



ARABIAN HORSE ASSOCIATION

Judges & Stewards

ARABIAN CONFORMATION

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ARABIAN CONFORMATION

- Arabian conformation is good conformation on a horse that has Arabian type.
- Arabian type is the result of those characteristics which distinguish a horse as an Arabian Horse. Five key elements distinguish type (descriptions in italics are quoted from AR104.1, **Purebred** Breed Standards found in the 2024 USEF Rule Book):
 - Head - Comparatively small head, profile of head straight or preferably slightly concave below the eyes; small muzzle, large nostrils, extended when in action; large, round, expressive, dark eyes set well apart (glass eyes shall be penalized in Breeding classes); comparatively short distance between eye and muzzle; deep jowls, wide between the branches; small ears (smaller in stallions than mares), thin and well-shaped, tips curved slightly inward;
 - Neck - long arched neck, set on high and running well back into moderately high withers;
 - Back - short back;
 - Croup - croup comparatively horizontal;

- Tail - natural high tail carriage. Viewed from rear, tail should be carried straight;
- The above qualities identify **type** in the purebred Arabian horse. If the horse has these qualities and correct conformation, we have our ideal standard.
- In addition to the descriptions listed above to define Arabian type, the following descriptions are also part of AR104, Breed Standards: long sloping shoulder well laid over with muscle; ribs well sprung; long, broad forearm; short cannon bone with large sinew; loins broad and strong; hips strong and round; well-muscled thigh and gaskin; straight, sound, flat bone; large joints, strong and well defined; sloping pasterns of good length; round feet of proportionate size. Height from 14.1 to 15.1 hands, with an occasional individual over or under. Fine coat in varying colors of bay, chestnut, grey and black. Dark skin, except under white markings. Stallions especially should have an abundance of natural vitality, animation, spirit, suppleness and balance.

Half-Arabian/Anglo-Arabian breed standard as found in AR104.2-3 of the 2024 USEF Rule Book

- The head should be attractive, with an eye that reflects a good disposition and character; withers well defined, coupled with a strong back that will easily carry and hold a saddle; shoulders and pasterns sloping and conducive to a free, light springy gait and long stride; feet, sound and strong, well conformed. True and straight forward action, winging and paddling to be penalized.

- Half-Arabians/Anglo-Arabians may be of any size and may show characteristics of any other breed.
- **Conformation** should relate form to function. A horse needs:
 - eyes to see,
 - nostrils to breath,
 - jaw and teeth to eat and drink,
 - adequate lean neck and clean throat for blood, air and food to pass through
 - neck to use as a balance arm,
 - body to house lungs, stomach and the machinery to operate the legs.
 - strong correct legs are needed to propel the horse as he lives.
- Correct conformation has been an ancient subject of controversy and remains so to this day. Some horses that are considered beauties of conformation are non-functional. They do not relate to either the potential physical abilities or ultimate soundness of the horse. They are, in sum, quite subjective, socially generated preferences – like long tails over short ones or slightly concaved heads over Roman noses.
- When we apply the popular word “correct” to conformation, it should make direct reference to two factors:
 - Conformation that is appropriate to the performance uses of the horse; and
 - Conformation that avoids certain defects likely to render the horse unsound during use.
- Conformation that avoids certain defects likely to render the horse unsound in use are the most important. If the horse is unsound, it will be unable to perform any use for the owner, regardless of how much it looks like an Arabian horse.
- Conformation faults can be listed by priority. Forelegs bear 60-65% of the weight of the horse. Furthermore, approximately 75% of all lameness occurs in the forelegs. Therefore, the forelegs are very important. If the forelegs are badly conformed, they are more susceptible to stress, strain, and concussion. Angle and length in relationship of shoulder to arm determine stride. A longer stride is desirable because fewer steps are needed to cover ground and it is easier to ride. The stress line should come out at the heel and not the center of the hoof. The angle of the shoulder and pasterns will determine this stress line. Horse which are conformed so that the stress line comes out in the middle of the foot are more susceptible to navicular problems.
- The front limb is vital to the horse’s function. Flat bone is a description of bone and ligaments and is necessary for strong limbs. The hoof should be adequate to support the horse’s body weight.
- Muscle seldom breaks down. Bone, tendon or ligaments are more likely to break down. A straight leg will, with few exceptions, outlast a crooked leg.
- Part of judging conformation is observing the horse in action. Features to consider when observing the horse in action are as follows:
 - Length of stride
 - Trueness
 - Spring
 - Regularity
 - Power
 - Height
- Consideration must also be given to the substance and quality of the horse. Substance and quality can be found in the following:
 - Smooth muscles
 - Clean, well-defined bone
 - Finely textured hair coat
 - Masculinity in stallions
 - Femininity in mares
 - Refinement

DEFINITIONS

| <i>Type</i> | <i>The look of the horse that identifies it as an Arabian horse.</i> |
|---|---|
| Conformation | The structure of the horse that makes it a sound, long lasting, correct individual animal. |
| Suitability as a Breeding Animal (stallions & mares only) | A combination of all the specifications regarding the appearance of the breeding animal. The horse's appropriateness for reproducing desirable athletic offspring. |
| Quality | An element that we all recognize in all things desirable. The degree of excellence, condition, carriage, athleticism, balance front to rear, and strength required to perform effortlessly and with finesse. A horse pleasing to the eye. |
| Movement | This relates to how the horse covers the ground with lightness, balance, and cadence. The legs should move straightforward gracefully and freely so the strides appear to be effortless. |
| Substance | The perception of strength and power to do any required task for an extended amount of time with minimal effort. |
| Manners | The conduct or behavior with which the horse performs, obedience and responsiveness to the handler, safety being of utmost importance, the willingness to be controlled. Acceptance of the surroundings and other horses in the arena. |
| Presence | The dignified air, the "special look", the "look at me" attitude, the special spirit that gets your attention. The bloom, shine, depth of conditioning and muscle, athleticism and finesse that sets an individual apart from the others. |

NATURAL ARABIAN APPEARANCE

AR105.2 Natural Arabian Appearance

a. An "altered" tail as determined by an evidential proceeding, civil, criminal, or administrative hearing, arbitration, or other tribunal finding renders the horse ineligible to enter and compete in any Arabian Division class. No horse may compete in a class in the Arabian Division with a tail carriage that has been altered in any manner or by any means. Violations of this rule are considered serious infractions because such alterations constitute misrepresentations of the breed type.

b. An "unnatural" tail is deemed, by a judge's opinion, to be carried in a manner not consistent with the typical Arabian or Half-Arabian type. Judges are required to penalize a horse exhibiting unnatural Arabian tail carriage. Conversely, horses with natural

Arabian tail carriage showing expression that is not angry or offensive shall not be penalized. A horse's tail carriage shall be considered "unnatural" when it is obviously and consistently carried in an unnatural manner throughout its performance in a class.

i. In all non-scored classes, a horse exhibiting an unnatural Arabian tail carriage must be penalized and positioned last in the class.

ii. In all scored classes, a horse exhibiting an unnatural Arabian tail carriage must be assessed a 10-point penalty. Exception: Hunter/Jumper and Breeding In-Hand classes using the Score Sheets will utilize the penalty outlined in AR105.2bi.

iii. Dressage and Western Dressage are exempt from AR105.2bi and ii.

MAJOR AND MINOR FAULTS CHART

* in front of Category name indicates a conformation category of Arabian Scoring System.

| <i>Category</i> | <i>Minor Faults</i> | <i>Major Faults</i> |
|---|---|---|
| *Head | Excessive length to head Large coarse ears Wide set ears (sheep eared) Excessively close set ears Narrow head | Overshot jaw (parrot mouth) Undershot jaw (monkey mouth) Convex head (Roman nose) Small eye (pig eyes) Human eye (purebred only) Glass/blue eyes (purebred only) Cataract/cloudy eye Lop ears or cow ears. |
| *Neck and Shoulder | Straight neck. Short neck Excessive crest Low set | Ewe shaped Poor hinge Thick throat Excessive heavy neck Straight shoulder Flat withers (mutton withers) |
| *Back, Loin and Hip | Low in the back | High croup Disproportionally short croup or hip Steep sloping hip Sway back Shallow body Rafter hips Disproportionally long back |
| *Legs and Feet. <i>FRONT LEGS</i> | Toe in (pigeon toed) Buck knees (knee sprung) | Calf knees (back at the knee). Bench knees (offset knees) Bow legs (bandy legged) Knock knees (knee narrow) Straight or short pasterns Coon footed (excessive sloped or long pasterns) Tied in knees (tied in tendons) Toes out (splay footed) Long cannons (high knees) Base narrow (stands close) Base wide (stands wide) |
| *Legs and Feet <i>REAR LEGS</i> | Stands under (sickle hocks) Toes out Cow hocked | Post legged. Bow legged (bandy hocked) Long cannons (high hocks) Straight or short pasterns Coon footed. (excessively sloped or long pasterns) Stands wide (base wide) Camped out Stands close (base narrow) |
| *Legs and Feet <i>ANY LEG</i> | Broken axis of pastern and hoof Asymmetrical feet | Club foot Dished foot Contracted narrow feet (mule footed) |
| Arabian Type | Low set tail | No tail carriage. Wry tail Crooked tail |
| Movement | Lacks coordination Paddles out | Irregular strides Short stride Wings in |

GAITS

The **type of movement** for each division the Arabian breeds are shown in are determined by the class specifications in the USEF Rule Book. (These rules were written by the Arabian horse community – breeders, owners, exhibitors and judged.) The best type of movement for each division in the rule book was written to describe the most functional and efficient movement for that division.

The **type** of movement should not be confused with the **quality** of the movement. Any type of movement can be performed well, and no one type of movement is superior to another.

Success in the show ring creates popularity and fads. It has a dramatic influence on the way the Arabian horse breeds are ridden, trained, and bred to move. Judges have an obligation to know correctness and quality of gaits, as well as how they are applied to each division according to the USEF Rule Book.

- **A walk is a four-beat gait in any division the horse is being shown.**
- The walk is a four-beat gait, executed in four-four time. Four distinct hoof beats are heard as each foot in succession strikes the ground. Two or three feet are always on the ground. The four beats should be clear, distinct and

evenly spaced, without shuffling, quickening or altering the rhythm.

- The sequence of foot falls is **(1) right hind, (2) right fore, (3) left hind, (4) left fore.**
- **A trot is a two-beat gait in any division the horse is being shown.**
- The jog-trot or trot is a two-beat diagonal gait with suspension, executed in two-time. The trot should always have two clean beats, with a regular, even rhythm and tempo. A good trot has engagement, with springy, round and relaxed back muscles.
- The sequence of footfalls is **(1) right hind and left fore, (2) left hind and right fore.**

In the show ring the horses are asked to move at a particular gait and speed, in a specific direction, and to carry themselves in a certain fashion. In each division the frame and way of going varies, but the mechanical aspects of the walk, trot/job, and canter/lope are the same within all the divisions. A horse that moves with an inappropriate type of movement for the division he is being shown in should be discriminated against, no matter how well he moves. The type of movement (or way of going) specified for a particular division should be given priority over an inappropriate type of movement for that division.

CONFORMATION

Ideals, Theory and Observations

This information is not designed or written to appear as the ultimate word on horse conformation by the most authoritative specialists in the field. Rather it is as the title indicates, it is a compilation of acquired ideals and theory mixed with considerable practical observation. Not a little of the information has been gleaned from knowledgeable horseman who had the ability and patience to explain why a horse works better when he is conformed in a particular manner.

It is also most important to remember that this work is designed as a guide or reference to be helpful in appraising an individual horse for *relative* merit. The perfect horse hasn't been born yet, and there have been numerous horses, handicapped by poor conformation which went on to win the race or bet the competition with only heart.

Figure A illustrates what we would like to call the ideal. He is "on the square", - well balanced and capable of most any chore requiring athletic ability. His body, trunk and legs fall into a square with a level top line, (top of withers to top of croup – not just croup as so many believe), correct hind leg (a line, dropped perpendicular to the ground from the point of buttocks, touches the back of the hock, rear cannon and fetlock), the feet are squarely under the body ("a leg at each corner"), and a sound front leg which fits well in to the shoulder. He has a well-laid-back shoulder and is deep in the heart (indicated by the mark from bottom of the sternum to the point where the bottom of the neck enters the chest). The mark above his back and the arrow at the loin show that he is strong in the loin and "closed coupled" (the proximity of the last rib and point of the hip). In general, he follows the Rulebook ideals for conformation and type. The square may also be divided into three almost equal parts vertically; the point of the shoulder

to the back of the withers, from girth to hip, and from hip to the point of buttock.

The horse has good length of neck, is clean in the throat latch, has well set ears, and a good eye, a flaring nostril and a fairly level croup with good length of hip. Our ideal by the way does not have a "table top" croup. To digress: though a good tail set and a highly carried tail are to be sought after, and the "apple rumped" horse is not desirable, in relation to the croup too level a pelvis often causes problems. Particularly in the mare, where the openings of the digestive and reproductive tracts are in close proximity, one

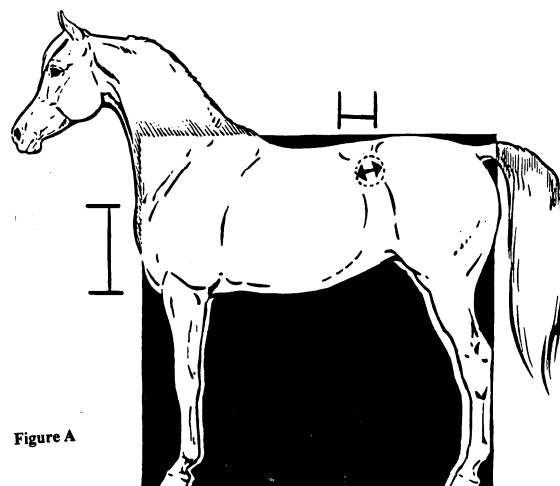


Figure A

can see that a very level croup throws the anus in such a position (directly above) that the exterior reproductive organs are contaminated with fecal material.

Our ideal horse is again illustrated in **Figure B**. He is obviously pleased with himself and shows us that since he has such a good shoulder and hip, and is close coupled, he can properly elevate both his fore and hind legs as well as rounding

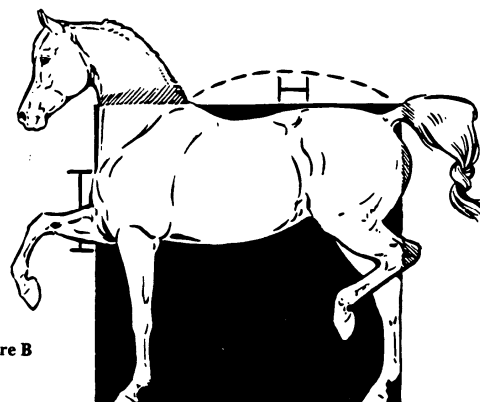


Figure B

out or bending his frame (back) slightly as indicated by the dotted line. (Please note: his mane is not blowing in the breeze and he is not covering ground. He is merely lifting his legs and we wish to discourage anyone from thinking we are making comments on Park action.) With proper collection, our horse is elevating his legs and bowing his back so that not only can he trot, but he can jump well, gather himself for a quick start or well-balanced sliding stop, scramble over Cougar Rock on the Tevis Cup Ride or even execute a *Piaffe* or *Passage*

Figure C is a full brother to our Ideal and looks very worried. He has a very similar front end – quite correct. But, he is “off the square” mainly because he has a bad coupling and long back. This makes it extremely difficult for him to round his frame (notice the dotted line) and gather himself. He stands a strong chance of developing a sore back. He has the good hip of his brother, our Ideal in Figure A, but the weak coupling makes it hard for him to work with his hocks well under him. He has difficulty gaining forward motion because of the ill-placed hocks, and he also has a bad time turning and bending. You can see that just the one serious fault – the long back- has limited this horse’s use and athletic ability. A gelding that has been used hard for ten or twelve years with this particular fault might be a safe risk, but would you want to choose a broodmare with it? Unless she were a mutation and you could prove it, she would not be the best bet. Conformation is a heritable trait. That means that this fault is a bred in characteristic. That’s why a knowledge of conformation is essential to a breeder – not just the endurance rider.

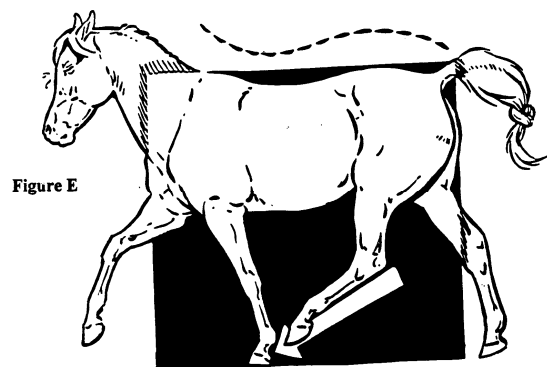


Figure E

In **Figure D** our horse on the left has been drawn with a short straight neck which ties-in too low, a steep shoulder and too-straight, short pasterns to match. His whole front shock absorption system is sadly lacking. He would jolt along, “heavy on the forehand”, with each concussion apt to foster calcification of the joints, splints and a darned rough ride for a passenger.

Comparatively, our ideal on the right in Figure D

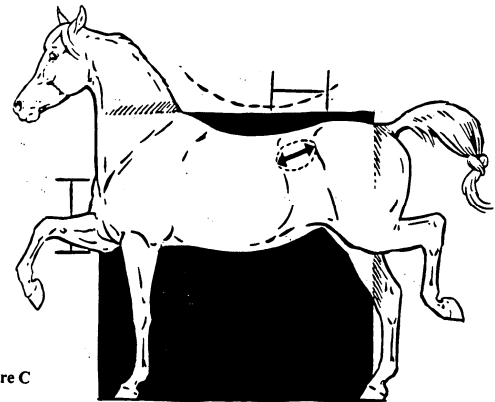


Figure C

has good slope of shoulder which allows for use of the long well-set neck to elevate his forehand

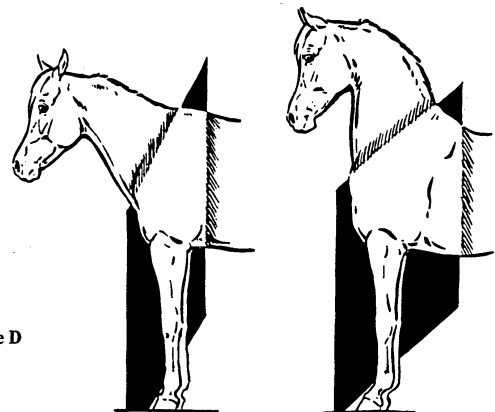


Figure D

and move with alight, well-balanced manner. The pasterns have length and angle enough to flex and give a very comfortable ride.

Figure E shows our horse on the left from Figure D when he tries to move “on the square”. He ends up with a short back and good hind quarters, but when he tries to engage those hind quarters he interferes with the poor, heavy forehand which has a shorter stride. Hence, the forefeet don’t get out of the way and forging and scalping occur. Ouch!

The reason man domesticated the horse, after eating him for a while, was basically to use him as a beast of burden. To accomplish this task the horse had to be able to move forward to carry the burden –cargo or rider or both. Since the horse’s forward movement and impulsion originate with the hind, let’s take a look at a break down of the parts of the horse and what they should look like. The proper conformation – correct bone, joints, and angulation of bones – makes the horse mechanically efficient and effective.

Figure #1 is a comparison of the human leg to the hind leg of our horse. As you can see, the hip of the horse is the upper leg of man, the stifle is the knee-cap, the hock is the ankle and the hoof is comparable to the toe.

Of the three horses illustrated in **Figure #2**,

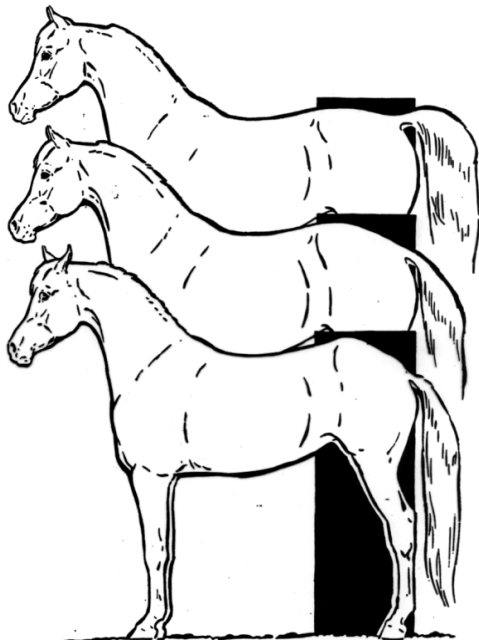


Figure #2

(below) the top horse is our friend who was “on the square”. He and his two comrades show the three basic variations in croup angle. Our ideal horse has a long pelvis, well muscled hind quarters, a relatively long, level croup and a nice tail carriage.

The middle horse in Figure #2 has most of the same attributes but with a somewhat steeper croup angle. And, although he may not have the

sweeping stride that our top friend of the level croup does, he is nonetheless efficient. He can perform with agility and thrust from the hocks, but may deviate from the ideal in a halter class

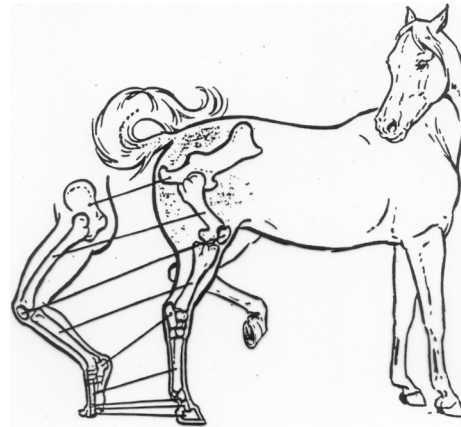


Figure #1

due to the croup.

The bottom horse has a croup that is even steeper, but he has a considerably shorter pelvis. He is longer and rougher in the coupling and over the loins. When allowed to become over-fat, this type of hind end gives the appearance of what is often referred to as “apple rumped”.

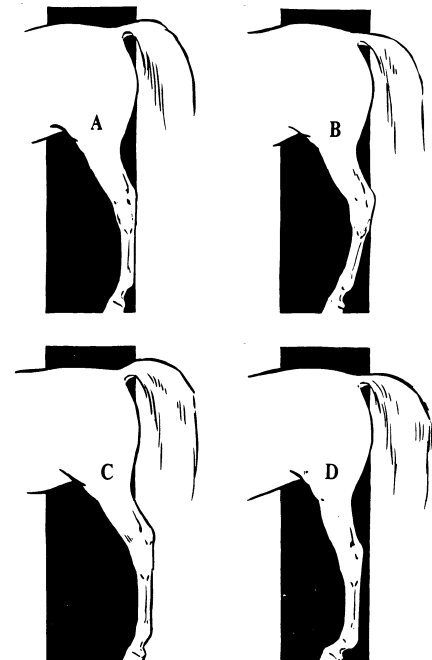


Figure #3 (right) shows several variations of the hindleg, as viewed from the side. "A" is our ideal whose leg lines up from point of buttocks to back of hock and fetlock. "B" is sickle-hocked. The hock is out behind the point of the butt and the foot is too far under (camped under). The cannon is not perpendicular to the ground and complications arise because the cannon does not fit properly into the hock joint. Unsoundnesses which may occur here are bog spavins and curb. Again, leg conformation is a heritable transmissible trait. Choose accordingly. Example "C" is "camped out". This means as you can see, that when the cannon bone is perpendicular to the ground, the hock and fetlock are out behind the line from the point of the butt. This horse is more uncomfortable when asked to engage his hind quarter and work in a collected manner. "D" is "post legged" which simply means he is too straight in the leg. From the pelvis to the pastern there is not sufficient angulation. He is probably not very comfortable to ride because his shock absorbing system is inefficient. He is prone to stifle problems and is also "coon footed" as well as being "soft" in the pastern.

Figure #4 is a view of the rear of the horse as you stand behind him. The first thing you should notice is how different sets of legs deviate from a plumb line dropped vertically from the point of the buttocks to the ground.

In the Ideal "A", the plumb line bisects the center of the hamstring, the hocks, cannon, fetlock, and hoof. A horse thus conformed has straight, smooth action. Both legs on the same side (front and rear) travel on the same plane.

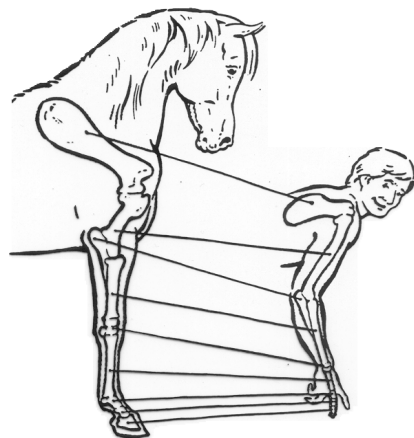
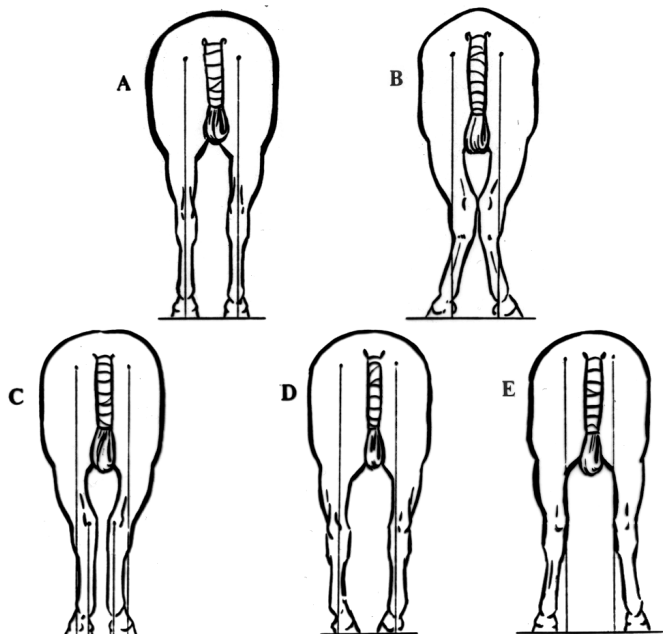


Figure #5

"B" is a truly cow-hocked horse. Hocks are twisted and close together. The

cannons do not fit correctly into the hocks, causing curbs, jacks and spavins. This particular individual is also "rafter hipped". He lacks the muscling, seen in "A", to fill out his profile. Often a young horse, which appears fat and sleek from the side, will evidence the rear profile indicated. It is mostly caused from over-feeding and lack of exercise. "C" is often mistakenly called cow-hocked. He is in reality a very functional individual. Though his hocks are close, the cannons fit into them correctly. He toes out, but is usually not unsound. He can still lift his leg and move out because his stifles are positioned on the sides of his barrel even though his hocks do not fall on the same plumb line.



Horse "D", on the other hand, is hampered in his movement by being toed-in. He is open at the hocks rather than the stifle, and would have trouble where his legs try to move past the barrel as he moves them forward. He is called "base narrow".

"E" is the opposite, being "base wide". He would travel spraddled out with little hock action and would lack the full function of his stifle as well.

Looking at the front end of the horse in **Figure #5** will show how the horse's shoulder and front leg

correspond to man's. The shoulder and forearm with elbow compare easily, but man's wrist becomes the horse's KNEE! The bones of the hand come together to form the horse's cannon while the bones of his middle finger form the pastern and coffin bone.

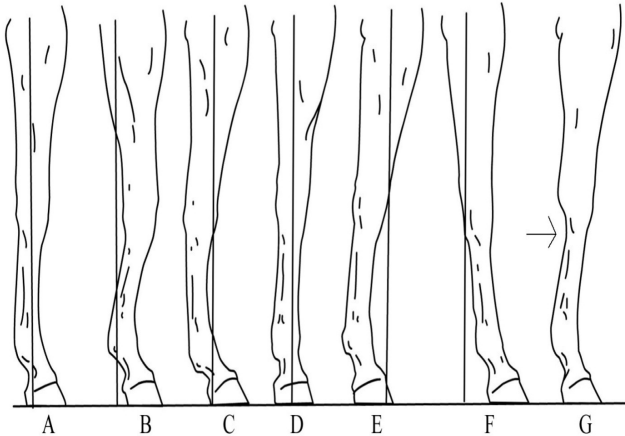


Figure #6 (above) illustrates various types of forelegs viewed from the side.

- "A" shows a correct leg, straight and able to support the weight above it.
- "B" is "over in the knee", and while the leg is not as attractive as the ideal, it is not apt to become unsound. Though the leg is not quite straight, it will support weight, and the joint has not much unnecessary strain put on it.
- "C" is "calf kneed" or "back at the knee", and this is much more serious. Under stress, the bones in this leg will suffer as weight puts stress in exactly the opposite direction from which the joint should bend. The legs of a horse are designed to accommodate motion with some degree of concussion when the horse's hoof meets the ground.
- "D", being straight and short in the pastern, has nowhere to absorb the shock of that concussion. Thus, he would be rough riding at best and unsound at worst. His shock absorption system is faulty.
- "E" and "F" are respectively "camped under" and "camped out". They do not

support weight as they should, but are less hazardous to permanent unsoundness than is the post leg, or "D".

- "G" is "tied in" below the knee. This means that he is lacking support from either bone, tendon or both in a critical area. One would like to see relatively the same depth of bone and tendon at the point where the cannon joins the knee as at the top of the fetlock joint.

The front of the cannon bone and the back of the tendons should form a parallel line as viewed from the side from the knee to the fetlock.

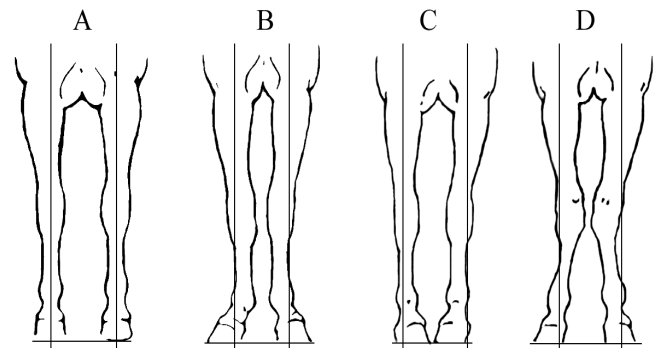


Figure #7 (above) illustrates front legs viewed from the front.

- "A" is again our ideal. A plumb line dropped from the point of the shoulder would pass through the forearm, knee, cannon, fetlock, pastern and would bisect the hoof.
- "B" is obviously toed out, but not just in the hoof. He starts to toe out in the pastern, and it is this joint that will receive the abuse and show the damage.
- "C" toes in or is "pigeon toed" and is apt to paddle. But he will not interfere with himself, as "B" will, so he is more serviceable, though not much better to look at.
- "D" is knock-kneed and because the weight will be compressed on the outside of the knees, rather than through the center, serious problems will occur when the horse is stressed.

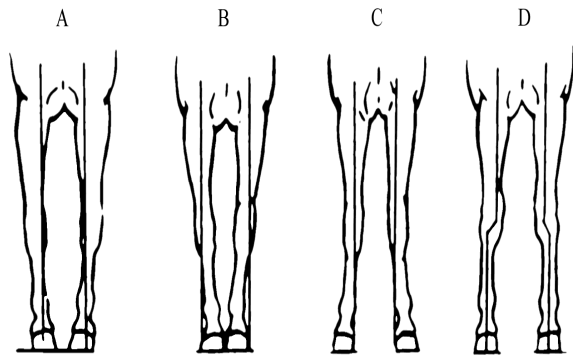


Figure #8 (above) continues with front leg types.

- “A”, being “open” at the knees, will be a clumsy mover and will not be able to trot very well.
- “B” is base narrow and
- “C” is base wide. Both horses will lumber in their gaits because of poor movement in the shoulders. The former is open at the elbows while the latter is closed.
- “D” is “bench kneed” – he has offset cannons. In other words, the cannons don’t come down out of the center of the knee. He will develop high splints and knee problems when stressed.

Stress constitutes hard work such as long hours working cattle, racing, endurance riding or playing polo. Many of our show horses are never actually stressed to these extremes.



Figure #9 (above) concentrates on the lower leg and hoof.

- “A” is the ideal, with good length of pastern and both pastern and hoof at the correct angle to the ground. “B” and “C” show basically improperly trimmed feet. “B” is long in the toe and “C” is short with too much heel. Both have the correct equipment, but it has been artificially misused.

- “D” and “E” show corresponding hooves corresponding to “B” and “C”, but the leg above does not follow the same line, hence, the broken angle effect. Both “D” and “E” stress the coffin bone and promote unsoundness.
- “F” in Figure #9 shows a “coon foot” or a horse soft in the pastern. The pastern is long and the attachments are weak. Under stress of a hard gallop or hard stops and rough ground, this horse will eventually injure the sesamoid bone. His gait will also be too springy and camel like. One can often tell if a horse tends toward this problem by close examination of the ergot. If the ergot is rubbed off or infected, or if the surrounding hair is gone, there may be room for question.

Figure # 10 (below) compares the head of a typical “cold blooded” horse with that of a typical Arabian. There is an overall intelligent look about the Arabian’s head that the other simply doesn’t possess. There is refinement in the well chiseled, clean head. The space between the eyes leaves room for some thought to occur. The placing of a large eye, well set on the head, will make a horse appear more intelligent in his actions even if he isn’t any smarter than his companion. He will have a better disposition simply because he can see more things efficiently. He can see what is around him and behind him with less head adjustment. Because of his increased powers of observation, not as many things will spook him or surprise him. The peripheral vision of the pig-eyed cold-blooded horse will often cause him to see things much later as they approach him from side or behind

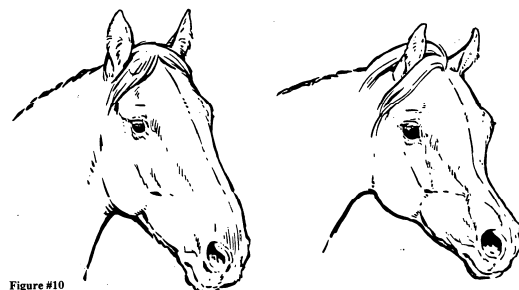


Figure #10

The forehead of the Arabian is properly called the "Jibbah" by the Bedouin and had great value placed upon it. They believed the better the jibbah in terms of swell and breadth, the better the chance for intelligence in the animal.

The large, flaring nostril allows for adequate air intake under stress conditions. A clean throat latch and space between the branches of the jowls also aid in the horse's breathing process.

Figure #11



Figure # 11 (above) shows the ideal horse in the center with a short-necked coarse-throated companion on the left. To the right of our ideal, a double-headed arrow indicates what is meant by space between the jowls. If the horse is to work with a proper head set, and still be able to breathe properly when moving, his windpipe cannot be compressed. Narrow bars and thick throat latch restrict the supply of air and cause the horse to resist the rider's wishes by throwing or lugging his head in order to breath.

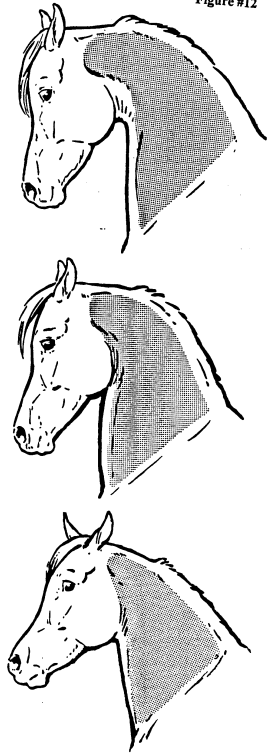
Figure # 12 (right) indicates three types of necks.

- At the top is our ideal. He is long from poll to crest and long and clean in the throat latch. He has room to flex, give to the bit and bend through the neck – and still breath efficiently.
- The middle horse has a reasonably long neck, but is not long in the throat latch region. His neck bulges below the jowl and will lack the grace with which our ideal handles his head and neck. Even if his breathing is not interfered with, he will still be less supple and responsive to the trainer's wishes.

- The bottom horse has a short, straight neck which will cut down considerably on the grace and elasticity with which he moves. He will not be well balanced and will have more trouble than our ideal in rounding his back and engaging his hindquarters. This sort of neck usually fits less well into the shoulder and such a horse does not move "on the square".

The whole reason for knowing what is correct when talking about conformation is that conformation has a direct bearing on how the horse moves or performs his given duty. A horse can be beautiful, but not be able to move without injuring himself. As the horse was developed as a beast of burden for man, he must be able to satisfactorily complete a task for a period of time. If he can't he is worthless – no matter how pretty he is standing around.

Figure #12



The **trot** is the most significant and descriptive gait the horse has to offer to the educated horseman's eye, and we are only scratching the surface of the imperfections in a horse's way of going.

Figure #13 (next page, bottom left) shows three different horses trotting toward the viewer.

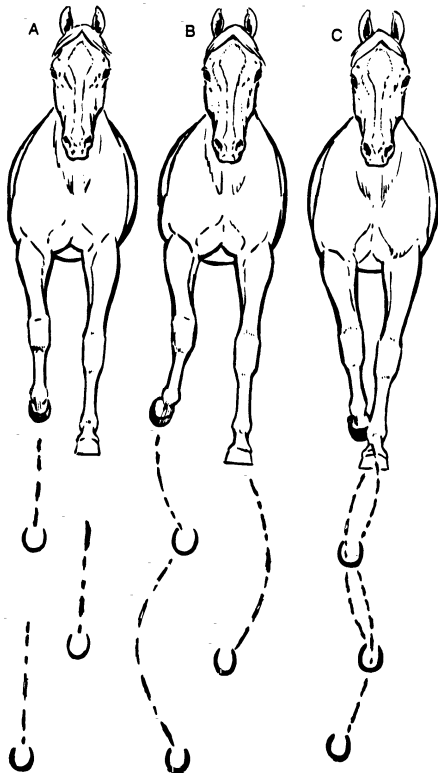
- "A" is our ideal. His front legs move straight and true. They travel in the same plane from front to back with no deviation. The hoof prints below each subject track the motion of each hoof.
- "B" is probably a wide-chested horse that might stand a little pigeon-toed. He "paddles" as he moves out. The hoof

tends to swing out from the vertical plane causing an arc rather than a true straight-ahead motion. This horse would not be apt to go unsound as seriously as would his companion to the right.

- Horse "C" is the worst mover. He is base narrow and wings as he moves. As he strides forward, his hooves deviate from the vertical plane toward the inside. A horse that wings severely will injure himself by hitting the inside of the coronet, fetlock or cannon as the opposing hoof passes.

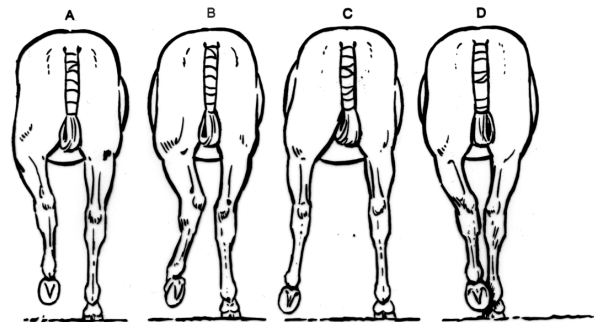
Figure #14 (below) shows four horses moving away at a trot.

- "A" is correct, moving with his hind legs in the same plane as his front legs.



- "B" is moving too close at the hocks and toes-out, but he is wide at the stifle and can move freely. He will be able to get his hocks well under himself and will generally be a very serviceable mount.
- Horse "C" moves poorly in comparison, as he is narrow at the stifle and moves base-wide. He would have restricted hock action and a "spraddled out" way of going.
- The worst problems are seen in horse "D", however. His legs are set close at both the hocks and fetlocks. He is base-narrow and his hooves stand a very good chance of interfering with each other as he moves.

Perfectly moving horses are few, but available. The trick in choosing breeding horses is finding those that approach perfection in their legs, as



well as type desired. The trick in choosing a riding horse is finding either the perfection mentioned or in knowing which faults can still leave a horse serviceable, sound and useful for the duration of his life.

RESOURCES

<https://www.usef.org/learning-center/videos/arabian-horse-conformation>

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