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SUGGESTIONS FOR BUYING AND JUDGING HORSES

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This publication was prepared by W. W. Albert, Associate Professor of Animal Science.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR BUYING AND JUDGING HORSES

There is currently a strong interest in light horses for pleasure and recreational use. To derive maximum enjoyment from his horse, it is important that the owner select an animal with good physical form or *conformation* — a horse that will remain sound under training and use. The horse is essentially an athlete and good conformation is correlated closely with good performance.

Whether it is called evaluation, selection, or appraisal, the art of judging horses is important to all horse people — the breeder, the buyer, the adult or young horseman, and the show ring judge.

Evaluation or judging is important to buyers and riders in choosing serviceably sound horses. Selection is important to breeders in determining matings and in approving or culling individual horses. Show ring judges have the responsibility of establishing correct ideals and standards.

THE MAJOR PARTS OF THE HORSE

An Evaluation Procedure

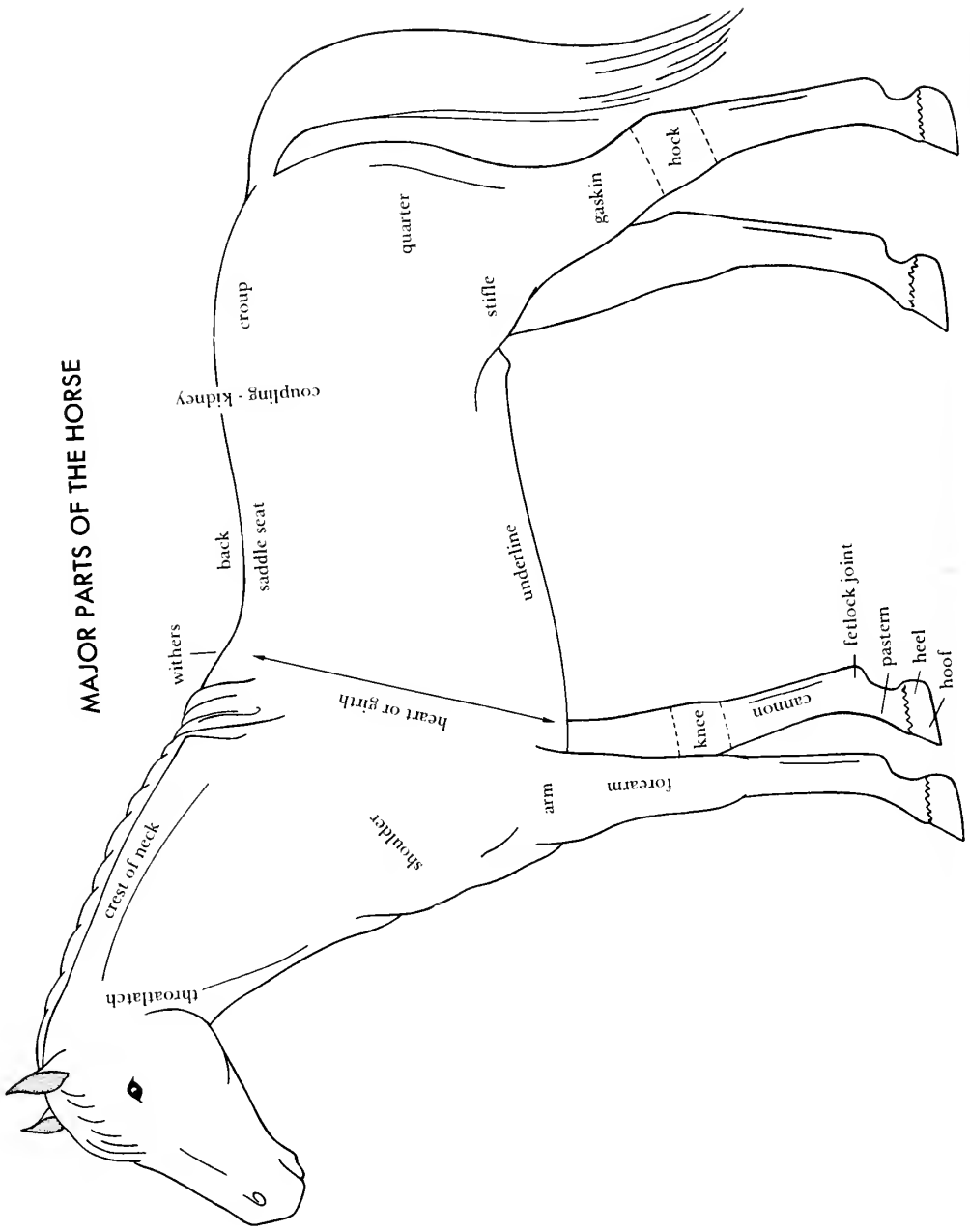
To talk intelligently about selection, it is imperative that one learn the major parts of conformation and the associated terms.

To become a good judge of horses, it is important that the horseman develop a mental picture of ideal conformation. Fundamentally, the ideal types of the different pleasure breeds are quite similar. Most breed associations publish a score card. *The American Horse Show Rule Book* (published by the American Horse Shows Association, Inc., 527 Madison Avenue, New York, New York) is regarded by professional judges as an authoritative reference about most breeds.

Most experienced horsemen have the skill to appraise a horse quickly. Until one has developed an experienced eye, however, it may be useful to use a systematic method of appraisal.

First, get an overall picture of the horse from a distance of 10 to 20 feet and mentally compare it to an ideal. Then move closer, walk around the horse, and check the specific anatomical points. Such an assessment should include a look at:

Bottom — including hooves, heels, pasterns, fetlocks, cannon bones, knees, and hocks.



MAJOR PARTS OF THE HORSE

Top — including head, throatlatch, neck and crest, withers, back, coupling, and croup.

Middle — including chest, shoulder slope and depth, depth of heart, spring of rib, and underline.

Muscles — specifically the power muscles in the rear: croup, quarter, stifle, and gaskin; and in front, the weight-bearing arm and forearm, and the V of chest.

Action — while the horse is in motion check for trueness, length of stride, promptness, flexion of knees and hocks, coordination, and power or thrust.

BOTTOM

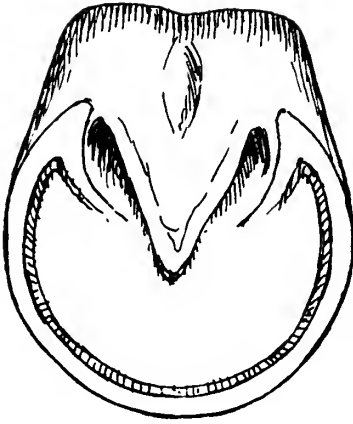
“No feet or legs, no horse.”

The hoof or horn of the foot is in many ways comparable to the human fingernail. The hoof wall grows down from the coronet or hoof head, and forms an incomplete circle by turning under at the heels. The hoof wall should be tough and waxy. Dry and brittle hooves crack easily. Neglected and untrimmed feet become irregular and may break or cause lameness. The size of the hoof should be in overall proportion to the size of the horse. Thus, ponies have small feet, while heavy work horses need larger feet.

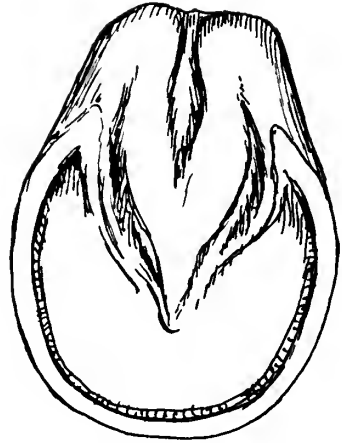
Seen from the side, a horse's heels should appear deep, and from the rear they should look both deep and wide. This depth and width allows the hoof to spread and absorb the shock of the horse's stride. Shallow and narrow heels often result in a rough ride. The pastern area (above the hoof head) should have a 45- to 50-degree angle of slope to aid in cushioning the stride. Steep, stubby, or straight pasterns result in a choppy short gait and a rough ride. Feet should be set directly under the knees and hocks and should toe straight ahead (not in or out).

When viewed from the side, the cannon bone above the pastern and below the knee should appear flat and cordy. The knee consists of two rows of small bones. For good support, it should be broad and deep in the front and deep at the side. The hock of the hind legs should be broad and deep from front to back, appear strong, and be free from swellings.

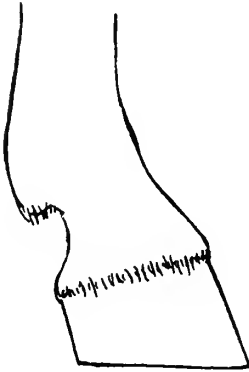
“Quality of underpinning” is a term applied to the joints of the feet and legs, and implies that fetlocks, pasterns, knees, and hocks are strong, cleanly defined, and free from puffs and coarseness. Swellings on the feet, legs, or joints should be regarded with suspicion because they may indicate weakness, lameness, or unsoundness.



Deep, wide heel.



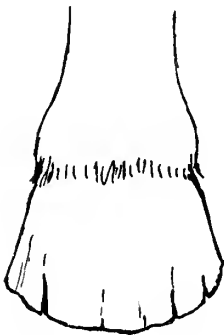
Faulty, narrow, contracted heel.



Deep heel. Provides a good cushion.



Shallow heel. May cause a rough ride.



Neglected, cracked hoof can lead to lameness.



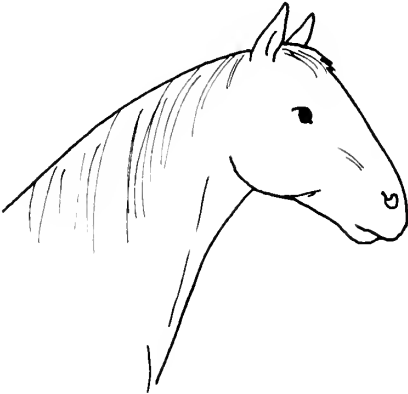
Turned up, ridged hoof indicates founder.

TOP

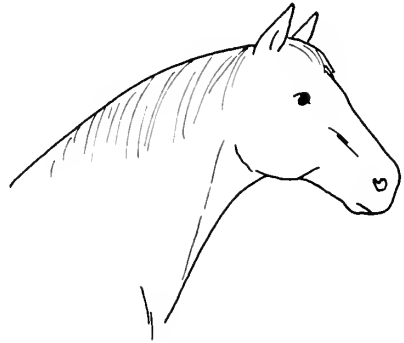
"No top, no price."

A horse's topline starts at his head and runs down his neck across his withers and along his back to his croup.

The head is important because it is the sensory center of sight, taste, and hearing. Overall, the head should appear lean and clean-chiseled in the face, wide between the eyes, of moderate length, and straight along its forward profile. Bulging "Roman" noses are considered to detract from appearance. The eyes should be clear, hazel-colored, sound, and bright. The ears should be reasonably short, not coarse or droopy. The muzzle and lips should be fine, not thick or coarse. The upper and lower jaws should meet flush in the front. A short, "undershot" lower jaw or a long, "overshot" upper jaw (also called parrot mouth) may interfere with normal eating. Either form of faulty mouth detracts from the horse's appearance and value.



Parrot mouth and "Roman" nose.



Heavy neck; thick throatlatch and crest.

All good pleasure horses should have reasonably long, lean necks, and a lean crest (top of neck) to insure good maneuverability. Heavy, short necks, and thick throatlatches are often associated with a short choppy stride.

The withers should be sharp, high, and prominent, providing bumpers for a good saddle seat. Flat, round, or thick withers are undesirable.

The back should be high, strong, and reasonably short. A short back gives better support to the rider and allows better transmission of power from the muscular hind quarters. Long, low backs detract from good

looks. Occasionally one sees an objectionable “roached” back which is too short and appears to be convex or raised.

The kidney area between the last rib and the hip is called the coupling. Well-muscled, tightly coupled horses are desirable.

The croup (or rump) should be long, evenly turned, muscular, and long from the hip to the point of the buttocks. A long, muscular croup aids in giving thrust and power. Short, steep, or very sloping croups are too often associated with sickle hind legs. Sickle legs appear to be bent too far under when the horse is viewed from the side. This often causes a strain on the planter ligament below the hock, resulting in a hardened, swelled unsoundness called a curb.

MIDDLE

“No middle, no stamina.”

To insure a long, easy stride, a horse should have deep, sloping shoulders. All horses need deep heart girths and well sprung ribs to insure the lung capacity necessary for good stamina. A long underline indicates that a horse can inspire (breathe in) plenty of air — an aid to his endurance and staying ability.

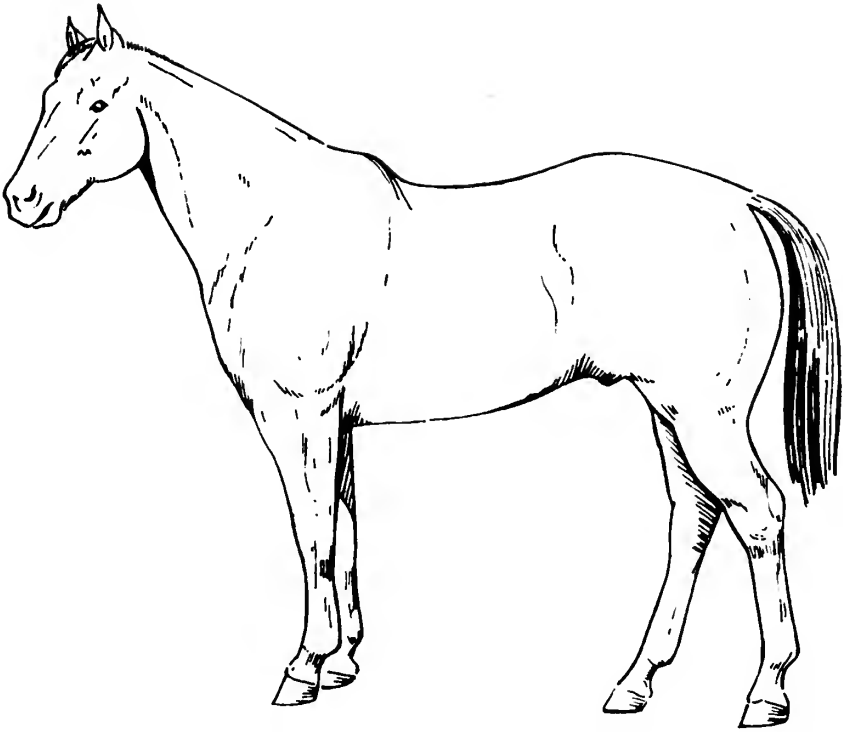
MUSCLES

“Light muscles, poor power.”

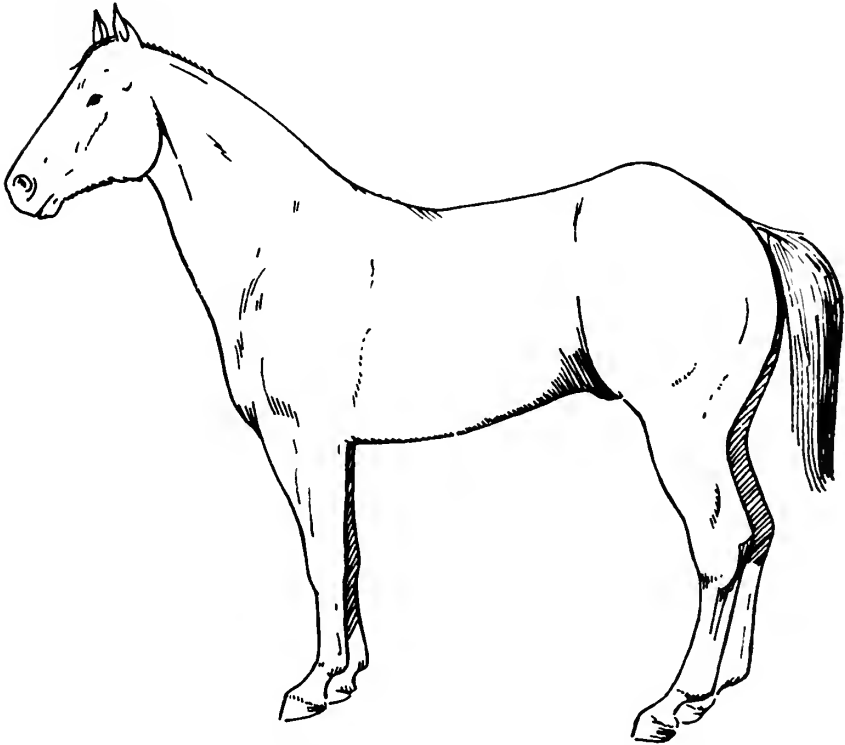
A horse’s muscles, and the skeleton to which they are attached, give him the form that is called “conformation.” The muscles are attached to the ends of bones by tendons. Bones and bone joints are held together by ligaments. Contraction and extension of the muscles move the bones. The source of power for action, jumping, or pulling comes mainly from the muscles of the croup, quarter, stifle, and gaskin. In the Quarter Horse breed, and in many stock breeds, the muscles will appear quite bulging; while in the Thoroughbred, American Saddle Horse, Tennessee Walker, and others, the muscle mass will appear longer, more sinewy, and not as bulging.

When viewed from the rear, the bulge of the stifle (thigh muscle) is usually wider than the top of the hips. The gaskin muscles (both inside and out) should also be bulging, long, sinewy, and athletic.

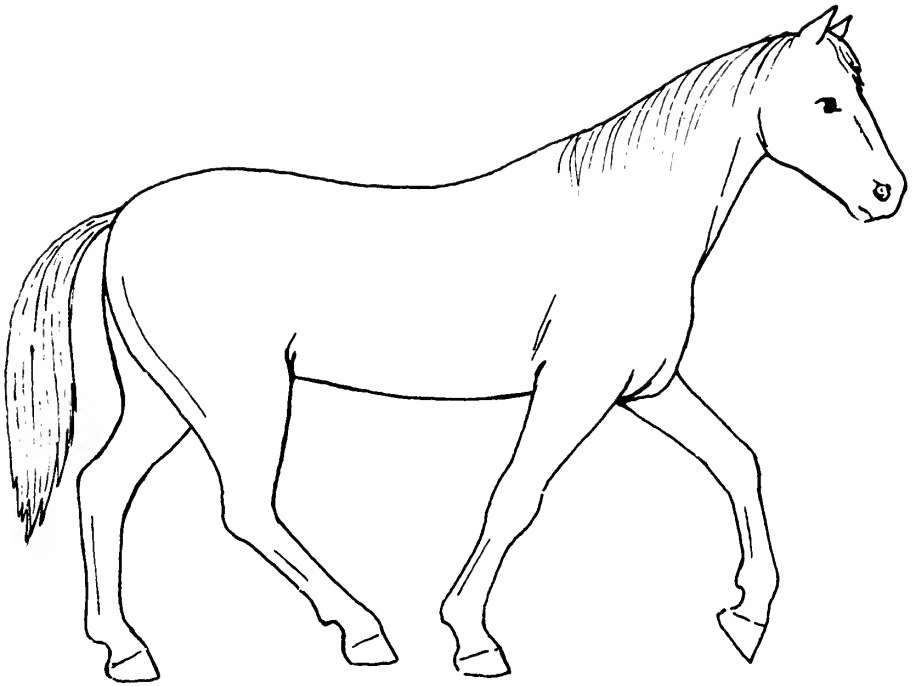
The arm and forearm muscles are needed to flex and extend the forelegs. A long, muscular forearm is important for a long stride. In stock horses, one will often notice heavy muscles between the front legs, forming a desirable V shape.



Good long, evenly turned croup; high, short back and sharp withers.



Faulty short, steep croup; long, low back and flat withers.



A good stride is long, true, prompt, flexed, free, and coordinated, with some thrust and power.

ACTION

Action, or “way of travelling,” is of basic importance. One can often predict how a horse will travel by observing the slope of his shoulder and pasterns in combination with the stance of his fore and hind legs.

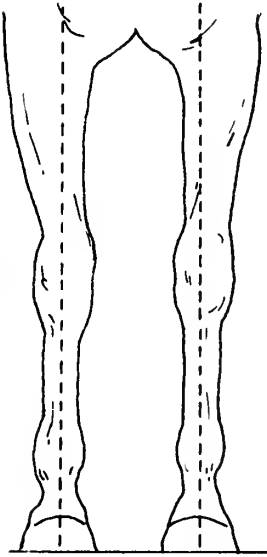
The stride (the arc travelled by the forefoot from the time it leaves the ground until it makes contact again) should be long, true, prompt, and flexed. It should be performed with power and thrust, but appear effortless, free, and easy. The stride should be rhythmic and well-coordinated. The hind legs do the propelling and the forelegs act as weight carriers.

Watch a horse as he travels away from you and returns, both at the walk and at the trot. The foot should be picked up effortlessly and promptly, showing the bottom. The walk should be true — both long and straight forward. The trot should be free, easy, and collected.

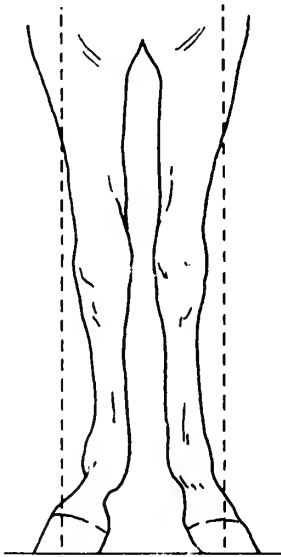
Excessive paddling (throwing the forefeet outward) is objectionable, as is winging (a dishing-in movement), in the action of the front feet or legs. For good thrust, the hocks should move reasonably close together.

LEG STANCE AFFECTS ACTION

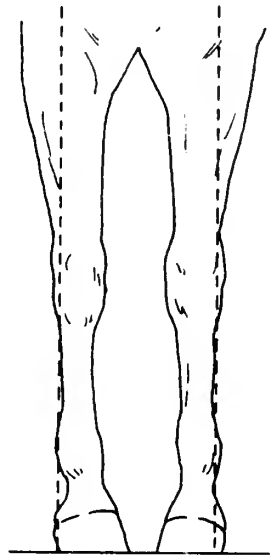
Action can often be predicted by observing the slope of the pasterns and shoulders.



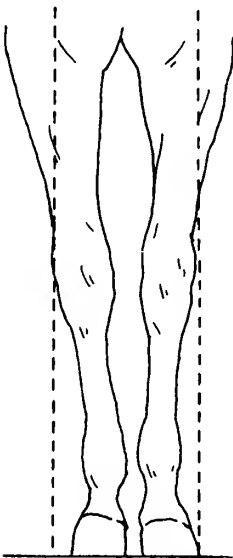
Correct stance.
Should move true.



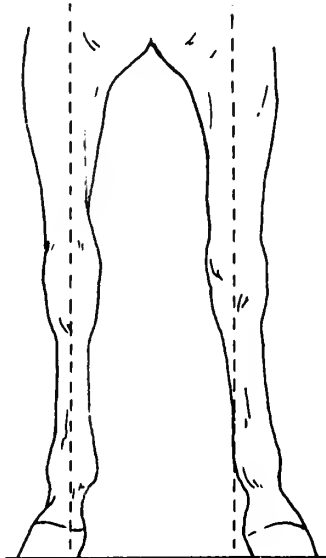
Splayed, or toed out.
May wing in.



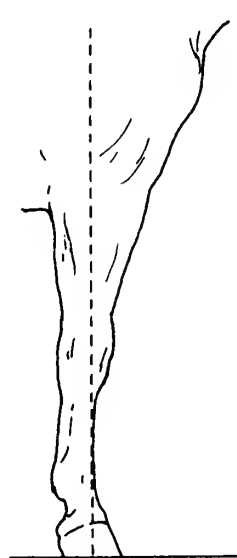
Pigeon toed, or toed in.
May wing out.



Stands too close.
May strike or interfere.



Stands too wide.
May roll shoulders.



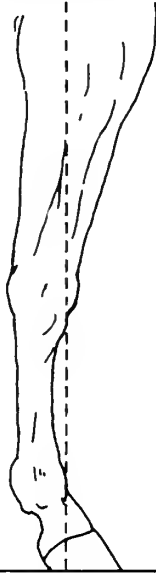
Too steep pasterns
and shoulders. May
have a short stride.

LEG STANCE AFFECTS ACTION

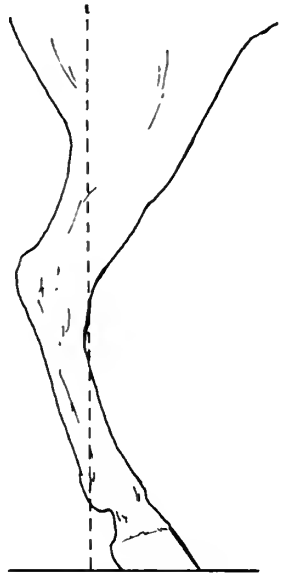
The stance of the front and rear legs may also help in predicting how a horse will move.



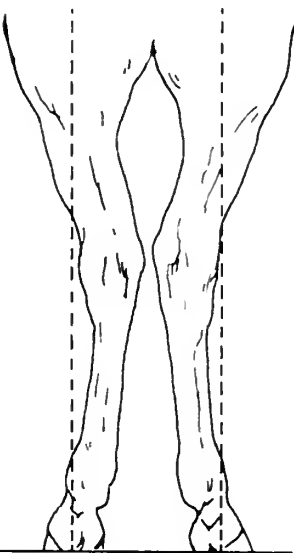
Bucked or over at knees.
May scuff or stumble.



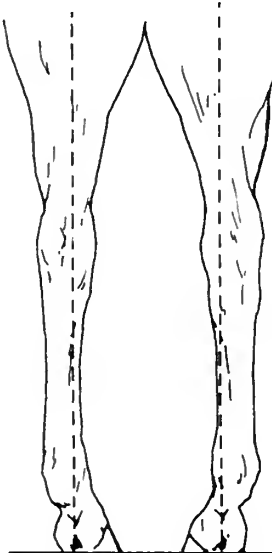
Calf-kneed or back at knees.
May hit ground hard.



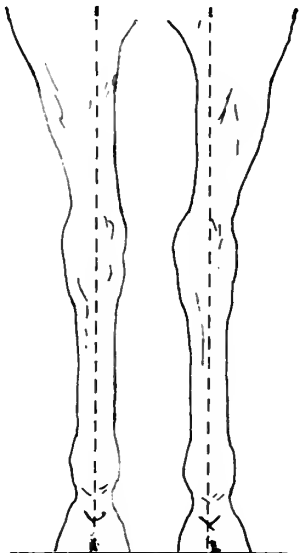
Sickle-hocked or too far under.
May overreach.



Cow-hocked or turns hocks in.
May roll hocks.



Too open or too wide at hocks.
May travel too wide and lack thrust.



Correct rear stance.
Should travel coordinated.

They should be bent or flexed sharply and brought forward promptly beneath the body. Horses that travel wide at the hocks or roll their hocks may have poor thrust and lack coordination.

UNSOUNDNESSES AND VICES

Before buying, it is important to be sure that a horse is sound and free from bad habits and vices. An inexperienced person may want to ask the help and advice of a more knowledgeable horseman or of a veterinarian.

Watch the action of the horse as he walks and trots away from you and back toward you. Be critical of swellings and puffs on the feet and legs — especially on the ankle, knee, and hock joints. A horse will often jerk his head up when he puts weight on a lame or injured front foot, and you can often notice flinching or higher raising of the croup when a horse puts weight on a lame hind leg.

It is advisable to try a horse under saddle if you are given the opportunity. Check the animal carefully and ask for information about his habits and disposition.

A blemish, such as a wire cut or a saddle sore, may just mar the horse's appearance, but an unsoundness often impairs the horse's usefulness. The wind, sight, and underpinning of horses can develop unsoundness due to heredity, injury, strain, over-exertion, or faulty conformation.

Many unsoundnesses occur as the result of, or are aggravated by, the use a horse is given. Experienced cavalry men have stated that about 75 percent of leg strains or injuries in riding horses will be found in front and that the majority of those unsoundnesses will occur below the knees.

Although there are many leg unsoundnesses, only some of the more common ones are shown in the illustration on page 15.

SOME UNSOUNDNESSES OF FEET AND LEGS

Front Legs

Bowed tendons are caused by strain, tearing, or stretching. The "bowing" is an extension of the flexor tendons on the backside of the cannon bones.

Founder or *laminitis* is an excessive growth of the hooves and frequently causes them to have deep grooves and to turn up. Founder may occur when the horse overeats, overexerts himself, or drinks cold water when he is too warm.

Navicular disease is an injury to, or fracture of, the small navicular bone below and behind the pedal bone of the foot. Since the bone is encased in the horn of the hoof, it is very difficult to diagnose navicular trouble. Generally, the horse will not put much weight on the foot or he will stumble and travel lame.

Ringbone is a false bony growth on the long or short pastern bone. It may appear as a bony enlargement surrounding the bones of the pastern — hence the name “ringbone.” If the growth is at the site of a joint, it can render the joint immovable. Thoroughbred trainers often call inflammation of ankle joints “osselets.” Ringbone may be caused by injury or strain.

Sidebone is a hardened or ossified bump of lateral cartilage at the hoof head, resulting from an injury.

Splints are caused by the tearing away of the small splint bone from the cannon bone. This results in a raised bump, usually on the inside of the front leg. It may be high or low, and on either front or back legs. Splints often occur in young horses but do not appear as frequently in older horses.

Hind Legs

The most common unsoundnesses of the hind legs involve the hock, which is composed of seven bones. Spavins, the most frequent form of unsoundness, are swellings in the hock area.

Blood spavin is usually the swelling of the saphenous vein on the inside of the hock.

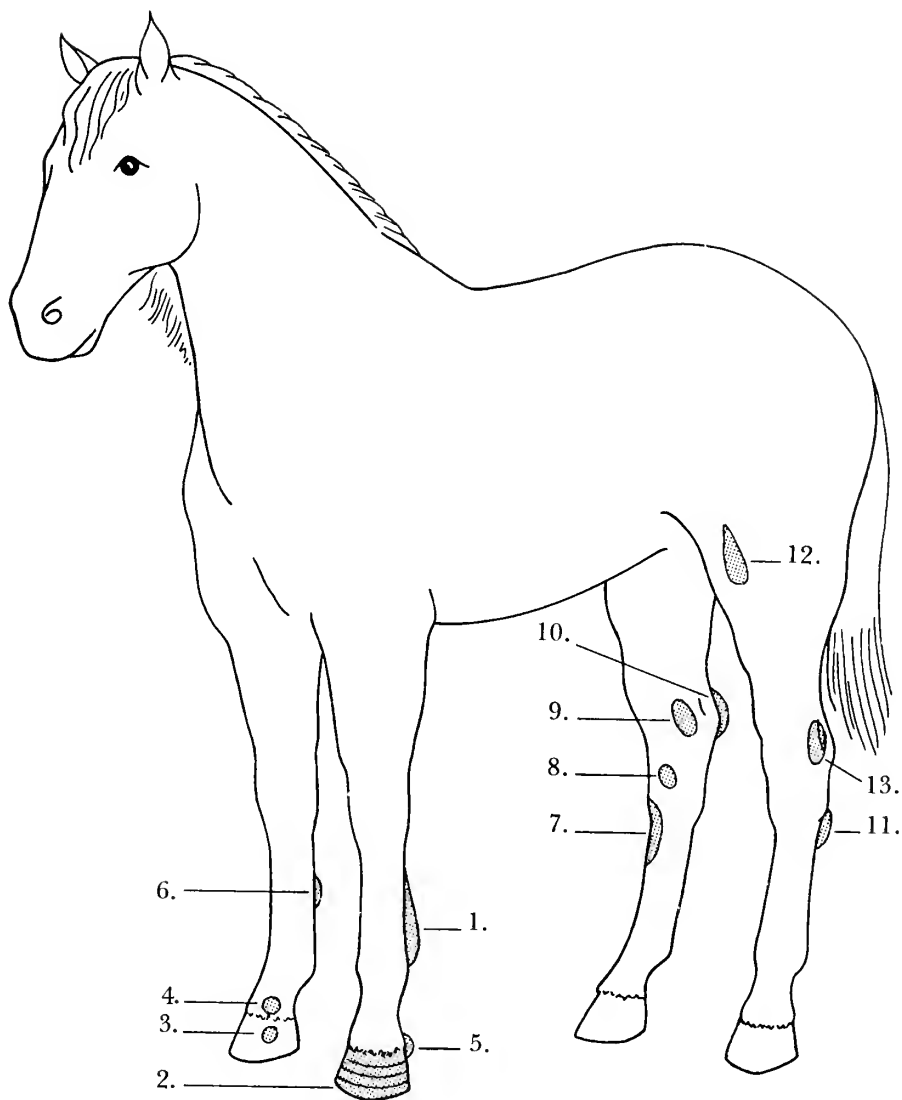
Bog spavin, edema of the hock, is an accumulation of water on the hock due to an enlargement of the bursa capsule that lubricates the hock. Bog spavin appears as a soft swelling on the hock, usually inside the leg.

Bone spavin is a false bony growth or enlargement that appears on the inside and front of the hock, usually toward the upper side.

Capped hock is an open sore on the point of the hock caused by bruising or breaking the skin.

Curbs are hardened swellings on the backside of the leg just below the point of the hock. They are due to an enlargement of the planter ligament as a result of strain or injury. Sickie hocked horses often develop curbs.

Stifled is the term used to refer to a dislocation of the patella at the junction of the femur, tibia, and fibula bones.



SOME UNSOUNDNESSES OF FEET AND LEGS

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Bowed tendon | 5. Side bone | 10. Capped hock |
| 2. Founder | 6. Splint | 11. Curb |
| 3. Navicular disease | 7. Blood spavin | 12. Stifled |
| 4. Ringbone | 8. Bog spavin | 13. Thoroughpin |
| | 9. Bone spavin | |

Thoroughpin is a swelled condition similar to bog spavin. It is called a thoroughpin because the soft swelling can be pushed through the hollows of the hock from outside to inside.

General

Corns are bruises to the sole of the foot and may cause the horse to go lame.

Gravel refers to penetration of a small bit of stone or dirt which works its way upward between the white line and the sole of the foot, causing lameness.

Grease is a bacterial infection of the heels and hair, usually in the form of tiny water blisters on the back side of the foot. Grease may occur when the horse is kept in a wet, dirty stable.

Quittor is a running sore at the top of the hoof head and usually is the result of a bruise or injury.

Thrush is a bacterial infection of the frog of the foot and causes a foul smell. Like grease, it is often the result of housing a horse in a wet, dirty stable.

Windpuffs are accumulations of fluid at the fetlock or ankle. They can be caused by strain and may sometimes result from confinement in a barn or lack of exercise.

UNSOUNDNESSES OF WIND

Judges and buyers should always check for unsoundnesses of sight and wind. Horses depend upon their wind for a good performance and of course good sight is also essential.

Heavy coughs occur in some horses when they are fed dusty or moldy feeds.

Heaves, or broken wind, is noticeable when a horse has difficulty expelling all of the air from his lungs. Symptomatic of heaves is a jerking, double-flank action as the horse breathes.

Noisy breathing includes grunting, whistling, or roaring. Such sounds may suggest faulty inspiration or expiration of air.

UNSOUNDNESSES OF THE EYES

Blindness, either partial or complete, may sometimes be detected by a discoloration of the eye, or a failure to blink when one flicks his finger or moves his hand close to the eye.

Partial blindness will seriously reduce the utility of a horse. Blind horses may stumble and sometimes hesitate in their gaits.

Moon blindness, or periodic ophthalmia, refers to a cloudy, inflamed condition of the eye which causes the horse to be partially blind for a time. The condition may clear up, only to return again later.

OTHER UNSOUNDNESSES

Colic is a belly ache or abdominal pain due to gas accumulation from poor feeds or over eating.

Fistulas are mattery sores in the area of the withers.

Poll evil is an inflamed, mattery sore at the poll between the ears.

VICES

Some horses may develop bad habits when they are idle or when they are confined to the stable without sufficient exercise.

Bolting, eating grain too fast, may be controlled by placing smooth, baseball-sized stones in the grain box.

Cribbing can include both active chewing of an object or simply getting a grip on something like a manger or fence board.

Tail rubbing against a wall may be discouraged by installing a tail-board (a flat board extending from the wall on all sides of a stall) or an electric wire.

Weaving or swaying back and forth in the stall indicates restlessness. Regular exercise in a paddock is a suggested remedy.

Wind sucking is often associated with cribbing and may cause colic.

Other vices are kicking, balking, shying, rearing, running away, or displays of bad temper when the horse is being groomed, saddled, or harnessed.

TELLING THE AGE OF THE HORSE

An inspection of the three pairs of incisors (six teeth) in front on the lower jaw will help in determining the age of a horse.

The center pair of baby or *milk* incisors usually appears at about 8 days of age. The second two, one on either side of the center teeth, are called *laterals* and come in when the foal is about 8 weeks old. The *corner* incisors appear when the foal is about 8 months of age.

The center milk incisors are shed and replaced with permanent teeth after about 2½ years. Milk incisors are small, white, and smooth. Permanent incisors are larger, more heavily stained, and grooved. The permanent

TELLING THE AGE OF A HORSE

Teeth in the Lower Jaw

A. APPEARANCE OF BABY OR TEMPORARY INCISOR PAIRS.



I₁ centers at 8 days.



I₂ laterals at 8 weeks.



I₃ corners at 8 months.

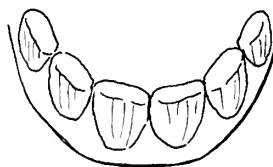
B. PERMANENT INCISOR PAIRS REPLACE TEMPORARY INCISORS.



I₁s replaced at 2 ½ years.

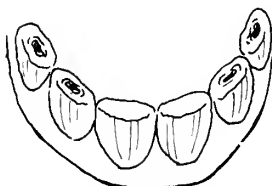


I₂s replaced at 3 ½ years.

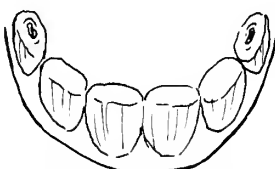


I₃s replaced at 4 ½ years.

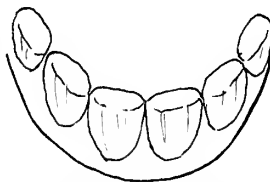
C. PERMANENT INCISORS LOSE ENAMEL CUPS.



I₁s lose cups at 6 years.



I₂s lose cups at 7 years.



I₃s lose cups at 8 years.

lateral incisors come in when the horse is about 3½ years old, and the corner ones come in when he is about 4½ years old.

As you look at the top surface of the permanent incisors, you will notice a cup or depression surrounded by enamel. With use, these cups are worn smooth. The center cups of the lower incisors are gone after the horse is about 6 years of age. The cups of the lateral incisors are gone at 7 years, and the cups are gone from the corner incisors when the horse is about 8 years old. After the age of 9, a horse is called "smooth mouthed" because the cups of the lower incisors are all worn smooth.

For further age determination, you can look at the upper incisors. Generally the cups are worn smooth from the upper centers at 10 years. The cups are gone from the upper laterals when the horse is 11, and from the upper corners by the time he is 12. It is quite difficult to tell the age of a horse after he is 12 years old.

SOME BUYING GUIDELINES

WHAT AGE HORSE TO BUY

Horses reach maturity at 4 to 5 years of age, and in the years from 5 to 12 are considered to be in the prime of life. For an inexperienced youngster who is just learning to ride, it may be safest to buy a horse in the 12 to 15 year age bracket. At that age, the horse is more likely to be mild mannered, but should still have enough life to provide an interesting ride. A young person who has some experience in riding, and who has the time, may find it an interesting challenge to start with a two- or three-year-old horse. Remember, though, that training takes much time and patience.

WHAT BREED TO BUY — PUREBRED OR GRADE?

Information on the various breeds is available from the respective registry associations. Such information will help you to select a breed that is best adapted to your particular needs, and one that has characteristics you will particularly like.

If you are not interested in breeding and raising horses or in showing extensively, a grade (or nonregistered) horse will probably be satisfactory.

Most people prefer to raise purebred horses because they have a greater sale value and because they are eligible for competition in more major horse shows than grade horses. If you wish to breed and raise horses, consider local, state, and national demand before making a final decision about which breed or breeds you will choose.

WHICH SEX TO BUY

The stallion is generally more difficult to manage and control. Most youth shows do not provide a class for stallions because of the possible hazards in showing.

A mare can be used to increase your horse population and thus help pay for her own keep.

The gelding has little use other than for riding, but can be an excellent youth project or pleasure horse.

WHEN TO BUY

Generally, the asking prices for horses are higher in the spring with the advent of good riding weather and summer vacation. Then, too, more horse shows are held during the spring and summer months.

The cheapest and best time to buy a horse may be in the fall because some owners feel that they do not have the time or adequate shelter and feed to carry a horse through the winter.

Occasionally you can be fortunate enough to purchase a horse from an older teenager who is going away to school or who has outgrown a particular mount.

WHERE TO BUY

Don't be in too big a hurry — buy from a dependable person! Do some inquiring in advance to determine what kind of horse you want and decide what you can afford to pay. If you are a novice, it is wise to ask the advice and help of an experienced adult horseman or veterinarian in selecting and buying your horse.

There are many sale sources. You can sometimes get a wonderful buy at an auction, but on the other hand you can easily be disappointed. Some dealers buy large numbers of horses, and may be able to fill your particular order if you give them advance notice. Sometimes it is cheaper in the long run to buy a horse that is already trained than it is to buy an unbroken horse and pay for the training.

JUDGING CONTESTS

At horse events and in youth programs there are often individual and team judging competitions. Contestants under supervision are shown a class of four horses, given time to compare conformation and action, and

asked to make a placing on a score card. Frequently, individuals are also asked to present oral reasons in defense of their placings to an official without referring to written notes.

As with any animal evaluation, it is best to get an overall picture of the four animals from a distance of 10 to 20 feet. In halter classes each horse is usually walked and trotted to show its action. Contestants are then generally permitted close inspection of the animals to confirm initial impressions. The contestant compares all four horses to a mental 'ideal' type. He then divides them into three pairs: top, middle, and bottom. (The second horse in the top pair is also the first horse in the middle pair. The second horse in the middle pair is also the first horse in the bottom pair.)

✓ At most judging contests, a participant is required to make oral remarks. An orderly, systematic appraisal of overall type, conformation, action, topline, middle, and bottom will enable him to be accurate and complete in presenting his reasons.

To be effective, oral reasons should not be more than two minutes long and should be well organized, logical, accurate, comparative, and be presented pleasantly and with conviction. One begins his oral statement by giving the name of the class and in what order he placed it.

There are many different systems of organizing reasons. For example, some talk about type first, next muscle, then go forward from croup to head, drop to feet and legs, and finish by discussing action. For variety, another pair might be discussed from head to croup, then down to legs and feet, and on to action. Specific order is not important as long as the oral reasons are clear and cover the important points.

In giving reasons, point out the areas in which one horse is superior to another, but grant the other horse his advantages too. Emphasizing the major differences between the animals will help keep reasons concise and to the point. Learning to express one's observations in good horseman's terminology will help in making actual comparisons between the animals and in avoiding simply giving descriptions.

HALTER HORSES

Horses shown at halter are generally shown for conformation, and the vocabulary for halter classes is largely concerned with such points. While good conformation is important for pleasure horses as well, they are judged primarily on their manners and suitability as riding horses.

Terminology for Judging Halter Horses

FAVORABLE

UNFAVORABLE

Overall Conformation

More desirable type	Off type
Shows more balance and style	Poorly balanced
Has more pleasing conformation	Poor conformation
Has more balance and symmetry	

Top

Smarter head	Poor head
Cleaner, chiseled face	Roman nosed
Foxier ears	Heavy, droopy ears
Cleaner throatlatch	Thick neck and heavy crest
Longer, leaner neck	
Higher, sharper withers	Flat, thick withers
Shorter, stronger back	Low, long back
Has a more desirable saddle seat	
Tightlier coupled	Loose coupling
Long, nicely turned croup	Short and steep in the croup

Middle

More depth and slope to shoulders	Steep shoulders
More spring of rib	Shallow through the rib
Deeper through the girth and rib	Shallow girth
Would saddle up bigger	
Has wider chest	Narrow chest
Has a longer underline	

Bottom

More quality of underpinning	Coarse about the joints
Has a rounder, tougher, waxier foot	Has dry, cracked hooves
More cleanly chiseled about his hocks and knees	Puffy knees and hocks
Deeper and wider at the heel	Shallow, narrow heels
More sloping in his pasterns	Steep in his pasterns
Toes straighter ahead	Toes out, or toes in
Stands more correctly on his rear legs	Splay-footed, sickle-hocked, or cow-hocked

Muscling

More athletic muscles	Lightly muscled
More muscling through the quarter, stifle, and gaskin	Poorly muscled
More muscling in the arm and forearm	
More defined sinewy muscle	Bunchy muscle
More inside and outside gaskin	

Action

Longer and more prompt	Short in his stride
Freer and more easy moving	Sluggish
Truer and more coordinated	Uncoordinated
More snap and flexion	Winged out, or paddled
	Winged in
More collected	Stumbled and scuffed
More determined	Short and choppy, rolled his hocks, or traveled wide at the hocks

The reasons for placing the horses in a halter class might sound something like this:

“I placed this class of Quarter Horse mares *One, Two, Three, Four*.

“*One* was placed over *Two* because she showed more desirable type, style, and balance. She was heavier muscled in her quarter and through her gaskin. She also had a longer, nicer-turned croup, a shorter, higher back, and sharper withers. In addition she traveled with a longer, truer stride. I faulted *One* for puffy hocks.

“*Two* and *Three* were a close decision, and I grant that *Three* was deeper in her girth and more sloping in her shoulders. But *Two* had a smarter head and a longer, leaner neck. She had a waxier, tougher foot, and had more quality of underpinning because she was more defined about her hocks, knees, and fetlocks. *Two* also traveled with more snap, flexion, and correctness.

“I preferred *Three*, the red chestnut, to *Four* because she had more balance and was more athletic in her muscling, particularly in her arm and forearm. *Three* stood on a deeper heel and was more prompt and decisive in her action.

“I left the black mare, *Four*, last even though she had sharp, well-defined withers. She was small, light in her muscling, low in her back, had a short stride, and winged badly at the trot.

Thank you.”

PLEASURE HORSES

Pleasure horses under saddle should give an enjoyable ride. In judging pleasure horses, the official usually asks for a walk, trot, and canter both directions around the show ring. One should watch to see that these gaits are free, easy, collected, and executed with reasonable promptness and smoothness. A horse that prances and dances cannot be regarded as a pleasure to ride. The trot should be easy, collected, and coordinated. If the rider bounces up and down in the saddle, one suspects a rough trot. At the canter a good pleasure horse will take the correct lead and will canter easily off both his forelegs and his hocks.

A judge will penalize horses that show a sour, off disposition, those that throw up their heads, and those that tug at the bit or wring their tails. Balking and rearing are serious offenses.

A western pleasure horse should work on a reasonably loose rein. English pleasure horses should arch their necks and carry their heads well up, though a high head carriage is not desirable in a western horse. Any pleasure horse should stop promptly and squarely when asked, and should line up and stand quietly. Upon cue, the horse should back in a straight line.

Terminology for Judging Pleasure Horses

FAVORABLE

UNFAVORABLE

Action

Was freer and more coordinated
Traveled more easily on a
reasonably loose rein

Lacked coordination
Short, choppy action

Gaits

Took gaits more promptly and
smoothly
Changed gaits more easily
Responded readily upon command

Balked when cued to trot
(or canter)
Changed gaits poorly and slowly
Failed to stop when asked

Leads

Took correct lead more easily
More prompt and correct in leads
Cantered more correctly off both
forelegs and hocks

Took wrong lead
Failed to change leads

Obedience

Was more responsive
Lighter on the bit
Required less visible cueing

Showed poor responses
Tugged at the bit
Balked and reared

Manners

Had more manners	Sour disposition
Stood more quietly	Fretted and pranced
Showed little fretting	Threw head excessively

Backing

Backed straighter and more promptly	Backed unevenly
Kept mouth closed and did not raise head when backing	Wrung tail and shook head when backing

Suitability

Looked like a pleasure horse	Had poor form under saddle
Gave rider a more enjoyable ride	Gave rough ride
Allowed rider to maintain better form and closer seat	Difficult to ride

A set of oral reasons for the placings in a pleasure horse class would include discussion of disposition, conformation, and action.

"I placed this pleasure class *Four, Two, Three, One*.

"*Four* was an easy winner over *Two* because she was more collected and coordinated in her execution of gaits. She showed a more calm disposition, traveled closer on the rail, and was particularly more prompt and correct in her leads.

"*Two*, the bay mare, showed more balance and style than *Three*. She stopped more squarely and promptly and took her leads more correctly. I faulted her for tossing her head and tugging a little at the bit.

"In placing *Three* over *One*, I granted that *One* showed less wringing of her tail, but *Three* was more responsive, trotted more freely and sounder on a looser rein. She also showed a smoother reverse on the rail. *Three* stood more quietly in line, and she backed straighter and more promptly. I faulted *Three* for a missed lead.

"I placed *One* last. She showed a good collected canter, but she was off in disposition and required more cueing from her rider. She was also labored and choppy at the trot.

Thank you."

PLACING AND DISCUSSION OF PICTURE CLASSES

Before you read the placings of the two picture classes, look them over yourself, read the remarks about each horse, and decide your own placings. Then check them against the official placings that follow.

QUARTER HORSE MARES

3 years and over



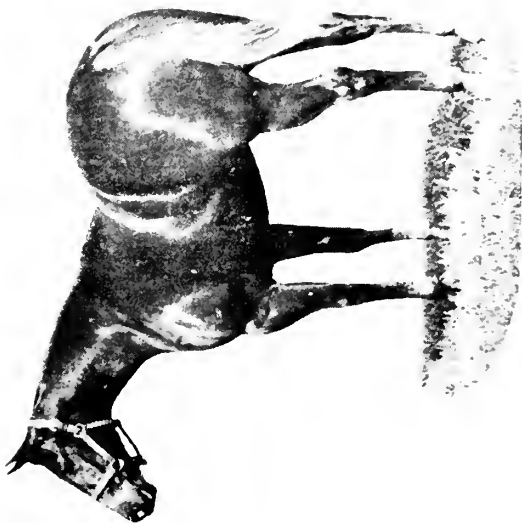
No. 1 Action is true, but stride is a little short. She scuffs her feet.



No. 2 Travels narrow in front and overreaches with hind legs.



No. 3 Long true stride with good snap and flexion.



No. 4 Stride is true and prompt with medium length.

YOUR PLACING: 1st _____ 2nd _____ 3rd _____ 4th _____.

Official placing and discussion is on the last page.

HALTER GELDINGS



No. 1 Action is long, true, prompt, and coordinated.



No. 2 Short and choppy in stride. Wings badly at the trot.



No. 3 Paddles out, travels wide at hocks. Good length and snap.



No. 4 True, easy, and free in action but wings slightly.

YOUR PLACING: 1st _____ 2nd _____ 3rd _____ 4th _____.

Official placing and discussion is on the last page.

PLACING OF QUARTER HORSE MARES

The class of Quarter Horse mares was placed *Four, Three, One, Two*.

Four and *Three* were an outstanding pair of mares, and *Two* was a logical bottom. *Four* was placed over *Three* in a close decision because she appeared to have more style, was heavier and more athletic through her gaskin and forearm muscles. *Four* was also longer in her croup, deeper in her heart, and leaner in her neck. Both mares had good quality of underpinning and were true moving, but *Four* was more prompt in her action.

Three followed more nearly the type of the top mare and was placed over *One* because she had more modern Quarter Horse type. She was longer in the neck, and was deeper and more sloping in the shoulder. She was also longer and truer in her stride and had more snap and flexion. *One* was faulted for her shorter and more bunched muscling.

Two appeared to have a lean neck, but she was poorly balanced. She was light muscled, shallow in her heart, narrow in her chest, and she stood cowhocked. She also traveled too close in front.

PLACING OF HALTER GELDINGS

The class of halter geldings was placed *One, Four, Three, Two*.

One and *Four* were both excellent geldings, but *One* appeared to have more eye appeal and more quality throughout. *One* had a more pleasing topline because he had a longer, nicer-turned croup. He also stood more correctly on his front legs. *Four* appeared a little easy at the knees. *One* showed more quality in his hocks, fetlocks, and knees. He was also truer and more coordinated in his action. Both horses appeared a little long in their backs.

Four was an easy winner over *Three* because he showed more type, muscling, and substance. He was especially leaner in his neck, and sharper at his withers. In addition, he was deeper through the heart, and he had more desirable balance. *Four* also traveled freer and easier.

Three was placed over *Two* primarily because of his advantage in overall type. *Three* stood more correctly and had a deeper, more sloping shoulder. He had a deeper heart, a longer underline, and a longer, more evenly turned croup. He was smarter in his head and ear. While *Three* traveled wide at the hocks, he had more snap and length to his stride.

Two was a plain gelding and was off type and poorly balanced. He was light-muscled, too steep in his shoulder and pasterns, and was short in his neck and in his croup. He appeared back at his knees and had a short, choppy stride.

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