



CANADA  
4-H Manitoba

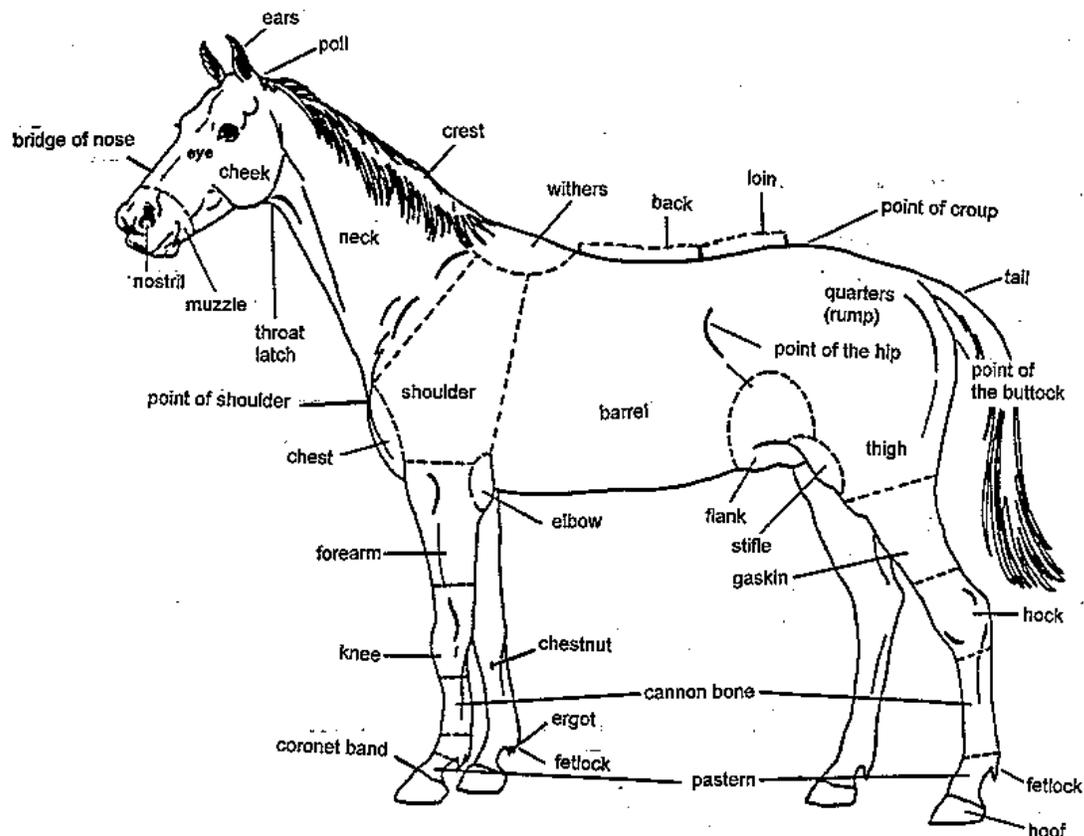
# Judging Horses

As you work through Judging Horses, you will accomplish these objectives:

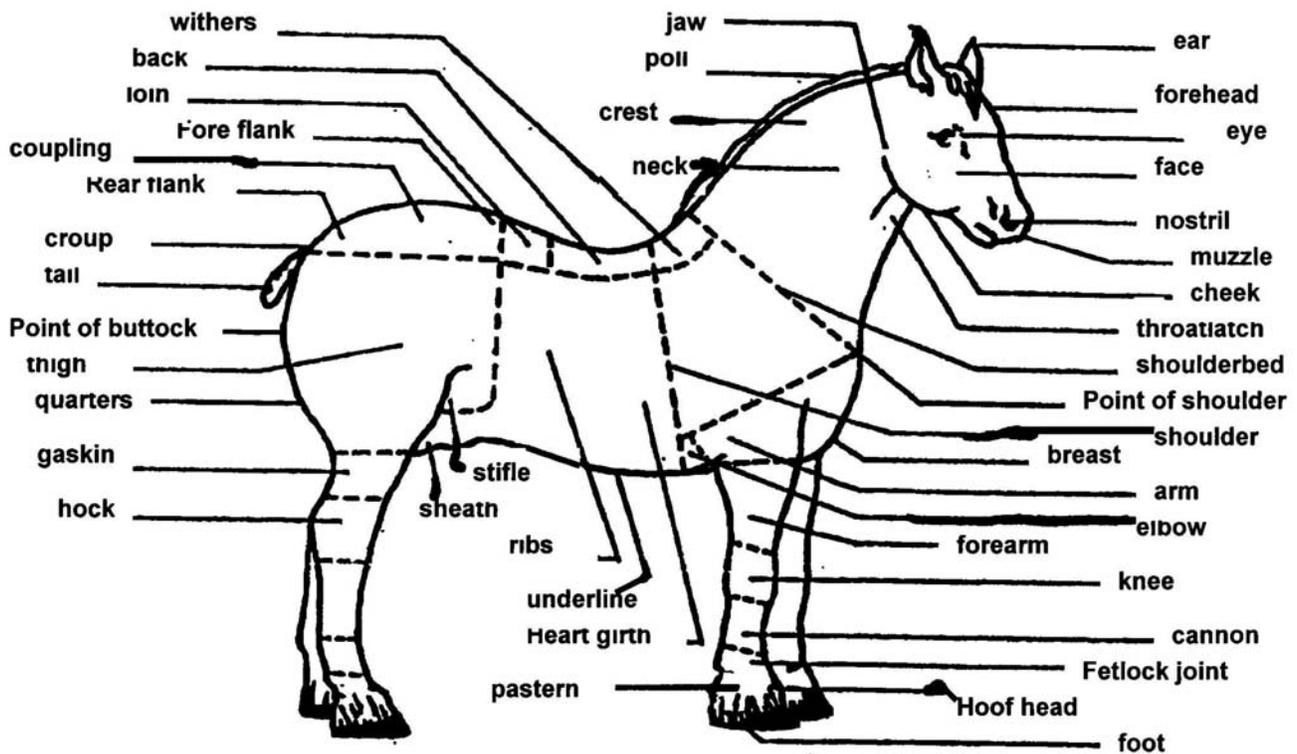
1. Become more familiar with the terminology used when judging horses.
2. Improve your ability to describe the ideal horse.
3. Learn how to choose the most ideal horse from a group of horses.
4. Learn more about abstract concepts related to the ideal horse.
5. Recognize deviations from the ideal type.
6. Recognize the common unsoundness and blemishes found in the horse.
7. Recognize the less obvious unsoundness and blemishes.
8. Understand the relationship of form to function.
9. Understand why and how a particular form enhances or reduces the function of the horse.

The first step toward accomplishing these objectives is to learn the terminology used to describe the parts of the horse, colour and markings.

## Parts of the Light Horse



## Parts of the Draft Horse



## Colors and Markings

### Colors

Horses come in many colors and with many different markings. The colors of horses and their corresponding descriptions are as follows:

<u>Color</u>	<u>Description</u>
Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Body color ranges from tan, through red, to reddish-brown.</li> <li>- All points are black, including muzzle.</li> <li>- Lower legs are usually black.</li> </ul>
Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Body color is true black without any light areas.</li> <li>- Mane and tail are black.</li> </ul>
Brown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Body color is brown or black with light areas at the muzzle, eyes, flank and inside the upper legs.</li> <li>- Usually black on lower legs.</li> </ul>
Chestnut	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Body color is dark red or reddish-brown.</li> <li>- Mane and tail are usually the same color as the body, but may be flaxen.</li> </ul>
Sorrel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Body color is reddish or copper-red.</li> <li>- Mane and tail are usually the same color as the body, but may be flaxen.</li> <li>- Sorrel and chestnut are often intermixed.</li> </ul>

- White - A true white horse is born white and remains white throughout its life.  
- A white horse has snow white hair, pink skin and normally has brown eyes.
- Albino - All white horse with pink eyes due to lack of pigmentation in the skin.
- Dun - Body color is yellowish or gold.  
- Mane and tail may be black, brown, red, yellow, white, or mixed.  
- Often has dorsal stripe, zebra stripes on legs, and transverse stripe over withers.
- Buckskin - A form of dun with body color yellowish or gold.  
- Mane and tail are black.  
- Usually black on lower legs and dorsal stripe.
- Palomino - Body color is a golden yellow.  
- Mane and tail are white.
- Grey - Mixture of white and black hairs.  
- Usually born solid colored or almost solid colored becomes lighter with age.
- Roan - Any coat color except black mixed with white hairs.  
- Present at birth and does not change as the horse ages.
- Appaloosa - Irregular spotting of black (or brown) and white, either over the loin and hips or the entire body.
- Pinto - Body is mixed with white and another basic body color in distinct patterns as though paint had been splashed on the horse.  
- The two recognized color patterns are overo and tobiano.
- Tobiano - White markings starting on back or sides; markings are generally quite large and distinct.  
- Legs are often mainly white.  
- Head usually dark.
- Overo - White markings originate on belly and travel upwards not crossing the back.  
- Usually smaller patches with some shading on edges.  
- Legs, back, mane and tail are usually dark with white stocking.  
- Face may be white with blue eyes.
- Paint - Body dark black, chestnut, bay with white.  
- The ideal mixture is 50/50 although paints are often more white than dark.

## Definitions

- Flaxen - Straw yellow or dirty white color caused by a mixture of dark hair in with the white.
- Dorsal Stripe - Darker line found down the backbone.
- Transverse stripe - Dark stripe that runs across the withers.
- Zebra stripe - Dark stripes running horizontally on the forearm, knees and cannon.

## Markings

In the following diagrams note the markings commonly found on the face and legs of the horse, and the terms which are used to describe them.



Star & Snip



Strip



Blaze



Broad Blaze



Spot



Race



Coronet



Half Pastern



Pastern



Ankle



Half Stocking



Full Stocking



Both Heels



Inside Heel



Outside Heel

# Horse Judging - What to Look For...

## Conformation

Conformation includes type, muscling, balance and structural smoothness. It also includes the form and proportion of the various parts of the body.

## Type

Type depends on the function a horse is to perform.

## Body Types

All horses fit into one of the five following body types. Each of these types has specific characteristics which separate it from the next body type.

**Draft Type**

- Clydesdale, Shire, Belgian, Percheron, etc.
- heavily muscled, large framed, large boned
- used primarily for plowing, pulling, driving and other hard work

**Stock Type**

- Quarter Horse, Paint, Appaloosa, etc.
- well-muscled, deep bodied
- center of gravity is close to the ground
- used primarily for short-distance racing, roping, reining, cutting, pleasure and gymkhana events

**Saddle (Gaited) Type**

- Arabian, Morgan, Saddlebred, etc.
- longer muscled, longer neck and body, more refinement, higher set arching neck, higher tail carriage, often animated movement
- used primarily for pleasure, park and driving

**Hunter Type**

- Thoroughbred, Warmbloods, etc.
- larger, longer bodies, deeper hearted, longer muscled
- used primarily for long-distance racing, jumping, cross-country, 3-day eventing, dressage, pleasure

**Pony Type**

- Welsh, Shetland Pony, etc.
- usually 14.2 hands or less, usually resemble Stock Type or Saddle Type breeds, generally shorter neck and body
- used primarily for children's mounts and driving

## Muscling

What is muscling?

Muscle is the tissue which contracts and relaxes to cause your horse to move. Muscling refers to how well you can see the length, definition and volume of muscling in your horse.

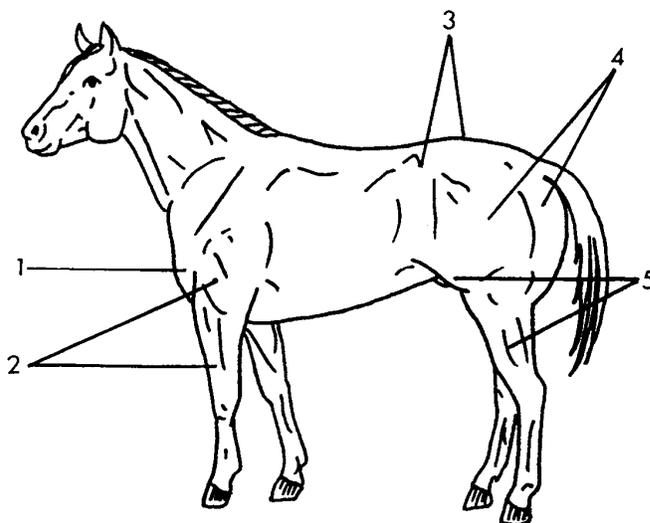
- Length - Long, smooth muscles are more desirable than short, bunchy muscles. Long muscles give the horse a longer stride and more endurance. Bunchy muscles tire more quickly and give your horse less endurance.
- Definition - You can easily see the outline or definition of each muscle beneath the skin of your horse.
- Volume - This is the amount of muscle. The greater the volume or amount of muscle, the greater the strength of the horse.

Both the quantity and the quality of the muscle are important.

Where do you look for muscling?

Evaluate the amount of muscling and determine if it is desirable. To find the amount of muscling on your horse, look in these areas:

1. Chest
2. Shoulder, arm and forearm
3. Loin and croup
4. Buttock and thigh
5. Stifle and gaskin



How does muscling differ from one horse to the next?

Well-defined muscling should be characteristic of all horses. Volume, length and definition of muscling should be uniform from the front to the rear and from one side to the other side of the horse. The length and volume of muscling that the horse should possess is determined by the body type and the breed of the horse.

1. Draft Type – Clydesdale, Shire, Belgian, Percheron, etc.

Draft type horses require a greater volume of muscling compared to horses with other body types because they are bred for strength and power. Thus, volume of muscling is of greater importance than length of muscling.

2. Stock Type – Quarter Horse, Paint, Appaloosa, etc.

In the stock type horse, length and volume of muscling are of similar importance. Volume of muscle is required for power and quick starts, while length of muscling is required for speed and suppleness. The length and volume of muscling in Stock Type horses is intermediate to the Draft and Hunter/Saddle/Pony types.

3. Hunter/Saddle/Pony Types – Thoroughbred, Arabian, Morgan, Saddlebred, Welsh, Shetland Pony, etc.

These body types have the least volume but the greatest length of muscling. Length is needed for speed, endurance and suppleness in these types of horses. Length of muscling is more important than volume of muscling.

**Balance**

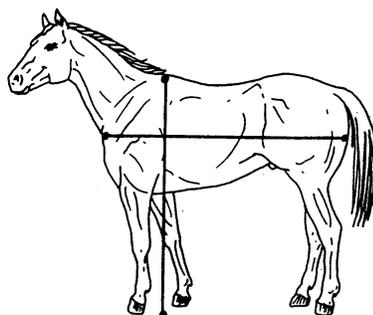
- Balance - All of the parts of the body are in correct proportion to each other, resulting in a pleasing appearance.
- Symmetry - When viewing the horse from the front and rear, divide the horse in half down the spinal column and down the middle of each limb.



**Methods of Determining Balance**

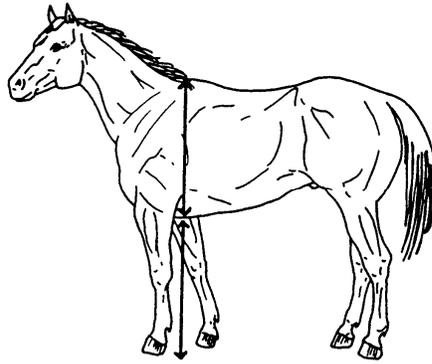
1. Length = Height

The length of the horse from the point of shoulder to the point of buttock should be equal to the height of the horse from the top of the withers to the ground.



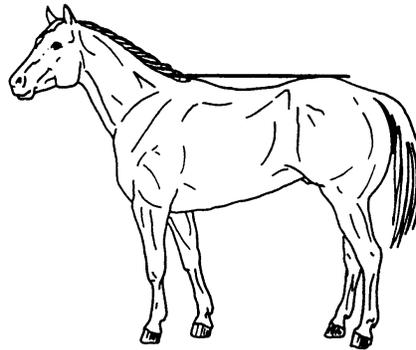
## 2. Length of Foreleg = Depth of Heartgirth

The length of the foreleg from the ground to the elbow should be equal to the depth of the heartgirth from the elbow to the top of the withers.



## 3. Levelness of Topline

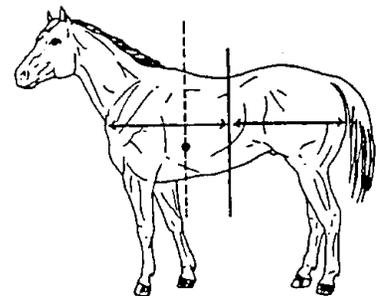
The point of the croup should be at the same height as the top of the withers.



## 4. Centre of the Horse

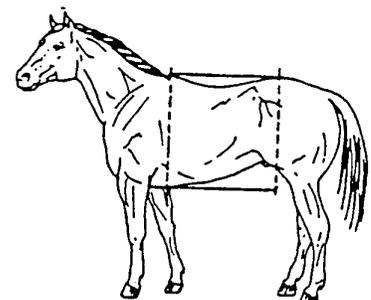
When the horse is divided through the center of the back, the forequarter (not including the head and neck), should be equal in size to the hindquarter.

Note that the center of gravity is different from the center of the horse. Because of the weight of the head and neck, the center of gravity is just behind the elbow when the horse is standing. When the horse is divided through the middle of the back, approximately 60% of the weight is carried on the front legs, because of the additional weight of the head and neck.



## 5. Top to Bottom Line Ratio

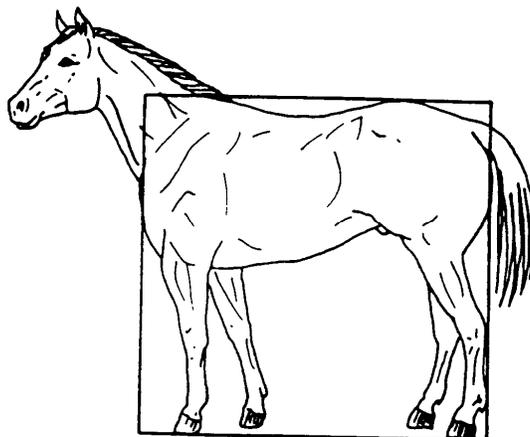
The well-balanced horse has a shorter top line (from the point of the withers to the point of the hip) in comparison to a longer bottom line (from the point of the elbow to the stifle).



## 6. Square

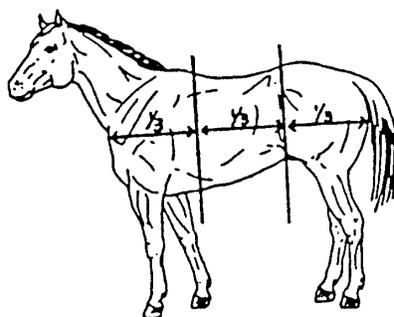
Draw a box around the horse so that:

- The width of the box is equal to the length of the horse from the point of the shoulder to the point of the buttock.
- The height of the box is equal to the height of the horse from the top withers to the ground.
- On a well-balanced horse, this box will form a square – all sides are equal.



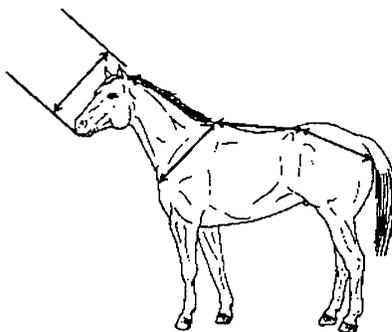
## 7. Divide the Horse in Thirds

Divide the horse into thirds by dropping lines down from the top of the withers and the point of the hip. The length of each of these three segments should be the same.



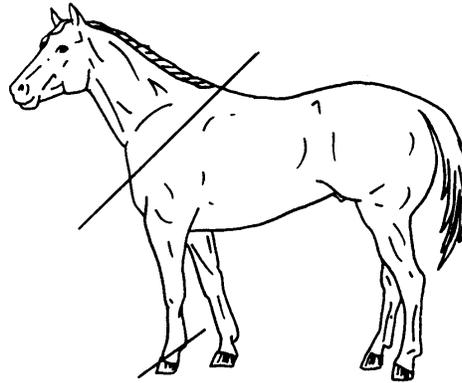
## 8. Equal Lengths

In the well-balanced horse, the head, neck, shoulder, topline and hip lengths should be approximately equal.



## 9. Parallel

In the well-balanced horse, the slope of the pastern and the slope from the point of shoulder to the withers should be parallel. They should both have a slope of 45°.



## Smoothness and Bloom

The head and the neck should be in proportion, and the neck should blend smoothly into the shoulder. The shoulder and forerib should fit smoothly together, the end coupling should be short and strong so that the top line is strong and the hips tie in smoothly. A horse with a thin neck and a sharp break at wide, prominent shoulders is not smooth. A horse with a weak coupling and jutting hips or extremely “bunchy” muscling is not smooth either.

- Smoothness - All parts of the horse's body should blend together smoothly, while having adequate muscle definition. The horse should be in good condition – neither so underweight that the ribs show, nor so overweight that there is little muscle definition.
- Bloom - The horse's haircoat should be short and shiny. This is referred to as bloom. A dull, shaggy coat indicates that the horse may not be healthy.

## Sex and Breed Character

Masculinity in the stallion and femininity in the mare defines the sex character. The stallion should have a bolder, stronger head, a more massive jaw and thicker, heavier neck and shoulders than a gelding or mare. A stallion has heavier bone and is larger and more rugged than a mare. Geldings do not show excessive masculinity. Mares should be feminine about the head and neck and more refined than stallions.

Each breed has slightly different characteristics about the head, as well as in body conformation. These are the points that denote one breed of horses from another. In breed classes or in selecting a horse of a particular breed, these points should be considered.

- Stallions - should look masculine
- when compared to geldings and mares, stallions should show:
1. heavier, more powerful muscling
  2. a larger and broader head
  3. a larger muzzle and jaw
  4. a thicker more muscular neck
  5. more substance for larger bone

- Mares
  - should look feminine
  - compared to stallions and geldings, mares should show more refinement about the head and neck
  - compared to stallions, mares are not as heavily muscled and have less substance of bone
- Geldings
  - should look more masculine than the mare, but much less masculine than the stallion
  - the volume of muscling and substance of bone in a gelding will be about the same as in the mare

*Note: A lack of masculinity in the stallion or a lack of femininity in the mare may indicate a reduced ability to reproduce.*

## Quality and Refinement

Refinement is a general lack of coarseness.

The factors closely associated with quality and refinement are:

1. a refinement of body parts – the horse should be smooth and clean-cut, not coarse
2. head looks clean-cut and chiseled
3. tendons and joints should be well-defined, not fleshy
4. bone should be clean and hard
5. tendons in the legs stand back from the cannon bone and give legs a flat appearance
6. short, shiny coat
7. tight, thin skin
8. hard, smooth, durable hooves
9. obvious sex character

## Action or “Way of Going”

Although the degree of action will vary with different breeds of horses depending on their use (draft, saddle, racing, stock horses or show), their usefulness depends on their ability to move well. In all breeds, motion should be straight and true, with a long well-coordinated, elastic stride. Excess lateral movement of the feet reduces efficiency and detracts from coordination.

## Action and Carriage

The horse should step out with plenty of snap, be a free, straight mover and have a long stride with good flexibility to the knee and hock. This flexibility enables you to see the full bottom side of front or back foot (seeing the shoe) when striding.

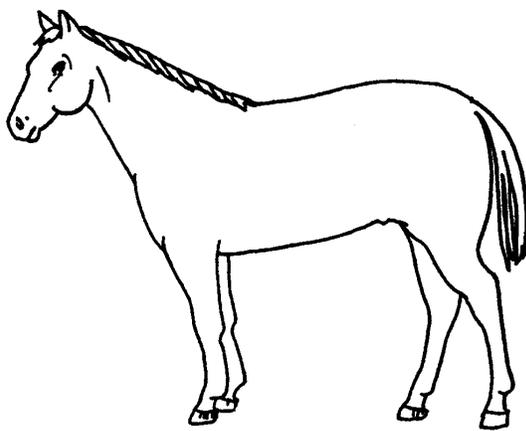
The trot will bring out any defects in action more clearly than at a walk.

Carriage is the stylish yet strong manner and ease in moving in which a horse travels. The feet, legs and body should move in a straight line and in a collected manner with the head carriage high and alert, giving an attractive arch to the neck.

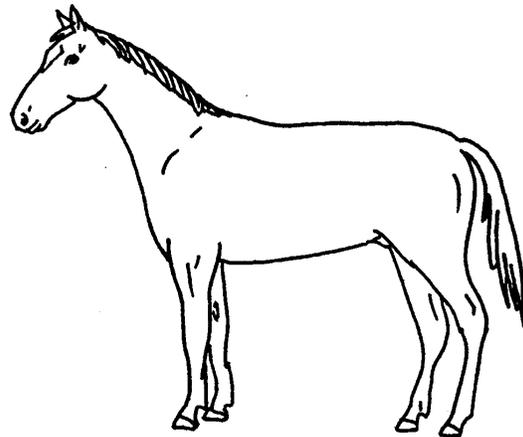
More information on way of going will also be provided later in this guide.

## The Ideal Horse

The ideal horse has specific characteristics. Let's examine these characteristics. As we discuss the desirable or ideal qualities for each characteristic, we will include the commonly found undesirable qualities or traits.



Good



Bad

## Bone and Legs

The bones of the legs should be flat, clean and free from fleshiness and puffiness. The bone should be of adequate strength and substance to support the horse during strenuous performance. The hock should be large, clean-cut, wide from front to back and deep. Gaskin muscles should tie in very strongly and low on the hock. The knee should be wide when viewed from the front, deep and clean-cut.

Tendons below the knees and hocks appear sharply separated from the canons, giving the leg a flat appearance.

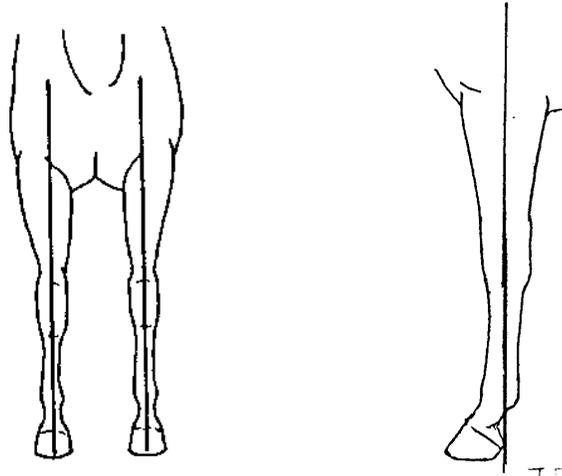
## The Forelimbs

- Side View - A line dropped perpendicular to the ground, or a plum line, should pass through the centre of the knee, cannon and fetlock, and touch the back of the heel.
- Front View - A plumb line dropped from the point of the shoulder should pass through the centre of the forearm, knee, cannon, fetlock, pastern and hoof.
- The knees and toes should point straight forward.
  - The feet should be as far apart on the ground as the limbs are at the point of the shoulder.

## General Structure of the Forelimbs

- Forearm - Long with well-defined muscling that ties in close to the knee. The muscle is large at the top of the forearm and tapers as it approaches the knee. Draft and Stock type horses will have more volume of muscle in the forearm when compared to the Hunter, Saddle and Pony types.

- Knee - Large, flat and clean-cut.
- Cannon - Shorter than the forearm and is wide with well-defined tendons along the back of the cannon when viewed from the side.
- Pastern - and hoof have an ideal angle of 45 degrees. The hoof should be durable and of appropriate size for the horse.



## Hindquarters

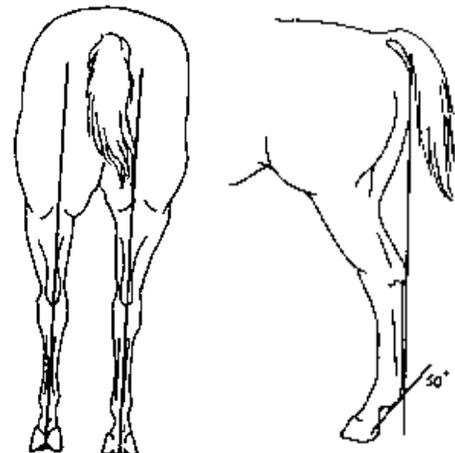
The rear quarters should be thick, deep and well-muscled when viewed from the side and rear. This muscling shows in thickness through the thigh, stifle and gaskin. The hind legs are muscled both inside and out, with the gaskin tied in low in the hock joint. The hocks are wide, deep and clean.

## The Hindlimbs

- Side View - A plumb line dropped from the point of the buttock should pass along the back of the hock, cannon and fetlock, and strike the ground 7.5 to 10 cm (3-4 inches) behind the heel.
- Rear View - A plumb line dropped from the point of the buttock should pass through the centre of the hock, cannon, fetlock, pastern and hoof. The feet should be as far part at the ground as they are at the hock.

## General Structure of the Hindlimbs

- Hock - Is large, deep, wide, clean and well-defined.
- Cannon - Is shorter than the distance from the stifle to the hock. Is wide with well-defined tendons along the back of the cannon when viewed from the side.
- Pastern - Has an ideal angle of 45-50 degrees.
- Hoof - Should be durable and of appropriate size for the horse.



Two or more defects in the feet and legs may appear together. (ie. Buck knees and bench knees, base narrow and toe out, etc.).

## Front Leg Defects

### Viewing from the Side

#### Buck Knees (over at the Knee)

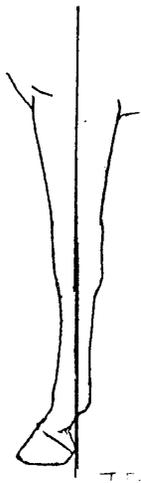
- the knee is forward of a line that bisects (divides in half) the foreleg
- this horse will be susceptible to bowed tendons

#### Calf Knees (Back at the Knee)

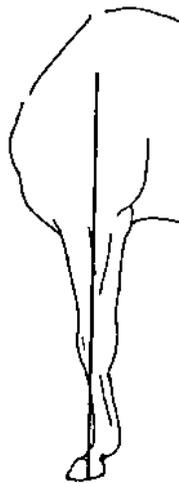
- the knee is behind a line that bisects the foreleg
- places excess stress on the front of the knee and strain on the tendons
- this horse will be susceptible to chip fractures of the knee and bowed tendons
- more serious than buck knees

#### Tied-In at the Knee

- the flexor tendon appears to be too close to the cannon bone just below the knee
- this horse will be susceptible to bowed tendons



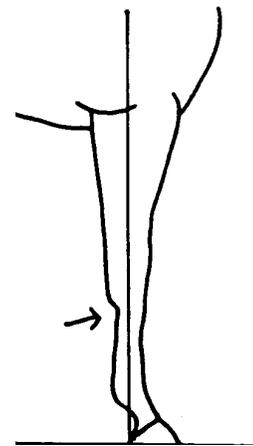
Ideal



Buck Knees

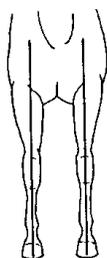


Calf Knees



Tied in at the Knee

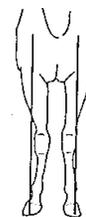
## Viewing from the Front



Ideal

### Knock Knees

- the knees lie inside parallel lines bisecting the forelegs
- places excess stress on the outer knee and strain on the inside ligaments of the forelegs



### Bandy Legs

- When a horse stands pigeon-toed on its hind feet, with the points of its hocks turned outward
- the bandy legged horse gives a lateral twist to its hocks, often referred to as “rotating hocks”



### Bench Knees

- the cannon bone is offset to the outside of the knee
- places more stress on the inside splint bones
- more susceptible to splints or knee chips



### Base Wide

- the legs are farther apart at the hoof than at the chest
- this fault is common to horses with a narrow chest
- because it creates uneven stress on the feet, it can cause ringbone



### Base Narrow

- the legs are closer together at the feet than at the chest.
- this fault can cause “interference” (one leg strikes another) or “plaiting” (placing one leg in front of the other)



### Toes In (Pigeon-Toes)

- the hooves are turned inward, causing the horse to “paddle” or “wing out”
- it puts extra stress on the outside of the foot and leg and may lead to ringbone



# Hind Leg Defects

## Viewing from the Side

### Sickle Hocks

- excessive angulation of the hock joint
- the horse appears to be standing under from the hock down
- places excess strain on the planter ligament
- susceptible to curbs

### Post-Legged

- insufficient angulation of the hock joint
- the entire leg appears too straight
- the hindleg is usually set ahead of a line dropped from the point of the buttock
- the pasterns are usually also too straight
- places excess stress on the front of the hock joint and on the stifle joint
- susceptible to bog spavins, thoroughpins, bone spavins or upward fixation of the patella

### Camped Out

- the legs are set behind the line
- this makes it difficult for the horse to “engage his rear quarters” or move them under



Ideal



Stands Under (Sickle Hock)



Camped Out



Legs too Straight (Post Leg)

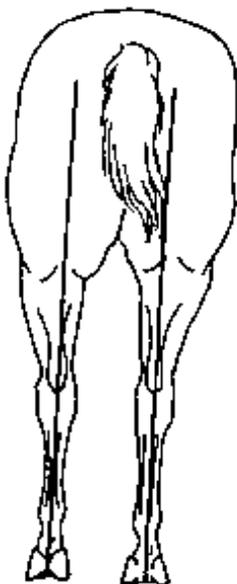
## Viewing from the Rear

### Cow Hocks

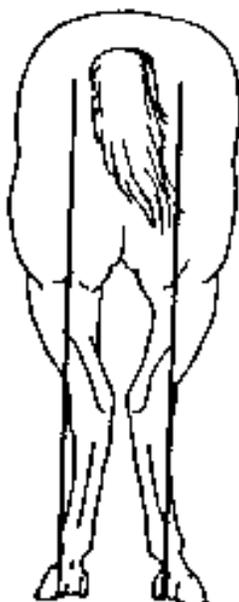
- the hocks are too close together and point toward one another causing the feet to be widely separated and often pointing outward
- one of the worst hind leg defects
- places excess stress on the hock joint and strain on the ligaments
- susceptible to bone spavins, curbs or thoroughpins

### Bow-Legged

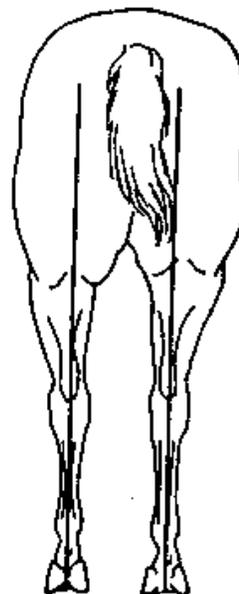
- the hocks lie outside parallel lines bisecting the hind legs
- may cause interference because horse moves narrower at the ground than at the hock
- places excess stress on the hock joint and strain on the ligaments
- susceptible to bog spavins, curbs or thoroughpins



Ideal



Cow Hocked



Bow Legged

# Front and/or Hind Leg Defects

Viewing from the Side

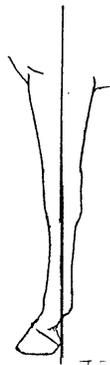
## Standing Under (Camped Under)

- Front Legs - the entire foreleg from the elbow down is too far under the body  
 - places excess weight on the forelegs
- Rear Legs - the entire hindleg is placed too far forward under the body  
 - the horse may also be sickle-hocked or post-legged; stress is the same as for sickle hocks or post-legged, respectively

## Camped Out

- Front Legs - the entire foreleg from the elbow down is too far forward  
 - places excess stress on the front of the knee and strain on the ligaments and tendons
- Rear Legs ~ the entire hindleg is placed too far backward  
 ~ the horse may also have steep rear pasterns and/or be sickle hocked; stress is the same as for sickle hocks

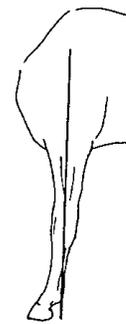
Front Legs



Ideal



Camped Under



Camped Out

Rear Legs



Ideal



Camped Under



Camped Out

### Steep Pasterns

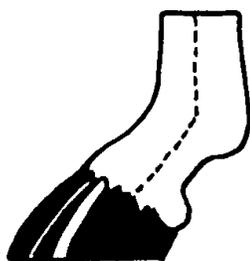
- often accompanied by a steep shoulder
- pastern length may be short or long
- increases the effect of concussion on the fetlock joint, pastern and navicular bone
- called a “club foot” if the hoof angle is also too steep
- predisposed to osselets, ringbone and navicular disease

### Weak Pasterns

- usually too long and sloping
- in extreme cases, the fetlock may touch the ground when the horse travels
- predisposed to injury of the tendons, ligaments and the fetlock joint

### Broken Hoof / Pastern Axis (Angle)

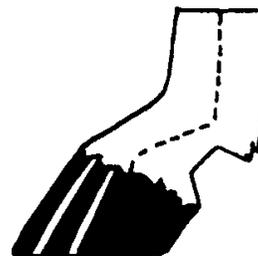
- the angle of the pastern and the angle of the hoof are not the same
- when the pastern is more sloped than the front wall of the hoof, it is called a “coon foot”
- places additional strain on the tendons and ligaments



Ideal



Steep Pasterns or Club Foot

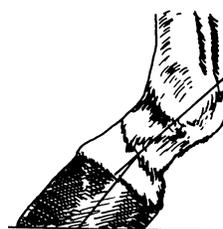


Weak Pasterns

### Broken Foot



Type 1  
Broken foot in which the foot axis is less upright than the pastern axis.



Type 2  
Broken foot in which the foot axis is more upright than the pastern axis. Also called “Coon Foot”.

## Viewing from the Front/Rear

### Base-Narrow

- the forelegs (hindlegs) are closer together at the ground than at the top of the leg

### Base-Wide

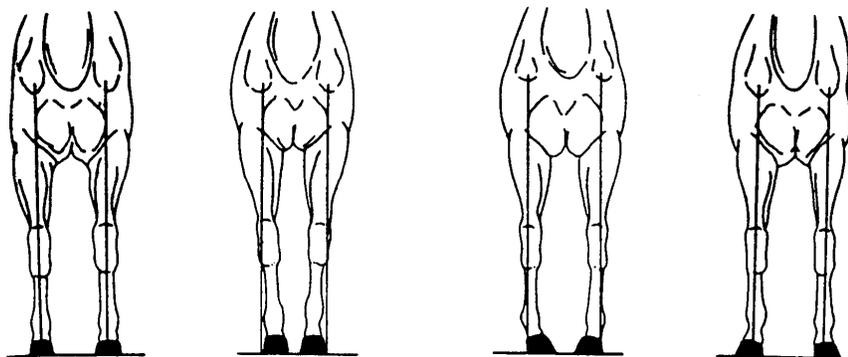
- the forelegs (hindlegs) are farther apart at the ground than at the top of the leg
- may be accompanied by toe-in or toe-out (most common) conformation
- places more weight and stress on the inside of the legs
- predisposed to windpuffs, ringbone and sidebone

### Toe-In (Pigeon Toed)

- the toes point toward each other
- usually seen with base-narrow conformation

### Toe-Out (Splay-Footed)

- the toes point away from each other
- may be seen with either base-narrow or base-wide conformation
- usually present if the horse is cow-hocked

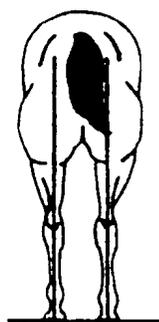


Ideal

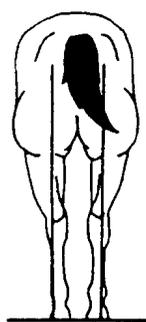
Base Narrow

Pigeon Toed

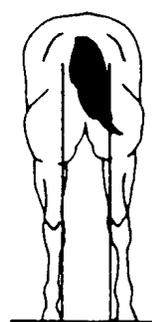
Toes Out



Ideal



Stands Close



Stands Wide

## Head

### From the Front

- Shape - is triangular with wide set eyes, tapering to a reasonably sized muzzle
- Eyes - are large and set out on the sides of the head
- Nostrils - are large and flaring
- Ears - are clean cut and in proportion to the size of the head

### From the Side

- Shape - is triangular and deep from the poll to the jaw, tapering to a reasonable size muzzle
- the bridge of nose may be straight or slightly dished
- the throatlatch is clean and free from excess fat



Good



Poor

## Head – Deviations from the Ideal

- Roman Nose - the bridge of the nose has a rounded or convex shape when viewed from the side
- restricts the horse's frontal vision
- Pig Eye - small eyes which are set too far back into the head
- restricts vision, especially to the rear
- horse often has a nervous or unruly disposition
- Platter Jaw - excessively large jaw
- most commonly found in Stock Type breeds
- reduces the ability of the horse to flex at the poll
- may restrict breathing, blood circulation and swallowing

### Parrot Mouth

- top jaw is longer than bottom jaw

### Overshot

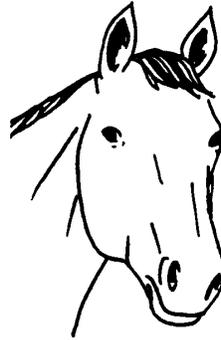
- bottom jaw is longer than top jaw



Ideal Head



Roman Nose



Pig Eye



Platter Jaw

### Neck

#### Length

- is long from the poll to the withers

#### Shape

- is clean and trim, arching from poll to withers

#### Set

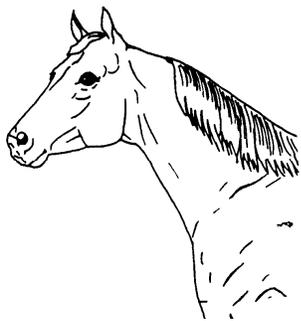
- is high and smooth into the top of the withers and high into the chest above the point of the shoulder

#### Ewe Neck

- neck appears to be “turned over”
- restricts flexation at the poll
- horse tends to throw head upward
- restricts vision

#### Cresty Neck

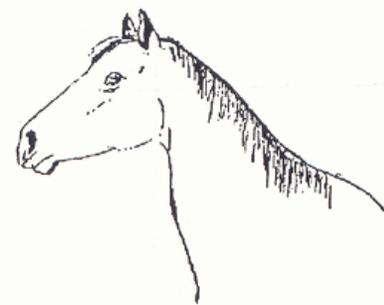
- excess fat deposits on the crest of the neck
- increases the weight carried on the forelegs



Ideal



Cresty Neck



Ewe Neck

### Withers

#### Shape

- is long, tying smoothly into the back, and high enough to hold the saddle on securely

Shoulder - length and angle of shoulder are long, and sloping about 45 degrees to aid in shock absorption

#### Steep Shoulder

- shoulder angle steeper than 50 degrees
- decreases the length of stride
- increases concussion or pressure on the forelegs

#### Chest and Ribs (Barrel)

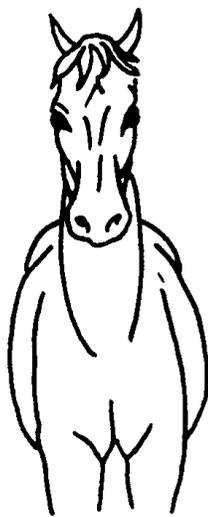
Size - the chest is deep and wide when viewed from the front. The ribs are well-sprung and deep. This conformation provides room for the maximum function of the heart and lungs.

#### Narrow Chest

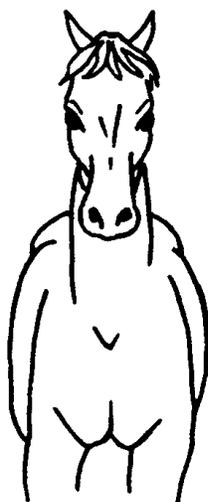
- legs are too close together
- legs may interfere when horse travels

#### Extra-Wide Chest

- legs set too far apart
- causes a laboring, waddling stride



Narrow Chest



Ideal



Extra-Wide Chest

#### Back and Loin (Coupling)

Size - is short and wide over the top, and is well-muscled  
- the only skeletal support in the loin is provided by the spinal column. Therefore, adequate muscling is necessary for additional strength. Inadequate muscling and a long coupling often result in a sagging, weak topline, often referred to as a swayback.

## Topline

### Mutton Withers

- low, wide withers
- withers are prone to injury if saddle slides forward
- hard to keep the saddle in place – prone to slip to one side

### Sway Back

- weak topline
- usually seen in older horses
- usually seen in horses with long backs and/or loins
- restricts ability to pull legs forward beneath the hindquarters

### Roach Back

- loin has a rounded (convex) appearance when viewed from the side
- restricts flexibility



Ideal

Mutton Withers

Sway Back

Roach Back

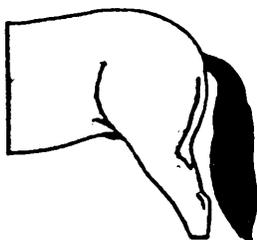
## Hip and Croup

### Length

- is long and is well-muscled

### Shape

- so the point of the croup is directly over the point of the hip. The croup should slope gently to the tail head



Good Croup

## Hindquarters

### From the Side

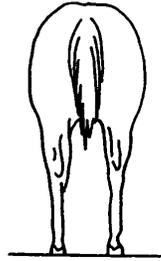
### Size

- the hindquarters are deep and well-muscled

## From the Rear

- Size**
- the hindquarters are deep and well-muscled
  - muscling volume, length and definition depend on body type. Both the inside and outside of the legs should be well-muscled. The gaskin muscle should tie high into the stifle and deep into the hock.

- Shape**
- is well-rounded over the croup. The width at the stifle should be at least as great as the width at the point of the hip.



Good



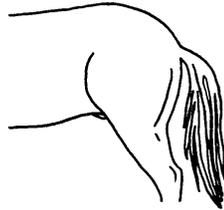
Poor

## Goose Rump

- hip is too steep when viewed from the side
- decreases the length of stride and speed
- increases concussion on the hindlegs

## Rafter Hip

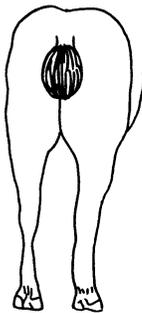
- when viewed from the rear, the width at the point of the hip is greater than the width at the stifle
- the hip is too flat over the top
- indicates a lack of muscular development
- horse may interfere during travelling due to lack of muscular support



Good Rump



Goose Rump



Ideal  
Broad Double  
Hindquarters of  
a draft horse



Ideal  
"Pear Shape"  
of the Quarterhorse



Normal  
Hindquarters  
with square thighs



Rafter Hip

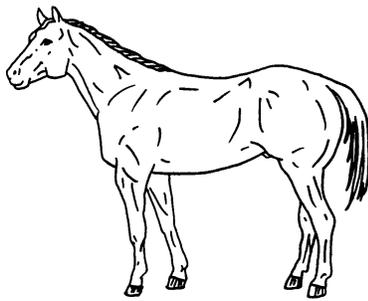
## Heartgirth and Flank

### Shallow Heartgirth

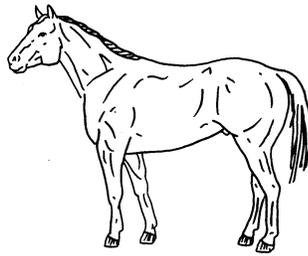
- depth from withers to elbow is less than the length from elbow to ground
- restricts the capacity for heart and lungs
- may decrease endurance of the horse

### Shallow Flank (Cut up in the Flank)

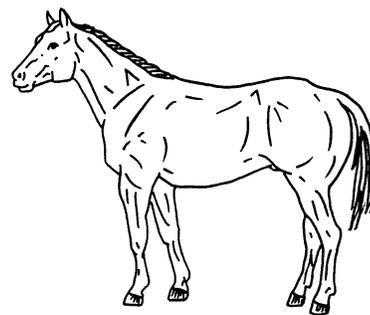
- pronounced narrowing in the flank region
- decreases capacity of digestive system
- decreases the foal carrying capacity in mares



Shallow Heartgirth



Ideal



Shallow Flank

## Way of Going or Travel

The way the horse travels is the way the horse moves. Ideally, both the front and hind legs should move forward in a straight line, without any deviation to the inside or outside. This is the most efficient way of moving. It places the least stress on the limbs. The horse should also move with a long, fluid, ground clearing stride rather than a short, choppy stride. A horse that drags the toes will kick up dust when he moves.

## Viewing from the Front / Rear

### Paddling (Winging Out)

- throwing the feet outward while in motion
- usually associated with toe-in conformation

### Winging (Winging In, Dishing)

- throwing the feet inward while in motion
- usually associated with toe-out conformation
- more serious than paddling since it may lead to interference when the horse moves

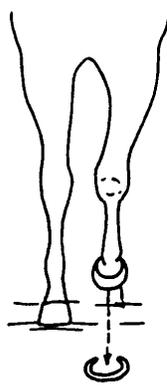
### Plaiting (Rope Walking)

- twisting of the striding leg around the supporting leg so that the horse appears to be walking a tightrope
- one forefoot may appear to land directly in front of the other
- more serious than paddling since it may lead to interference and stumbling

Daisy Cutter - a horse that doesn't get the feet up off the ground (term usually in draft horses).

### Interference

- when one foreleg (hindleg) strikes the opposite foreleg (hindleg) while in motion



Ideal



Paddling



Winging



Plaiting



Interference

## Viewing from the Side

### Overreaching

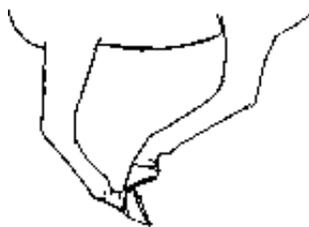
- the hindfoot strikes the heel of the forefoot before the forefoot leaves the ground
- if the horse is shod, the front shoe may be pulled off by the hindfoot

### Forging

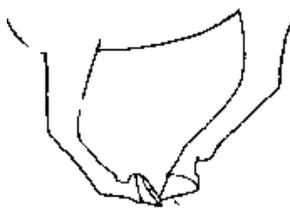
- the toe of the hindfoot strikes the sole or shoe of the forefoot while in motion

### Scalping

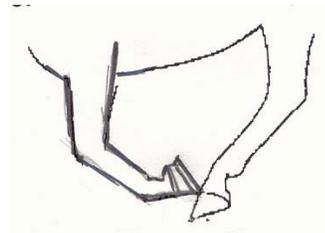
- the toe of the forefoot strikes the coronary band of the hindfoot



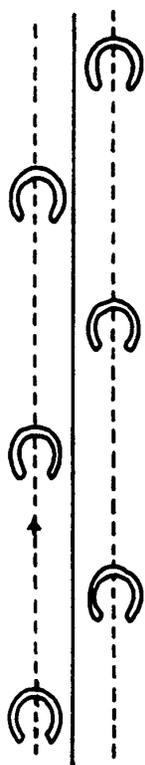
Overreaching



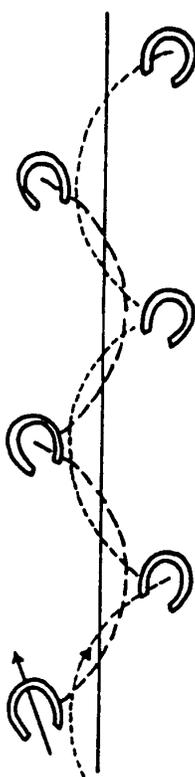
Forging



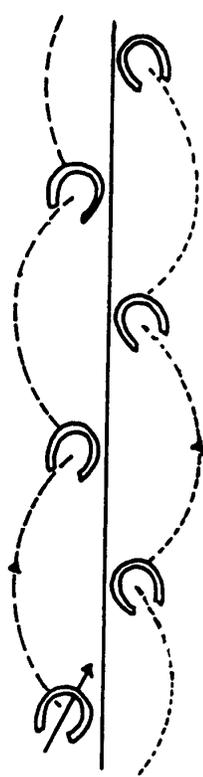
Scalping



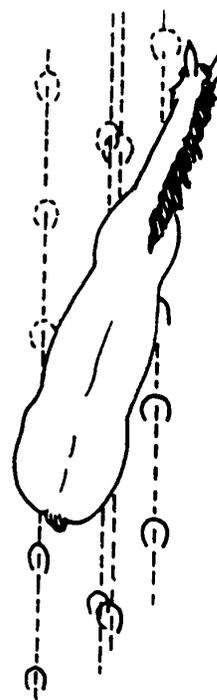
Normal



Horse that  
Toes Out



Horse that  
Toes In



Dog Style  
Movement

## Action in the Draft Horse

The draft horse is shown at two gaits, the walk and the trot. Action at the walk is of primary importance with a heavy horse since this is the gait at which the horse must go about his work. In most show ring situations the horse will be moved directly away from the judge and toward the judge, at both the walk and the trot. There is also something to be said for looking at a horse as he passes by, but ring size and time do not generally permit a judge the luxury of this broadside view.

Economy and efficiency of movement is what you are looking for, remember these are DRAFT horses. This means you want a long stride, one that will cover some ground; plenty of snap indicating a willingness to work; straight movement with the hocks carried reasonably close together for they will spread when pulling a serious load; and joints that flex so that each foot is lifted cleanly off the ground and those feet should hit the ground in such manner that the frog takes the impact...not the toe or heel.

Each move has a specific purpose in the show ring. Walking away from the judge, the judge can observe whether there is enough flex in knees and hocks so that each bottom shows plainly, is carried forward in a straight line, and that the hocks are carried reasonably close to one another.

Returning to the judge, the judge can again note the same things and that the feet are meeting the ground in such a way that no dirt, dust, or tanbark is being kicked forward by the impact. This means that the frog and heel are meeting the ground ahead of the toe. If the toe meets the ground first, the step will appear stubby and you have a short-strided horse prone to stumbling.

Action at the trot is probably more important now than it was when greater numbers of horses were putting in full days in harness. Even so, it has always been important.

The trot is important because a horse will often reveal more about himself at the trot than the walk, ie. deficiencies tend to become evident. If the animal is prone to spraddle (go too wide at the hocks); interfere (due to going too close); wing or paddle (throw the forefeet either out or in); roll (have a rolling gait with too much shoulder movement due to the legs being placed too wide); or not strike the ground with heel and frog first (a short, stubby stride)...all of those things which subtract in a significant way to his usefulness, are more easily seen at the trot than the walk. With today's emphasis on hitching, there is also more stress on style. And it is also fun. Show people, especially young ones with good knees themselves, love to show a good horse at the trot. If cows could trot (and not look like a turtle doing it), more people would watch cow shows.

The view from the side, or broadside, which is rarely used in the show ring, is particularly useful in two respects...showing the length of stride and how the feet are striking ground. A good judge will, however, pretty well be able to assess these characteristics by watching them go toward and away from him.

A couple terms you may encounter are "rope walking" which means the horse swings the striding leg around and in front of the supporting leg. A "daisy cutter" is a horse that simply doesn't get those feet up off the ground.

Most of the faults in movement are rooted in faults of conformation and temperament. Horses that either toe in or toe out, stand wide at the hocks, have short, stubby pasterns, and have straight or post legged hocks, or are of a lethargic temperament, are almost certain to pay the price for those shortcomings when shown on the move.

There is currently a debate on “how high is high enough” in terms of movement. In the hitch classes, it sometimes seems that there isn’t a “high enough”. Yet common sense and observation tell us that extreme flexion of the joints with Hackney-like movement both shortens up the stride and calls for an extra expenditure of energy. And both are contrary to draft purposes if carried to extremes.

\* Reprinted with permission from “So You Want To Show Draft Horses” by The Draft Horse journal.

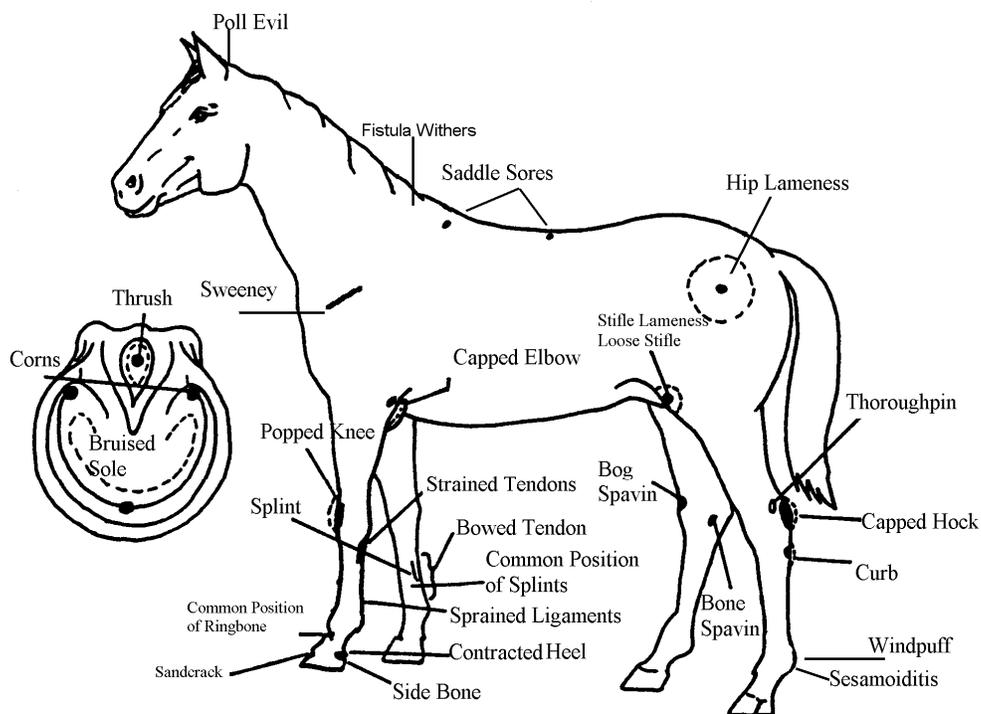
## Unsoundness & Blemishes

Soundness is extremely important since a horse’s performance depends on his ability to move freely. An unsoundness refers to any deviation or abnormality in the structure of the horse that interferes with its usefulness. (e.g. bog spavin).

A blemish is an abnormality that affects only the appearance, not the serviceability, of the horse. (e.g. wire cut).

Remember no horse is perfect. It is important to know and recognize common unsoundnesses and blemishes. Then you can judge for yourself how important they are in relation to how the horse will be used.

The illustration below shows the location of some common unsoundnesses and blemishes.



Some of the following are considered as a blemish (B), some as an unsoundness (U) and still others as both (B/U).

## Definitions

A major point in judging horses or examining one prior to purchase is recognising unsoundness and blemishes, and calculating the importance of each. A blemish is an abnormality which may detract from the appearance of a horse, but does not affect his serviceability. An unsoundness is an abnormality that interferes with the usefulness of the horse.

Certain unsoundness are inherited and are more serious than those which are acquired by accident. Inherited unsoundnesses make a horse undesirable for breeding, showing or performance.

- Blemish (B) - an injury or imperfection which affects the value of the horse, but not its serviceability. (ie. Wire cuts, rope burns, capped hocks, etc.)
- Unsoundness (U) - an injury or abnormality which affects the value of the horse and its serviceability. (ie. Blindness, ringbone, navicular disease, etc.)

## Upper Body

- Blindness (U) - complete lack of vision in one or both eyes  
- may be caused by injury or disease  
- blind horses will not react to quick motions near the affected eye(s)
- Fistulous Withers (U) - an inflammation of the withers  
- usually caused by bruising
- Heaves (Broken Wind) (U) - difficulty in forcing air out of the lungs  
- usually more noticeable after exercise  
- horse contracts abdominal muscles forcibly to expel air  
- usually accompanied by a chronic cough  
- most often occurs in older horses  
- horse is unsound for strenuous work  
- often caused by musty hay in combination with poor ventilation and dry air
- Hernia (U) - the protrusion of any internal organ through the body wall  
- usually seen in the abdominal, umbilical or scrotal areas
- Monkey Mouth (U) - a hereditary condition in which the lower jaw is longer than the upper jaw
- Moon Blindness - a cloudy or inflamed condition of the eye characterized by tearing and squinting of the affected eye or eyes
- Poll Evil (U) - an inflamed area between the ears  
- usually caused by a bruise in the poll region
- Roaring (U) - characterized by a whistling or roaring sound occurring with inspiration, especially with increased respiration from exercise  
- caused by paralysis of the muscles of the larynx, often due to a lengthy respiratory infection  
- most cases can be corrected surgically

- Sweeny (U, B)
- atrophy or shrinkage of the shoulder muscles
  - in advanced cases, the shoulder appears flat and the shoulder blade- or scapula is readily visible
  - caused by a direct injury to the supracapular nerve which serves the shoulder muscles
  - the nerve does not regenerate, so the performance ability of the horse is limited

## Feet and Legs

- Bog Spavin (U, B)
- a soft filling of the natural depression on the front and inside of the hock joint
  - usually due to faulty conformation or injury
  - rarely causes lameness
- Bone Spavin (Jack Spavin) (U)
- a bony enlargement on the inside and front lower hock where the hock tapers into the cannon bone
  - usually due to faulty conformation or injury
  - usually causes lameness
- Bowed Tendon (U)
- an enlargement of any or all of the tendons and ligaments behind the cannon
  - caused by excess stretching of the tendon due to stress or faulty conformation
  - occurs most commonly in the forelegs
- Buck Knees
- are horses over-at-the-knee or whose knees protrude too far forward when viewed from the side
- Bucked Shins (U, B)
- inflammation of the periosteum or bone covering on the front side of the cannon bone
  - characterized by a painful swelling along the front of the cannon
  - horse will usually try to rest the affected leg(s)
  - seen most frequently in young horses which are subjected to hard, fast work
  - lameness is usually temporary if the horse receives adequate rest.
- Capped Elbow (Soft Boil) (B)
- a soft fluid-filled or firm swelling at the point of the elbow
- Capped Hock (U, B)
- a firm enlargement on the point of the hock
  - due to injury
  - rarely causes lameness
- Contracted Heels (U, B)
- the hoof is narrower than normal (contracted), especially at the heels
  - most common in the forelegs
  - often due to improper shoeing
- Corn
- a bruise of the soft tissue underlying the horny sole of the foot which is seen as a reddish discoloration of the sole immediately below the affected area

- Curb (U, B)
- an enlargement of the ligament found on the upper rear part of the cannon below the hock (the planter ligament)
  - caused by injury or faulty conformation
  - may cause lameness
- Founder (Laminitis) (U)
- an inflammation of the sensitive laminae of the foot
  - characterized by horizontal “founder rings” in the hoof wall
  - Usually more severe in the front feet
  - in severe cases, the horse may stand camped out in front to relieve pressure on the front feet
- Navicular Disease (U)
- a degenerative disease of the navicular bone, navicular bursa and deep flexor tendon
  - primary causes are strenuous work and poor conformation (ie. Small feet, steep pasterns and shoulders).
  - rarely affects the hind feet
  - horse may point the most affected foot or stand with the forefeet extended forward
  - horse will try to land toe first when travelling to avoid frog pressure and concussion
  - the stride is short and choppy
  - no cure exists, but drugs and corrective shoeing may be used to ease pain
  - the nerves may be surgically severed in severe cases
- Osselets (U, B)
- an enlargement, either fluid-filled or bony, on the front side of the fetlock joint, generally slightly off-center of the front of the leg
  - the horse may travel with a short, choppy stride
  - usually caused by stress and concussion from hard work or faulty conformation
  - lameness is usually temporary unless the bone growth interferes with joint mobility
- Popped Knee (U, B)
- a swelling of the front of the knee
  - usually caused by injury or concussion
- Quittor (U, B)
- a deep-seated inflammation of the hoof which drains pus through the coronary band
  - caused by a direct injury such as puncture wounds, cuts, interference, etc.
- Ringbone (U, B)
- bony enlargement(s) on one or more bones and/or joints of the pastern region
  - most common in the forelegs
  - caused by injury or faulty conformation
- Sand Cracks (U, B)
- cracks in the hoof wall
  - they may start at the coronet and go down, or at the bottom of the hoof wall and go up
  - usually caused by injury or interference

- Scratches (grease heel) - a dermatological inflammation of the posterior surfaces of the fetlocks and pastern
- Sidebone (U, B) - bony enlargement(s) above and to the rear of the hoof  
 - most common in the forelegs  
 - usually caused by concussion due to faulty conformation
- Splay-foot - the toes of the front leg turn outward  
 - the striding foot of a splay-footed horse will swing inward toward the supporting leg  
 - interference is almost inevitable
- Splint (U, B) - a calcification (bone growth) on the inside and outside of the cannon bone  
 - most commonly found inside the front cannon  
 - usually due to injury or faulty conformation
- Stifled (U) - also known as Upward Fixation of the Patella  
 - occurs when the stifle is fully extended  
 - the patella (which corresponds to the kneecap in the human) becomes displaced and locks in place above the stifle joint  
 - it may release on its own or may require manual manipulation  
 - seen most frequently in post-legged horses  
 - once this occurs, the ligaments are stretched and the horse will be prone to stifling again  
 - may be surgically corrected
- Stringhalt (U) - an involuntary flexion of the hock during movement  
 - may affect one or both hind legs  
 - the cause is unknown  
 - the action is accentuated when the horse is turned or backed  
 - most noticeable after the horse has rested  
 - severe cases may be corrected surgically
- Thoroughpin (U, B) - a puffy swelling of the hollow above the hock joint  
 - moveable by hand pressure from one side of the hock to the other  
 - usually due to injury or faulty conformation  
 - rarely affects the horse after the initial lameness has disappeared
- Thrush (B) - a disease of the frog of the hoof characterized by a black, foul smelling discharge  
 - usually results from unsanitary conditions
- Windpuffs (B) - puffy, fluid-filled swellings at the top of the fetlock joint  
 - most common in the hindlegs  
 - usually a result of heavy work

# Form to Function

## The Relationship of Form to Function

The definition of form to function, according to Dr. Marvin Beeman, is:

*“For each particular function of the horse, there is a particular form that will enhance that function.”*

The following points are related to this definition of form to function. Consider these points when evaluating the horse:

- The horse is an athlete. We must evaluate the structures which contribute to its ability to perform and remain sound. Most unsoundnesses are a direct result of additional stress, strain and concussion resulting from poor conformation.
- Conformation is heritable, whether it is good or bad.
- Conformation and breed type should be evaluated against a standard of excellence. Most breed associations establish a standard of excellence for their own breed.
- No one part of the horse is of greater importance than another. Each part has a specific function and a role to play.
- Factors which you should consider when determining the severity of a particular deviation include:
  - The degree of deviation. Is it slight, moderate, or severe?  
(ie. Slightly sickle hocked vs severely sickle hocked)
  - The likelihood that the deviation will lead to unsoundness or decreased usefulness. (ie. A horse that is slightly buck-kneed is less likely to become unsound than a horse that is slightly calf-kneed because the knee is designed to bend forward.)
  - Other existing deviations which may make the horse more susceptible to unsoundness. (ie. A horse with steep pasterns and small feet is more likely to become unsound than a horse with steep pasterns and adequate size feet).
  - The intended use of the horse. (ie. A horse with small nostrils may be unsound as a race or endurance horse, but may be fine if used as a children’s mount.)

## The Functional Aspects of Conformation

The form of the ideal horse will give this horse superior function. Let’s look at each of the body parts and see how their form relates to their function.

### Head

The size of the head should be in proportion to the size of the horse.

If the head is too large:

- the center of gravity is shifted forward
- the horse tends to be a heavy mover
- vision may be restricted

If the head is too small:

- the center of gravity is shifted backward
- the horse tends to be light in front
- there is inadequate room for the teeth and other internal structures in the head

The head should be of a triangular shape to increase the cranial or brain capacity. If the bridge of the nose is rounded, as is the roman nose, frontal vision is restricted.

The eyes should be large and wide set to increase the horse's field of vision. When the eyes are small and set back into the head, as in pig eyes, vision is restricted, especially to the rear and the horse often has a nervous or unruly disposition.

The nostrils should be large and flaring to increase the airflow in and out of the lungs.

The throatlatch should be wide and clean to provide room for breathing, swallowing and circulation, and to increase the ability of the horse to flex at the poll. An excessively large jaw, such as the platter jaw will reduce the ability of the horse to flex at the poll and may restrict breathing, blood circulation and swallowing.

## Neck

Because the horse uses the head and neck as a balancing arm, adequate length is required to maintain equilibrium and balance. With increased length of muscle, the range of movement of the shoulder and the length of the stride will increase.

If the neck is too long the weight of the forehead increases.

If the neck is too short the length of stride and suppleness decrease, as is often associated with a thick, heavy neck.

A neck with a clean, arched shape is more flexible, especially at the poll. The shoulder rotation and the length of stride will also be increased. The ewe neck restricts flexation at the poll, restricts vision, and the horse tends to throw head upward. A cresty necked horse carries more weight on the forelegs.

The depth and set of the neck also affect the horse's function. A trim neck set high into the shoulder decreases the weight on the forehead. A thick or low set neck increases the weight on the forehead.

## Withers

Withers of a longer length have a greater area for muscle attachment. These muscles are required for:

- raising the head and neck
- moving the head and neck from side to side
- rotation of the shoulder
- extension of the spine

Long withers are frequently associated with well-sloped shoulders.

Low, wide withers, referred to as mutton withers, are prone to injury if the saddle slides forward. It is hard to keep the saddle in place on mutton withers since the saddle is more likely to slip to one side.

## Shoulder

The horse's front leg is attached to the body only by muscle and tendons. The front legs are a sling which holds the body.

A long shoulder or scapula increases the area of attachment and length of muscles, providing greater shoulder rotation, forearm extension and length of stride.

The slope of the shoulder is measured along the scapula spine to the top of the withers, not from point of shoulder. A well-sloped shoulder provides shock absorption and allows the foreleg to be raised higher to allow the stride to be fully completed before the foot strikes the ground. A more sloping shoulder provides freedom of movement, elasticity of gait, lightens the forehand and decreases concussion. A steep shoulder decreases the length of stride, increases concussion on the forelegs and gives the horse a rougher gait.

The muscling of the shoulder should be long and well-developed for strength and absorption of concussion. Too much muscle increases the weight on the forehand and decreases the freedom of movement.

## Arm

The size affects the function. The arm should be relatively short but well muscled. A well-sloped shoulder is usually accompanied by a fairly upright arm which allows for greater forward extension of the foreleg. An arm which is too long restricts the movement, and muscles tire quickly. An arm which is too short decreases the length of the stride.

## Chest

The chest should be wide, deep and well-muscled. This will increase the ability of the horse to move laterally. A chest that is too wide produces a laboring, waddling stride. When the chest is too narrow the horse may interfere when travelling.

## Barrel

The horse needs depth of heartgirth and spring of fore rib to provide adequate room for the maximum function of the heart and lungs. A lack of depth and spring of rib decreases the capacity of the heart and lung. A deep flank and spring of rear rib increases the digestive capacity and the foal carrying capacity in mares.

## Back and Loin

The only skeletal support in the loin is provided by the spinal column. Therefore, adequate muscling is necessary for additional strength. A swayback horse has restricted ability to pull its legs forward beneath the hindquarters. A roach back horse has restricted flexibility.

## Hip and Croup

A long hip and croup have longer muscles which increase the length of stride.

The shape of the hip and croup vary according to body type. A more level hip and croup provide a long, flowing stride, while a more sloping hip and croup allow the hind legs to drive further underneath the body for power and speed.

A rump which is too steep, or a goose rump, decreases the length of stride and speed, and increases the concussion on the hindlegs. A rafter hipped horse may interfere during travelling because of the lack of muscular support.

## Hindquarters

A well-muscled hindquarter is necessary for strength and power. The volume and length of muscling depend upon body type.

## Feet and Legs

### Forearm

A longer forearm allows for greater extension of the foreleg. Long muscling provides greater contraction and lift of leg. Volume of muscling provides power and support for the lower leg.

### Knee

The size of the knees affects the function of the horse. A large, clean, flat knee increases the area of attachment for tendons, ligaments and muscles, and increases the area of support to reduce stress on the knee.

A buck kneed horse is susceptible to bowed tendons. A calf kneed horse is susceptible to chip fractures of the knee and bowed tendons. Calf knees are more serious than buck knees because the knee does not bend backwards.

A horse which is tied-in at the knee is predisposed to bowed tendons.

Knock knees cause excess stress on the outer knee and strain on the inside ligaments of the forelegs. Bowlegs cause excess stress on the inner knee and strain on the outside ligaments of the forelegs. Bench knees cause more stress on the inside splint bones and the horse is predisposed to splints or knee chips.

### Gaskin

A longer gaskin (tibia) allows greater extension of the hindleg. Long muscling provides greater contraction and lift of the leg. A greater volume of muscling provides power and support for the lower leg.

## Hock

A large, clean, flat hock provides greater surface area for the attachment of tendons, ligaments and muscles and increases the area of support to reduce stress on the hock.

Sickled hocks place excess strain on the planter ligament. A sickle hocked horse is predisposed to curbs.

A post-legged horse has excess stress placed on the front of the hock joint and on the stifle joint. A post-legged horse is predisposed to bog spavins, thoroughpins, and bone spavins or upward fixation of the patella.

A cow-hocked horse has excess stress placed on the hock joint and strain on the ligaments. A cow-hocked horse is predisposed to bone spavins, curbs or thoroughpins.

Bowed legs caused excess stress on the hock joint and strain on the ligaments. A bow-legged horse is predisposed to bog spavins, curbs or thoroughpins.

## Cannon

The length of the cannon bone affects the function of the horse. A short cannon bone is stronger than a longer cannon bone. There is less mass to extend causing the horse to have a longer stride.

## Fetlock Joint

A large fetlock joint provides greater surface area for the attachment of tendons and ligaments and reduces stress to the joint.

## Pastern

The length and angulation of the pasterns are important. Moderately long, sloping pasterns help to absorb concussion.

Steep pasterns increase the effect of concussion on the fetlock joint, pastern joint and navicular bone. A horse with steep pasterns is predisposed to osselets, ringbone and navicular disease.

A horse with weak pasterns is susceptible to injury of the tendons, ligaments and the fetlock joint. A broken hoof / pastern axis or angle places additional strain on the tendons and ligaments.

## Hoof

Adequate hoof **size** is necessary so the stress and concussion are distributed over a larger area.

## **Deviations Affecting the Entire Foreleg / Hindleg**

If the horse is camped under in front, there is excess weight on the forelegs. If the horse is camped under in the rear, the horse may also be sickle hocked or post legged.

If the horse is camped out in the front, there is excess stress on the front of the knee and strain on the ligaments and tendons. If the horse is camped out in the rear, the horse may also have steep rear pasterns and / or be sickle hocked.

If the base of the foot is narrow, this may be accompanied by toe-in or toe-out conformation. There is more weight and stress placed on the outside of the legs and the horse is predisposed to windpuffs, ringbone and sidebone.

If the base of the foot is wide, this may be accompanied by toe-in or, more commonly, toe-out conformation. This places more weight and stress on the inside of the legs and the horse is predisposed to windpuffs, ringbone and sidebone.

If the horse toes in, or is pigeon toed, more weight and concussion is placed on the outside of the pastern and hoof. If the horse toes out, or is splay-footed, more weight and concussion is placed on the inside of the pastern and hoof.

# Horse Judging Terminology

The following list includes some of the terms commonly used in comparing horses.

## DESIRABLE

### General Appearance

More breed characteristics  
More balance, symmetry  
Smooth muscled  
More stylish  
More quality  
Closer coupled  
Deeper bodied  
Bigger  
More rugged  
More size  
More compact  
Wider  
Deeper  
Thicker  
More substance (muscle and bone)  
Heavier muscled  
More uniform and even in body lines  
More balanced in conformation

### Head and Neck

Shorter, more fox-like ear  
Larger, brighter eye  
More width between the eyes  
Sharper chiseled features  
Longer, trimmer, leaner, cleaner neck  
Clean throatlatch  
More refinement about the head  
Cleaner cut about the head and throat  
Finer featured  
Longer necked

### Forehand

More slope of shoulder  
D  
efinition at the withers  
Finer at the withers  
Sharper at the withers  
Higher at the withers  
A more masculine front  
A more feminine front  
More refined head and neck  
Longer, more sloping shoulder  
Heavier, muscled arm  
More powerful forearm  
Wider chest  
Smoother muscled arm and forearm

## UNDESIRABLE

Lacks breed characteristics  
Lacks muscling  
Lacks smooth muscling  
Upstanding, leggy  
Plain, lacks quality  
Lacks substance  
Shallow-bodied  
Upstanding  
Rangy  
Shallow  
Light-muscled  
Too fine in the bone  
Too light in the bone  
Rough  
Plain  
  
Long, coarse ears  
Dull eye  
Poorly set eyes  
Coarse, plain head  
Thick throated  
Ewe necked  
Short, thick neck with long or poorly set ears  
Coarse-headed  
Plain-head  
Heavy or coarse-eared  
Muled-eared  
Short-necked, heavy or thick at throatlatch  
  
Thick-withered  
Flat-withered  
Coarse at the withers  
Rounded at the withers  
Low at the withers  
Mutton withers  
Too straight in the shoulder  
Rough-shouldered, too straight in the neck  
Too straight from poll to withers  
Low-headed  
Low-fronted  
Plain about the front  
Steep shoulder, narrow or flat chest  
Lacking muscling in arms, forearm or chest

## DESIRABLE

### Body

Symmetrical  
Shorter top line  
Wider top line  
Stronger back  
Wider ribbed  
More arch of rib  
Stronger ribbed  
Stronger loined  
Stronger coupled  
Closer coupled  
Deeper flanked  
More muscle on the arms  
Longer, wider croup  
A nicer turn of croup  
Stronger in the stifle  
Thicker in the breeching  
Sharper over the withers  
Higher at the withers  
More prominent at the withers  
Shorter back  
Shorter coupling (kidney area)  
Stronger coupling  
Deeper heart girth  
Deeper-ribbed  
Greater spring of rib

### Rear Quarters

Longer croup (hip)  
More level croup  
Wider through the stifle  
Heavier-muscled thigh  
Heavier-muscled quarter and gaskin (inside and out)  
More powerful driving muscle  
Longer, smoother-muscled quarter and gaskin  
Heavier-muscled croup

### Underpinning

Shorter cannon  
Stronger pasterns  
More desirable slope to the pasterns  
Rounder foot  
Stronger, more roomy foot  
Straighter legs  
Stands more correctly on feet and legs  
Cleaner bone  
Higher quality bone  
Cleaner about the hocks  
Cleaner in the bone and joints  
Flatter bone  
Well-defined tendons  
Stands on a more correctly centered knee

## UNDESIRABLE

Too long in the back  
Weak in the back  
Narrow at the loin  
Slack in the coupling  
Low in the coupling  
Long in the coupling  
High-hipped  
Plain-hipped  
Steep-rumped  
Steep in the croup  
Too short and steep in the croup  
Shallow-middled  
Light middle  
Short-ribbed  
Needs back rib  
Too short in the back rib  
Hound-gutted  
Thick over the withers  
Low at the withers  
Long back  
Weak coupling  
Weak over the kidneys  
Shallow in the heart girth  
Shallow-ribbed  
Lacks spring of rib

Short croup  
Steep croup  
Short, steep croup  
Lacks muscling through the thigh  
Lacks muscling through the quarter and gaskin  
Lacks width and muscling through the stifle  
Poorly muscled quarters  
Lacks inside the gaskin  
Rough over the hip, low tail set

High hocks  
Long cannon  
Weak pastern  
Long, flat feet  
Narrow, brittle foot  
Stubby pastern (too short and straight)  
Stands too close at the hocks (cow-hocked)  
Stands too wide at the hocks  
Sickle-hocked  
Stands too close in front  
Knocked-kneed  
Toes in (pigeon-toed)  
Toes out (splay-footed)  
Over the knees (buck-knee); back at the knee (calf-kneed); puffy hocks, base narrow

## Additional Terminology for Draft Horses

- Well Planted - strong foreleg with good ankle showing proper length and slope to a strong well-shaped foot.
- High Headed or Heads Up - A horse that carries the head high and alert. This makes for an eye catching hitch horse who accentuates the height through the head and neck carriage.
- Well fitted - the right amount of fat and muscle to give the horse a healthy firm (fit) appearance.
- Over Fitted - too much fat-to-muscle ratio so the horse looks flabby and/or pudgy. Can be detected visually or by hand pressure since fat is soft but muscle is hard or firm.
- Upstanding - good length of leg, sharp wither with little or no underline below elbow and stifle. Proportion of balance alludes to height, rather than length or depth.
- Deep - solid body with ample depth of chest and gut to show strength.
- Open - an expression used to describe a breeding female that has large enough body to carry a foal. Opposite is compact.
- Fine Featured - lacking in strength of character about the head and bone. Pretty but not befitting a draft animal.
- Drafty - refers to plenty of bone, foot and hair.
- Hitchy - head up, alert, loves to move with high true action.
- Reaches for Ground - referring to action, the horse takes a good length of stride.
- Stepping Short - horse may have good vertical action, lifting knees and hocks well, but does not cover much ground in a forward direction.
- True Mover - viewed coming and going, the horse's feet travel a straight path, neither winging out, paddling, interfering or other deviant action.

## Judging Draft Horses

Three things seems obvious to be a competent judge of any class of livestock.

Firstly, you must know what the important physical characteristics of any domestic animal are before you can look for them, and then you must be able to recognize them.

Secondly, you must know *why* they are important. In other words, if you cannot relate FORM to FUNCTION the whole exercise is meaningless. A wide heel and a sloping pastern are not “good” because some panel of judges decided that was the case 100 years ago. They are important because they contribute to the usefulness of the animal. And so it is, or should be, with other points of conformation.

This is not to say that fashion does not play an important role in the show ring. It certainly does. The show ring is as subject to whims of fashion and trends that feed on themselves as any human institution. Some of them turn out to be “wrong turns” and the show ring has led some breeds of livestock down the primrose path to hard times and obscurity. The flip side of that is that they have influenced other breeds in economically useful directions.

Where draft horses are concerned, this relationship of form to function was never summed up better than by the late R.B. Ogilvie, former secretary of the Clydesdale Association. He said, “Utility in a draft horse means absolute soundness, a willingness to work, wearing qualities, and the ability to move large loads at a long, easy stride. Accessories to these desirable qualities in a drafter are oblique shoulders, short backs, deep ribs, long level quarters with heavily muscled thighs, shanks of ample size and quality, pasterns properly set, and strong, shapely feet.”

The third thing to mention for beginning judges is the importance of having a pattern of examining an animal. For the person who knows what he or she is looking for, appraising an animal is not a random act. He or she goes about it in a systematic, businesslike way.

The draft horse is a large animal. That first impression should be gained at a reasonable distance. The general impression will very often carry the day, unless you find something you don't like on close inspection, or if the horse looks great standing still but moves like a duck.

Any horse, light or heavy, is an animal of movement. Whether the purpose of the breed be to draw a load or carry a rider, the feet and legs constitute the working foundation of any horse and are thus of more relative importance than in any class of livestock. The close inspection of a draft horse should begin at the ground, for if he doesn't have it there – he doesn't have what it takes. In a real life situation this means observing the horse move, at both the walk and trot, both going away and coming at you.

After the horse has been moved comes the close, hands-on inspection, beginning with the underpinning. It is at this point where you will see the judge check the hoofheads on the forefeet with his fingers for any indication of hardness on the corners and give the hocks a close examination.

The close inspection is finished topside in most cases with the judge checking the eyes, mouth and very often chinning them for height at the withers. Close inspection completed the horse is excused and sent back to the line.

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## Sample Reasons – 2 Year Old Belgian Fillies

I place this class of 2 Year Old Belgian Fillies B-A-C-D.

I placed Filly B first because she is a mare that immediately caught my eye, even though she isn't the biggest filly in the class. She shows a lot of symmetry and balance. She is a nice top lined mare showing the smoothness and style that radiates quality. In that quality, she has a good flat bone, correct slope to her pasterns and a nice flat hock. She is a filly that is standing correctly on her feet and legs. She shows a good width to her chest and appears to carry that on through to the rear. She has a beautiful slope to her shoulders and is smoother and more neatly laid in over the withers. She is longer and cleaner in the neck and is cleaner through the throat latch. She shows more femininity about the head and neck than Filly A. She has a well rounded foot and even though she has a nice wide heel, she could be helped by being deeper at the heel.

I like Filly A second because she is a big drafty colt that shows more size than any other filly in the class. She is a filly that shows a lot of muscling over the croup and carries it deep in the quarter. She has a nice top line and is stronger over the back than Filly C. She is longer in the pasterns and longer and cleaner in the neck than Filly C. As I look at her from the rear, I feel she is standing very close at the base and a trifle wider in the hocks, especially compared to the top placed filly and I fault her for this.

I placed Filly C third because of C's lack of femininity compared to the first two. Although she will be a very useful mare, she is shorter and thicker in the neck than the first two. She is also a trifle easier over the back and is shorter and steeper in the pastern. She is not standing as correctly in front and appears to be wider in the hocks. However, she does show a lot of body capacity and a very desirable turn to her croup. Even though she exhibits a lot of draftiness, she lacks the femininity and quality of the first two.

I placed Filly D last even though I liked her cleanliness and length of neck and sharpness over the withers better than Filly C. She also stands more correctly on her rear legs as viewed from the rear. But she is a trifle lower over the back and shorter and steeper in the croup. She also cuts up in the rear flank and lacks the muscling in the rear quarter and gaskin that is present in the other three mares. She is also narrower in the chest and a bit close at the knees. She may also turn out a bit on the right front foot. Although she probably has adequate width at the heel, she is probably the narrowest heeled filly in the class.

## Sample Reasons - Quarter Horses Mares

I placed this class of Quarter Horse mares 4-2-3-1.

In the top pair, I placed 4 over 2 because she has more balance, more correct slope to the shoulders, more prominent withers and a shorter, stronger coupling than 2. 4 has a longer, nicer-turned croup and is thicker through the stifle and gaskin. She also moves with a freer, truer stride than 2.

In the middle pair, I placed 2 over 3 because she has more balance and style and is straighter on her legs. 2 has a breedier, more feminine head, and her neck blends more smoothly at the shoulder. She has longer, smoother muscling and moves with more snap and flexion than 3.

In the bottom pair I placed 3 over 1 because she is heavier muscled, is shorter in the cannons and has a more durable hoof.

I placed number 1 last because she is very light-muscled and narrow through the chest.

For these reasons I placed this class of Quarter Horse mares 4-2-3-1.

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## List of References That May Be of Help

“*The Draft Horse Primer*” by Maurice Telleen, 1977, Rodale Press.

“*Buying, Judging, Raising and Showing Belgians*” Canadian Belgian Horse Association, 1984.

“*Canadian Clydesdale Contact 1993*” Canadian Clydesdale Horse Association of Canada.

“*So You Want To Show Draft Horses*” by The Draft Horse Journal, 1998.

Many breed associations print educational material that is of assistance in judging horses.

For example:                “Competitive Horse Judging” – AQHA  
                                      “Conformation – The Relationship of Form to Function”, by M.Beeman,  
                                      DVM; AQHA.

The material provided in the Manitoba 4-H Equine Series member manuals will also be of assistance.

Thank you to Alberta Agriculture for the use of their Judging Horses material and to the Draft Horse Journal for permission to use information from “So You Want Show Draft Horses”.

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