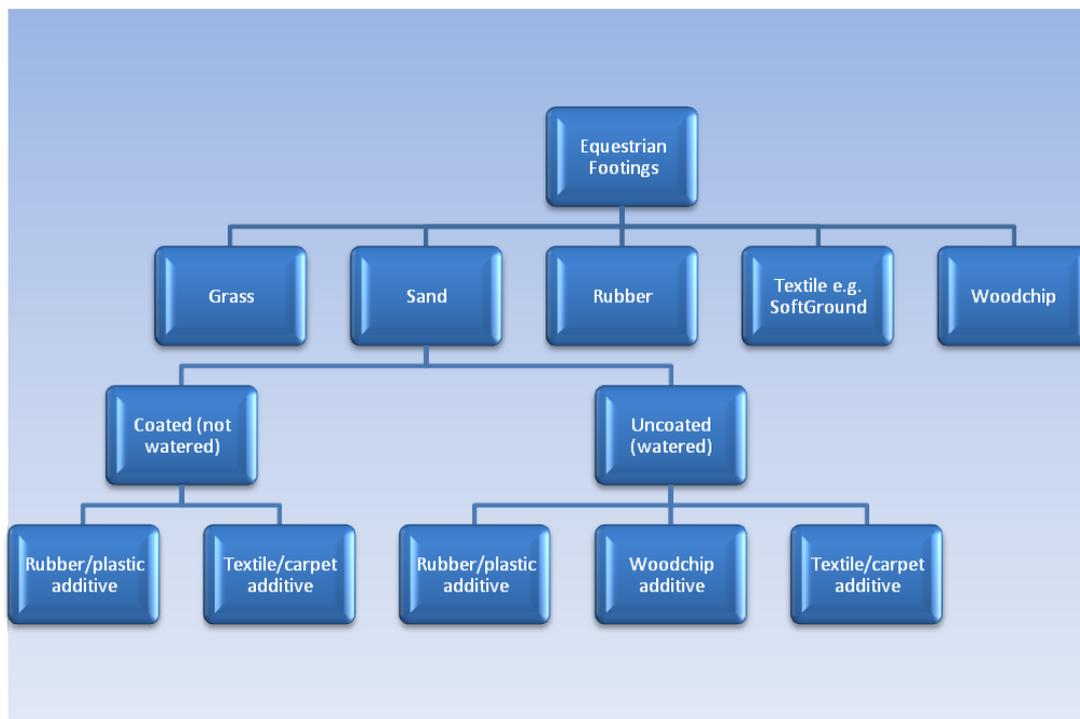
Footing Facts: May 2019

Classification of Equestrian Surfaces

We are always struck by the broad array of equestrian surfaces available from suppliers. It must be quite bewildering for customers to try to sort through what is available and compare surfaces from different companies. This is not helped by the suppliers, most of whom do not offer advice on which surface is most applicable to a customer's circumstances.

So we thought it would be useful to re-visit and update this subject we covered in the December 2015 edition of Footing Facts.

Take a look at the diagram below. The first level of classification is the material upon which the surface is based. Here we find grass, woodchip, rubber, Textile/nonwoven pieces, and sand. We'll leave out grass for now. At the low performance/low cost end is wood chip which are pieces of wood, usually waste from a lumber process or 'recycled' natural wood products. It is considerably cheaper than sand-based surfaces but in our view significantly inferior. Disadvantages are very low levels of grip (bordering on the dangerous at times!), the chips can biodegrade very quickly, and when dry can easily be displaced from the arena. So the cheapness can be a false economy.



Also at the lower performance/lower cost end is rubber pieces. Recycled rubber pieces offer a cheap method of imparting some shock absorption and rebound properties to the surface. However, rubber contributes very little cohesion, shear strength, so footings can feel slippery and lack support on cornering, jumping and landing. A second disadvantage is that an uneven surface can very quickly form which can be quite damaging to a horse's joints. Also look out for low grade recycled tire material - often this will contain dangerous chemicals such as polyaromatic hydrocarbon oils which are carcinogenic.

New on the scene is textile pieces, in the form of Attwood's new SoftGround footing, made from pieces of incredibly robust, industrial grade nylon carpet. Whilst for many years we have only supplied sand-based surfaces because they are the best performing, we were so struck with the performance of SoftGround, we decided to offer it as our budget surface. Unlike rubber pieces SoftGround offers good grip because of the interlocking nature of the fibrous structure, drains incredibly well, and is extremely easy to maintain.

Sand-based surface is by far the most popular, and if formulated correctly, highest performing surface. These surfaces can be classified into two types: uncoated sand requiring watering, and coated sand not requiring watering (theoretically! - see later). Each of these types usually has some kind of additive incorporated.

Coated surfaces rely on the coating to bind the sand grains and any additives together. The level of adhesion is critical because too much and the surface is hard and can't be levelled and harrowed, whilst too little adhesion and the footing is loose and unresponsive. Many of our competitors supply a coated surface in which the coating is a petroleum wax. They use wax because it is a reasonably cheap by-product from crude oil, and is fairly simple to apply. This is because the wax melts like a candle, and this is exploited to coat the sand more easily. However this melting is a severe disadvantage because in hotter weather the wax coating re-melts, turns into a liquid and the footing properties change significantly, with the surface losing cohesion and riding deep. Furthermore the wax is easily rubbed off from the sand, and we find many customers complaining that they have to water their wax surface to hold it together. Attwood uses polymers for its coating that do not melt in this way and so properties do not significantly change with temperature. Nor does the coating rub off so easily because it is anchored to the sand.



Uncoated sand surfaces rely on water to bind the particles together. Consider the difference between dry sand in the dunes at the seaside, and that at the shoreline. The dry sand is free flowing whilst the wet sand is hard and compact. Any child soon learns that the sand needs to be wet to make sandcastles!

For both types of sand-based footing, coated and uncoated, various additives are usually blended. These are usually textile in nature, although rubber and plastic, and wood pieces are also used. The technical reason for adding an appropriate additive is to improve cohesion in the surface, and to improve impact resistance and rebound. However many of our competitors have a different reason - they use cheap, often recycled additives to reduce their costs. At Attwood we believe new and unused textile fibres are the most useful additive, providing reliable shear strength to the footing.

Eurotex : Product Profile

This new additive from Europe is truly affordable and easy to install. The unique composition of Polyester and rubber fiber is further enhanced with the addition of Geopad felt and Cleff elasticated fibers providing lateral and vertical binding to achieve optimum consistency and cushioning. It can be incorporated into new or existing sand arenas.



Product HighLights :

- Excellent shock absorption
- Customisable to suit jumping or dressage
- Helps maintain moisture retention - less watering required
- Can be retro-fitted into existing sand arenas

Focus on Eurotex :

Whilst it might be tempting to think that the additive is the most important component in a non-coated, watered surface, this would be ill-advised. Especially with this type of footing, the sand is of vital importance. Put another way, a poor sand, even when combined with the very best additive system, still won't give rise to a satisfactorily performing footing. This is because a significant level of the performance derives from the interaction between sand grains and moisture. This interaction is generally poorly understood amongst footing manufacturers, suppliers and installers. Many will supply an additive, claiming it can be used with any sand. In reality, an additive may slightly improve a poor sand, but will not bring the surface up to an acceptable condition. Here at Attwood, we will not sell our Eurotex additive unless a good sand is being specified for a new surface, or an existing sand achieves our standard.

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You can also contact us at info@equestriansurfaces.com, info@attwood.in and enquiries@aesurfaces.co.uk.

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*Attwood Equestrian Surfaces provides
meticulously engineered surfaces that benefit
both the horse and the rider*

