

## Product Review



# Safe Rocker - Product Review

By Alex Collins

Struggling to decide what piece(s) of kit to purchase to condition or rehab your dog?

*Look no further, the SafeRocker+ is what you need.*

**T**his simple piece of equipment opens the door to many functional fitness, conditioning and rehabilitation exercises. The only limit is your creativity and imagination.

I have been using the SafeRocker+ for the past six months and nearly every week I am finding a new exercise for which I can use it. This is what I've found so far...

Using the K9 Fitness Pyramid, created by K9 Fitness Solutions\*, [www.k9fitsolutions.com](http://www.k9fitsolutions.com) as a guide for a complete conditioning programme, the SafeRocker+ can be used for exercises which incorporate the following:

- Balance
- Stabilisation
- Body Awareness
- Flexibility
- Strengthening
- Speed and Quickness
- Power

**For balance and stabilisation**, the SR+ allows the owner or therapist to move the rocker at the desired pace and angle of tilt. Alternatively, you can lure the dog to create movement. The main movement is in the cranial/caudal plane. However, by changing the angle at which the dog stands on the SR+, you can obtain diagonal pair loading and medio-lateral loading. When the dog is standing in good form using the SR+, the isometric

muscle activation can be seen and felt throughout all the main locomotor and core stabilising muscle groups. This is great for activating the glutes to support the pelvic limb, for maximising power and for avoiding the over use of hamstrings. It is also a fantastic way of activating muscle groups without the impact of repeated dynamic movements. This is especially useful for dogs from a rehabilitation perspective as well as for those suffering from osteoarthritis.

**For body awareness**, the SR+ can be used as a platform in 'stationary mode' on its flat side as the proprioceptive non-slip surface is on both sides.



Dogs are immediately more aware of their bodies when you raise the dog off the floor and the generous size and height of the SR+ allows dogs to be challenged within safe limits, should they misplace their footing during an exercise. Opportunities range from simply stepping onto and then off the SR+ - or by moving across it. There is also the more advanced option - when using the 'rocker mode' of the SR+ - of allowing it to rock gently as the dog moves across it. The dog is then challenged to balance whilst stepping onto and off or across the SR+. These are just a few ideas to improve body awareness.

**For flexibility**, where you want to improve the range of movement of your dog, using the SR+ in the

static position gives the dog focus on where his body is. Once the dog is happy to foot-target and hold position or offer stillness, you can achieve dynamic stretches such as carrot stretches, play bow stretches (with nose targets left and right of the elbows), hip flexor stretches and so on.

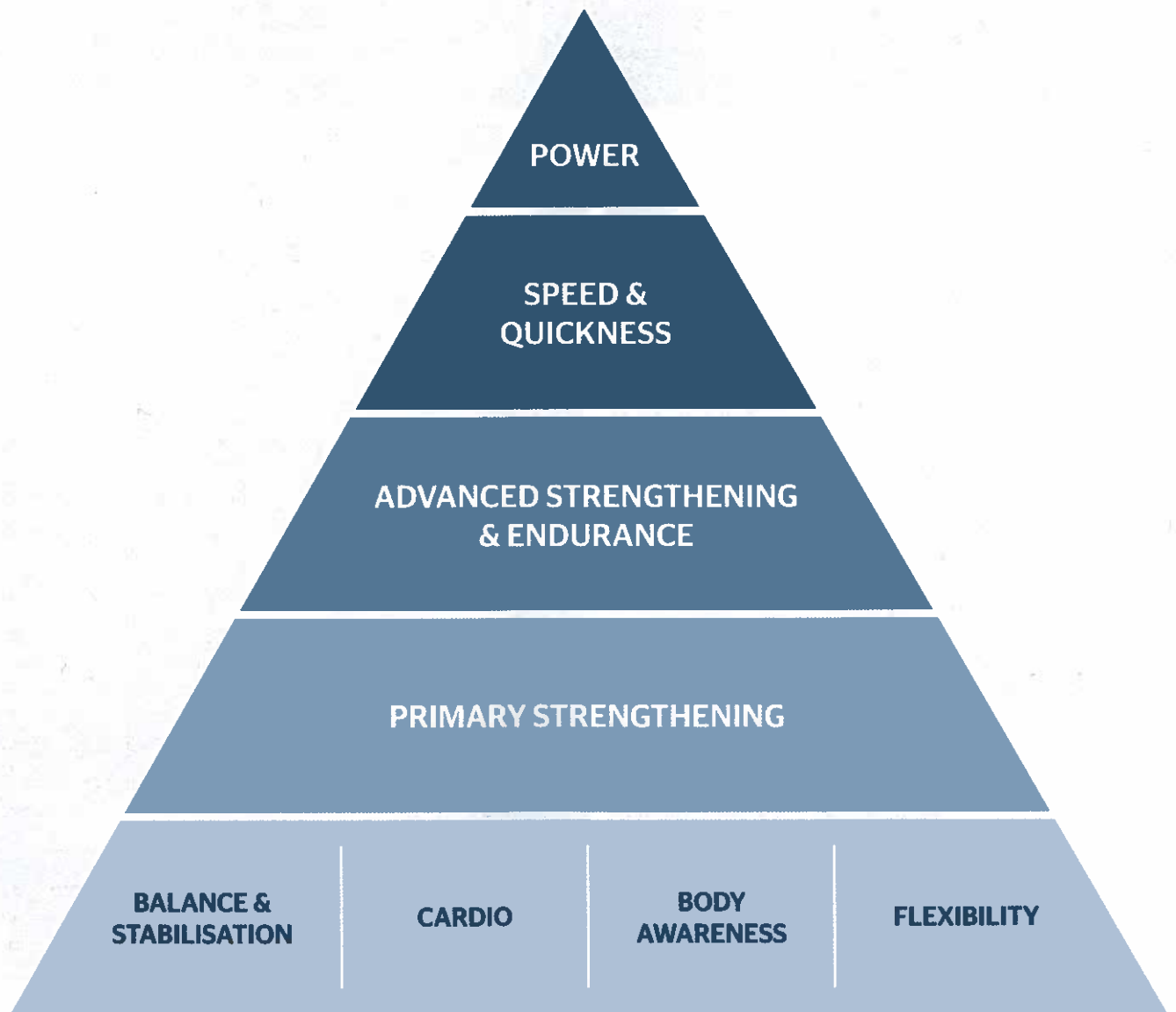
**For strengthening** exercises, the SR+ can be used in both the rocker mode and stationary mode so that the dog can perform exercises such as squat stand, down stand or tricep dips.

Using the SR+ on its side, you can increase the strength required to complete the exercise. You will need to check with your therapist that the height/dog ratio is correct to avoid injury and that the exercise still

gives the desired results by using the correct muscle groups.

The SR+ can also be used on a gradient by using a cushion to stabilise one end. In this way, you can increase the loading of one end or a limb - if used with the dog standing on the diagonal.

**For speed and quickness**, you will be pleasantly surprised at how stable the SR+ is when a dog is moving across it at speed. Even in a two on, two off position on the rocking side, it does not slide or flip and make a noise if a dog jumps off it quickly. Also, if a dog jumps on the SR+, it will not slip or flip in response. Please note that I don't use the SR+ on a tiled floor, but only on carpeted or foam matted flooring. Also, when on its







side, the SR+ is stable enough to be used to send your dog round (accel/decel/collection drills) and unless the dog slams into it, it takes a decent push to knock it over.

**For power exercises**, along with using weighted vests or resistance bands, the SR+ provides ample opportunities to improve power - more so in the static position than when rocking.

Exercises with variations, which include using the rocking and static surfaces, can provide a complete warm up, conditioning session and cool down - all using one piece of equipment.

Of course, for those agility handlers out there you can use it to practice your contacts if you have chosen the 2on 2off method. The SafeRocker+ is also ideal for dogs before they progress to the seesaw to get them used to equipment that moves and learning how to adjust their body weight, control the movement and balance in response.

Other benefits include confidence building and improved relationship with your dog. It also improves your dog training skills as you can train your dog to perform

multiple different behaviours on one piece of equipment.

With regards to the more practical aspects of the SR+, it stores easily up against the wall and takes up surprisingly little space.

The black mat surface provides not only a great proprioceptive experience and excellent grip for the dog, but also surface grip when used in combination with other

complementary equipment. The mat surfaces are also 'easy wipe'.

The handles on either side help when moving the SR+ into the desired position during a session and are also useful when moving to and from storage.

The SafeRocker+ comes in three bold colours: red, blue and purple.

\* - K9 Fitness Solutions do not endorse this product.

## About the Author

**Alex Collins (BSc Hons)** has been competing in agility for the past 10 years and before that competed at British Eventing and local riding club competitions for 15 years. Alex started a small company called Flexidog Therapy & Training Workshops 3 years ago after qualifying with a Level 4 Diploma in Canine Massage Therapy. She also runs monthly Canine Parkour workshops and holds an Intermediate Title in Dog Parkour. She also runs fitness and conditioning workshop series for active dogs.

She has a diploma in Canine Anatomy & Physiology and Canine Nutrition and is currently studying toward a Certificate in Exercise Rehabilitation Therapy. She is also heavily involved in a partnership with veterinary physiotherapists at Bach Canine Rehab and MSK professional at Canine Rebalance to produce a set of progressive conditioning videos for use by Physiotherapists, Osteopaths, Chiropractors and Exercise Rehab Specialists. She also has a BSc Hons Degree in Equine Studies (Science).

She is passionate about providing owners with fun, interactive, positive and structured ways to improve their dog's quality of life and performance.