



Tee Coolest, a Quarter Horse stallion

# Introductory Level

## North Carolina 4-H Horse Judging Manual

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## **Use of this 4-H Horse Judging Manual**

This guide contains criteria, terms, suggestions, and diagrams to be used in developing a 4-H or youth Horse Judging Team. Because certain breed types change quite frequently, this guide in no way tries to describe the ideal type for each breed. It simply lists general terms that apply to all breeds. The structural diagrams and lists of body parts, blemishes, and unsoundnesses are primarily the same for all breeds of horses. Certain traits or characteristics are emphasized in different breeds, and that information can be obtained from the appropriate breed association. The suggestions and recommendations for judging are universal rules that have withstood the test of time and will normally remain unchanged as time continues.

Contact your volunteer leader to obtain the correct breed type for a particular breed. In addition, the breed associations have a wealth of knowledge about the breed character class requirements.

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## **Characteristics of a successful judge**

In order to be a successful judge, either at a show or in a judging contest, one needs the following characteristics:

1. A clear knowledge of the ideal or standard breed type.
2. An ability to recognize desirable and undesirable traits in both conformation and performance.
3. Quick and accurate powers of observation.
4. The ability to form a mental image of several individual animals and to rank them comparatively.
5. Reasoning power that takes into account practical considerations.
6. The ability to reach a definite decision based on sound judgment.
7. Extreme honesty and sincerity in order to avoid any bias or prejudice. Judges should always make decisions based on their own knowledge and judgment.
8. Steady nerves and a confidence in one's ability to make close, independent decisions based entirely on the merits of the animals. Students, in both practice and in contests, should work independently. A good philosophy

for all judges is to do the best work possible at the time and have no regrets about results or accomplishments.

9. Ability to evaluate and rank an individual horse according to its appearance the day of judging, regardless of its placing at a previous show and/or its future potential.

10. Sound knowledge acquired through practice and experience in order to give effective reasons for decisions made.

11. A pleasant and even temperament. Good judges, however, do not fraternize with exhibitors or friends along the ringside.

12. A firmness to stand by and defend one's placings without offending or in any way implying that one's decisions are infallible.

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## **Giving reasons on a class**

A good judge must not only have a complete knowledge of the ideal breed type, but also be able to give effective and accurate reasons for his/her placing. By the time a judge reaches his/her final decision, he/she should be able to justify that placing with proper terminology in a systematic manner.

Before most students, and even experienced judges, are able to give an effective set of reasons, it is necessary for them to spend considerable time learning the anatomy of the horse and proper terminology. Then they must gain experience. In order to give a competent set of reasons, it is necessary to train the mind to absorb and retain a mental image of the good and bad characteristics of a horse. The judge must develop a vocabulary based on current industry terminology that will enable him/her to state these points accurately, concisely, and effectively. In learning to give a good set of reasons, a judge develops the following skills:

1. The ability to make a decision after weighing all points of consideration.
2. The ability to present and defend a decision.
3. The ability to stand and speak with confidence to a group of people or an individual.

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## **Taking notes on a class**

In competitive horse judging, students are often required to give reasons for their decisions several hours after they have placed a class. Therefore, it is necessary for students to take notes on a class as they judge it. These notes will be used only as a prompt to remember a class and should never be used when presenting reasons formally. Secretarial notepads (8½" by 11¾") are an ideal size when taking notes in a judging contest.

When preparing to take notes on a class ([Figure 1](#)), start with a full page, divide it into two columns, and then draw four separate rows. At the top of the page make one large blank for the class name and a smaller blank for your final placing. List the number of the horses one through four in the rows and make a blank next to each of the numbers. Then, write "good" at the top of the first column and "bad" at the top of the second. This allows the judge to separate good (commendations) and bad (faults) characteristics on each animal and makes it easier both to place the class and prepare to give reasons. Also, it can be helpful to circle large differences in animals, therefore highlighting and bringing them to attention. In the blanks next to each of the numbers, write the identification points (IDs) of each horse. These can be color, markings, blemishes, or any distinguishing characteristics that help the students remember and describe each individual horse. Each person will probably develop his/her own method of taking notes, but the important thing is to get the essential facts into your set of notes. Many judges develop a type of shorthand, using abbreviations while taking notes, which save them time.

After taking notes, write your order of placement at the top of the page. You should make certain that this



agrees with the placings you write on the card that will be turned in to contest officials. Also, make sure the proper class name and number are placed on the appropriate card and respective note page before turning the card in.

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## **Presenting oral reasons**

Oral reasons should be accurate and specific, and proper terminology should be used to describe the individual horses. A good set of reasons should describe a class in such a way that someone listening to the reasons who has never seen the class can visualize the animals and "see" them in their mind.

The organization of reasons, or the "flow," should unfold in a definite order. Although the organization should follow a definite pattern, each person giving reasons will develop an individual approach that is convenient to their way of speaking. A set of reasons should be comparative in nature, using a minimum of descriptive terms. In addition, terminology within a set of reasons should vary and not appear monotonous due to a repetition of terms and expressions.

Presentation, or delivery, is an important part of giving reasons. Oral reasons should be spoken in a pleasant and pleasing voice. They should be given in a convincing, confident manner with the utmost conviction, but they should never be shouted or given in an offensive manner. A good set of reasons should leave the official with a favorable impression of the reasons-giver. Remember, the maximum time for presenting a set of reasons is two minutes, so it is important to be concise and discuss only the factors that influenced your placing.

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## **Organizing a set of oral reasons**

When preparing to give a set of oral reasons, use the notes previously taken on the class to prepare an ordered, concise set of reasons. The easiest way to set up a notepad to give a set of reasons is to take a page and write both the name of the class and your placing at the top of the page ([Figure 2](#)). Then, divide the rest of the page into a "tic tac toe" board or three columns and three rows. Each of the rows represents a "pair" of animals. In placing a class of the standard four horses, there will be three pairs. For example, if a class is placed 2-1-4-3, 2 and 1 are the top (initial) pair, 1 and 4 are the middle (intermediate) pair, and 4 and 3 are the bottom (concluding) pair.

At the top of the first column write "Commendations." In the commendations box of each pair write the number of the higher-placed horse over the number of the lower-placed horse. Next, write the IDs of each animal next to the numbers. You will need two blanks for IDs in your top pair, but only one blank for the lower-placed animal in the middle and bottom pairs. In the commendation boxes for each pair, write the reasons why the horse that was placed above in the pair excelled over the horse placed lower in the pair.

At the top of the second column, write "Grants." In these spaces go the characteristics that the lower-placed animal excelled over the higher-placed animal in the pair. There never is or ever has been a perfect horse, so there will always be a least one trait that the lower-placed animal was superior in than the higher-placed animal within a pair. Finally, at the top of the final column, write "Faults." These boxes are where the faults of the lower-placed animals are listed. These are the major faults that forced the judge to place that horse below the other horse. This grid system allows the reasons-giver to organize his/her thoughts in a logical manner that easily translates into a set of reasons.

When an actual set of reasons is given, it should follow the exact flow described above. The critical points, or criteria, upon which you judged the class and the class name should be stated first, followed by the placing. Then, the student should describe the top pair, starting with the identification points, followed by the commendations of

the first-placed horse, next by the grants of the second-placed horse, and finally by the faults of the second-placed horse. Next, the middle pair should be given in the same manner, followed by the bottom pair. Within the commendations, grants, and faults of each pair, there should again be a systematic order or flow. By using this grid system for organizing a set of reasons, it is easier for the student to format the important facts in a logical manner without jumping from one animal to another throughout a set of reasons.

It is easiest to describe in-hand or halter classes in the following manner: Each horse should be discussed front to rear, top to bottom, with movement being the last thing discussed. By organizing each horse's description this way, the reasons-giver is "painting a picture" of each individual horse for the official. Furthermore, it is a consistent, logical format that is easy to remember and follow for both the reasons-giver and reasons-listener. Likewise, in a performance class without a pattern, each animal should be discussed in the following manner: First, describe how the horse carries itself, otherwise known as its frame, including the headset, followed by its quality of movement, rate of speed, consistency, transitions from different gaits, and finally how it backs.

In a pattern class, each horse should be discussed in the order of the maneuvers of the pattern from start to finish. Again, as the maximum time for a set of reasons is two minutes, it is imperative to stress the important facts within a class and not get bogged down with details that did not affect the placing. Ideally, a set of reasons should be completed in 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 minutes.

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## Reasons format skeleton

\_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Criteria*) \_\_\_\_\_ were the criteria I used to place this class of \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Class Name*) \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Placing*) \_\_\_\_\_, starting with (1<sup>st</sup>), \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert IDs*) \_\_\_\_\_, who best combined \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Criteria*) \_\_\_\_\_ to the highest degree. In my initial pair, I did prefer (1<sup>st</sup>) over (2<sup>nd</sup>), \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert IDs*) \_\_\_\_\_, as (1<sup>st</sup>) was \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Commendations*) \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, (2<sup>nd</sup>) \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Grants*) \_\_\_\_\_, however (2<sup>nd</sup>) \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Faults*) \_\_\_\_\_.

Even so, due to (2<sup>nd</sup>)'s advantages in \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Criteria*) \_\_\_\_\_ placed over (3<sup>rd</sup>), \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert IDs*) \_\_\_\_\_, in my middle pair. \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Commendations*) \_\_\_\_\_

I will concede that (3<sup>rd</sup>) \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Grants*) \_\_\_\_\_, yet (3<sup>rd</sup>) \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Faults*) \_\_\_\_\_.

Despite these criticisms, it was \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Criteria*) \_\_\_\_\_ that compelled me to place (3<sup>rd</sup>) over (4<sup>th</sup>), \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert IDs*) \_\_\_\_\_ in my bottom pair. \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Commendations*) \_\_\_\_\_

I cannot dispute the fact that (4<sup>th</sup>) \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Grants*) \_\_\_\_\_, but (4<sup>th</sup>) \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert Faults*) \_\_\_\_\_, and therefore merits no higher placing in this class today.

~Thank You

(1<sup>st</sup>) = first-placed horse

(2<sup>nd</sup>) = second-placed horse

(3<sup>rd</sup>) = third-placed horse

(4<sup>th</sup>) = fourth-placed horse

Remember to include connective phrases within the commendations, grants, and faults. Also, you may move the pair transitions, grant phrases, and fault phrases around in order to develop your own style of giving reasons. The terms listed above are only suggestions, and there are many variations. Play around with them and find a combination that works for you. Refer to the back of this manual for more terminology.

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## Rules for giving oral reasons

1. Learn to *visualize* the animals. Do *not* read your notes in the reasons room.
2. Talk in a *slightly* louder than ordinary voice. Be confident and enthusiastic, but do not shout.
3. Stand approximately six to eight feet in front of the reasons-listener.
4. Always start your reasons by giving the class name and your placing, followed by the reasons why you placed the class.
5. Be sure to *compare* each animal to the one you placed below.

6. Use *comparative* terminology. **Note:** Most of the terms used are adjectives ending in "er," like heavier, taller, wider, deeper, etc., or the word "more" prior to a descriptive term. The only time superlative terms may be used is when describing the first- or last-place animal. (Superlative terms end in "est," like tightest, longest, shortest, etc.)
7. *NEVER* use indefinite terms, such as better, good, nice, best, etc., which explain nothing about the class and do not compare one horse to another.
8. Proper *organization* is important. Follow the format set out above, and discuss each animal in a logical and systematic manner.
9. *Don't memorize* your reasons. Always think about the class and picture the animals in your mind.
10. Do *not* learn one set of reasons and apply it to each class. No two animals are alike, and each class differs greatly.
11. Big, fancy words are not important. Use *well-known* and *straightforward terminology* that is easily understood by the untrained horseman and accepted in the equine industry.
12. The *truth* about a class is the most important factor in giving reasons. Be accurate and do not make up points that were not true.
13. There is *no substitute for accuracy*. (Reasons are scored approximately 75 percent on truth and accuracy and only 25 percent on organization and delivery.)
14. A set of reasons does not need to be long. A minute and a half should be sufficient if you are organized. *Two minutes are the maximum time limit* without penalty.
15. Always be prepared to answer questions concerning the class. If you can readily visualize the class in your mind, answering questions will be easy.
16. Train yourself to give a good set of reasons. To be able to give reasons takes practice. However, learning a format and flow makes it much easier. Here are some suggestions to improve your reasons:
  - a. *Practice* giving reasons to other people.
  - b. *Practice* writing reasons just as though you were speaking them.
  - c. *Practice* giving reasons in front of a mirror.
  - d. *Practice* your reasons using a video camera or a tape recorder to hear yourself.

**Remember, the key word in each of these suggestions is PRACTICE.**

17. *Look people in the eye* when you talk to them. This conveys confidence and conviction in what you are saying.
18. *Stand up straight*. Do not slouch, move around, or "speak" with your hands. Keep your hands at your side or behind your back. You are making a presentation to an official and should give them proper respect.

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## **General criteria for judging conformation classes**

**Balance**—This is the most important criterion in judging and placing a conformation class. Balance can be defined as the overall way a horse fits together. This means that all parts of the horse should be in proportion to one another. Ideally, a horse should be visualized in three equal parts, the front (muzzle to the heartgirth), middle (heartgirth to the rear flank), and hind (rear flank to the point of the buttock) ([Figure 3a](#)). These parts should all have the same length. In addition, the length of the head should be approximately the same length as the underside of the neck, which corresponds to the length from the point of the shoulder to the heartgirth, the barrel, and finally the hip. Furthermore, the depth of the barrel should be equivalent to the length of the horse's legs, while the length of the underline should be two times the length of the back ([Figure 3b](#)). The ideal horse has a 45- to 50-degree angle to the shoulder, and the pastern angle should correspond to the shoulder angle ([Figure 3a](#)). No horse is exactly proportional, but in theory an ideally balanced horse would exhibit these ratios.



**Structural correctness**—This concept can be defined as a measure of the perfection of the skeletal structure of a horse. A horse with the correct alignment of bones and ligaments will move well and maintain soundness over a longer period than a structurally incorrect horse. Figures [4a](#), [4b](#), [4c](#), and [4d](#) show ideal leg conformation, as well as diagrams of common structural flaws and/or deviations.

Although many horses do not have ideal conformation, they are serviceably sound and perform successfully. As a judge, you must determine the severity of conformational defects when observing a conformation class. The following definitions are critical when determining the usefulness of a horse.

**Unsoundness** reflects any deviation in structure or function that interferes with the intended use, function, and performance of a horse.

**Blemish** describes abnormalities that do not affect the intended use or serviceability of a horse. Over time, a blemish may result in an unsoundness (Figures [4c](#) to [4d](#)).

**Serviceability sound** is a term to indicate that a horse may have a structural problem or deviation, but it may have only a limited effect on the animal's ability to perform.

**Muscling**—This criterion evaluates how much muscle a horse carries on its frame. The amount of muscle desired on a particular horse is dictated by its breed ideal. For example, a Quarter Horse should have significantly more muscle than an Arabian. Therefore, it is important to know what the breed ideal is before judging a class. In general, stock-type breeds, like Quarter Horses, Paints, Palominos, etc., desire more total mass of muscle with more expression throughout. In contrast, many saddle-type breeds, like Arabians, Saddlebreds, etc., emphasize a longer, smoother muscle pattern and do not want an extreme amount of muscling. These breeds want just enough muscle, or substance, to support the horse's frame. The most common places to look for muscling on a horse are in the pectoral region, the arm, forearm, loin, buttock, thigh, stifle, and inner and outer gaskins ([Figure 5](#)).

**Refinement or quality**—These terms describe how a horse's features, particularly the head, neck, and overall bone and muscle structure, fit together. Essentially, this category covers the attractiveness and "eye appeal" of the horse. A refined horse should have wide-spaced, bright eyes and be short from poll to muzzle with ears set squarely on top of a chiseled head ([Figure 3a](#)). Furthermore, a refined horse will be clean through the throatlatch with a long, proportional neck set high on the shoulder ([Figure 6](#)). Finally, a horse that exhibits quality will have clean legs, joints, and tendons, with tone and definition of muscling, and will not appear coarse or bulky, soggy or fat.

**Breed type or character**—Obviously, the breed type of each individual breed will differ greatly from each other. For example, a Quarter Horse should not look like a Saddlebred and vice versa. Therefore, in order to determine breed type, it is important to have a working knowledge of common breed ideals, such as the Arabian, Quarter Horse, Tennessee Walking Horse, Saddlebred, Hunter-type horses, etc.

**Quality of movement or way of going**—A horse must exhibit proper movement, head carriage, and frame in order for it to be successful under saddle. Therefore, we want a horse in a conformation class to have the proper length of stride and drive from the hindquarters. Since different breeds have very different ideals for how a horse is supposed to move, it is important to understand each breed ideal. The structural correctness of a horse determines the trueness of stride, which is evaluated from the front and rear ([Figure 7](#)). All horses should be evaluated on

trueness and length of stride. In stock-type halter and hunter-type conformation classes, we want a horse to have a longer stride and flatter knee, whereas in saddle-type classes (for instance, purebred Arabian, Saddlebred, and Tennessee Walking Horse), we want a horse to exhibit more spring or animation from both the knees and hocks.

Each type of class puts emphasis on a different set of characteristics. For example, in a stock-type mare class, there would be more focus on breed character, structural correctness, and refinement than in a stock-type gelding class, whereas the geldings would have more emphasis on muscling. As a general rule of thumb, the girls should look like girls, and the boys should look like boys. Balance is universally the most important characteristic and highest priority when placing any conformation class. Just use common sense when judging classes to determine which are the most important traits for the breed and intended use of the animal you are judging.

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## **Common structural deviations**

### **HEAD**

**Parrot-Mouthed** or "Overshot Jaw"—The front teeth overlap the bottom teeth.

**Monkey-Mouthed** or "Undershot Jaw"—The bottom teeth overlap the top teeth.

**Pig-Eyed**—The eyes are small, unattractive, and placed low on the head.

### **FRONT LEGS, FRONT VIEW**

(See Figures [4a](#), [4b](#), and [7](#) for diagrams of selected structural deviations.)

**Splay-Footed** or "Toes-Out"—The front hooves point outward away from each other. Splay-

footed horses will "**wing**" when tracking.

**Pigeon-Toed** or "Toes-In"—The front hooves point inward toward each other. Pigeon-toed horses will "**paddle**" when tracking.

**Bench-Kneed** or "Offset Knees"—The cannon bone is offset from the center of the knee, and there is no straight line from the knee to the cannon to the fetlock joint.

**Knock-Kneed**—The knees are set closer together than the width of the horse's chest and the distance between the front feet.

**Bow-Legged**—The knees are set farther apart than the horse stands.

### **FRONT LEGS, PROFILE (side view)**

**Buck-Kneed** or "Knees Sprung" or "Over-at-the-Knee"—The knees bend forward.

**Calf-Kneed** or "Back-at-the-Knee"—The knees are placed too far back.

**Camped-Out**—The entire front leg is set too far forward and away from the body.

**Camped-Under**—The entire front leg is set too far back and under the body.

**Tied-In**—The tendons come in too sharply behind the knee, preventing the horse from firmly locking its knees in place.

### **BACK LEGS, PROFILE (side view)**

**Sickle-Hocked**—The hock has too much angle, so the horse stands underneath itself from the hock down.

**Post-Legged**—The hock has too little angle, so the hock joint appears straight.

**Camped-Under**—The entire hind leg is set too far under the hindquarters.

### **BACK LEGS, REAR VIEW**

**Cow-Hocked**—The hock joints point inward toward each other, and the feet are widely separated.

**Bandy-Legged**—The hocks are set wider apart than the horse stands.

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## **Common blemishes**

### **FEET**

(See Figures [4c](#) and [4d](#) for examples of selected blemishes.)

**Toe Crack**—The front part of the hoof wall is split.

**Quarter Crack**—The quarter (side) area of the hoof toward the heel is split.

**Contracted Heel**—The heels of the feet, especially the front, are extremely low and narrow.

**Club-Footed**—The hoof is extremely upright in appearance and has a different, steeper angle than the pastern, as compared to the other hoof; the coronary band when viewed from the rear is higher off the ground.

**Coon-Footed**—Both hooves are extremely upright in appearance with a steeper angle than the pastern.

### **LEGS**

**Bowed Tendon**—An excessive stretching and tearing of the tendons has occurred, normally on the front legs. After the tendon has healed, it still appears stretched and looks like the curve of a bow.

**Osselets**—Small enlargements have developed around the fetlock joints, caused by a traumatic arthritis.

**Ringbone**—A bony enlargement surrounds the pastern bone.

**Sidebones**—Ossification or calcification of the cartilage around the pasterns has occurred.

**Splint**—A bony enlargement on the splint bone on the inside of the cannon bones, normally caused by interference or offset knees, has developed.

**Windpuff**—A soft swelling of the joint or tendons, usually in the fetlocks, has developed.

**Bucked Shins**—An inflammation of the shins has occurred.

**Capped Elbow** or "Shoe Boil"—This swelling at the point of the elbow is caused by a horse's injuring itself, normally by its shoes, when the horse is lying down.

**Bone Spavin** or "Jack Spavin"—A bony enlargement on the inside of the hock has occurred.

**Bog Spavin**—The soft tissues of the hock have swollen.

**Thoroughpin**—A swelling in the hollows of the hock has developed.

**Capped Hock**—This swelling at the point of the hock is caused by injury.

**Curb**—A bony enlargement on the plantar ligament just below the hock joint, is caused by trauma; it is frequently seen on sickle-hocked horses.

## BODY

**Fistula** or "Sinus of the Withers"—Injury causes this hole or indention on the withers, which drains continuously.

**Sweeney**—A depression in the muscles of the shoulder is caused by trauma or bruising.

**Hernia**—Tissue protrudes through an abnormal opening in the body cavity.

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## General criteria for judging performance classes

**Quality of movement or way of going**—When judging a performance class, one of the most important criteria is how the horse moves, or its way of going. Of course, ideal movement depends on the breed of horse, but an easy way to break it down is to separate all horses into several general categories: stock-type/hunter-type, saddle-type breeds, and Tennessee Walking Horses. All stock-type/hunter-type breeds, including, but not limited, to the Quarter Horse, Palomino, Paint, Appaloosa, and any United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) hunter-types (normally Throughbreds and all warmblood breeds) stress the same characteristics in movement. All of these breeds should have a long stride with lots of drive from the hindquarters. Therefore, these horses should walk, trot, and canter with a flat knee, working close to the ground, and have proper flexion from the hocks.

The saddle-type breeds, including the Arabian, Saddlebred, etc., exhibit more snap and action to both the knees and hocks. They still have a long stride, but these breeds exhibit more "brilliance" when moving and will appear flashier, with their forearms breaking more nearly parallel to the ground, instead of hitting the ground with a flatter knee, as in stock- or hunter-type breeds. Tennessee Walking Horses still have the same brilliance of movement as the saddle-type breeds, but they exhibit a "rolling" type of action on the front end, where their forearms break more nearly level and then "roll" outward. They also drive extremely deeply off the hock, and their hind feet should overstep the footprints that were left by the front feet.

**Collection**—Collection can be described as how well a horse "compresses" its frame. The normal horse carries approximately 65 percent of its body weight on its front legs and only 35 percent on its hind legs. By collecting a horse, or making it reach deeper under its body with its hindquarters and hocks, the properly collected horse carries closer to 50 percent of its weight on the front end and 50 percent on the rear. By equalizing its weight distribution, a horse is more balanced and better able to perform and is less likely to trip or have trouble executing particular maneuvers.

**Impulsion**—Impulsion is basically how much drive or power a horse exhibits from its hindquarters. Therefore, in order for a horse to exhibit a high degree of impulsion, it must drive deeply off its hocks and use the hindquarters to propel the rest of the body forward. Impulsion is normally a criterion that is more important in hunter-type breeds, as the horse must have enough forward impulsion to thrust itself over fences.

**Cadence**—Cadence can be defined as the ability of the horse to maintain a correct and distinct footfall pattern throughout the class. For example, a huntseat horse that exhibits a high degree of cadence will have a very definitive two-beat trot in which the front and rear feet reach the same distance. Each beat can be heard distinctly,

and there is no change in this "one-two" pace. The same expectations apply to all the other gaits. The canter and lope should have a notable "one-two-three" beat pattern, whereas the walk should exhibit a "one-two-three-four" footfall pattern with all feet striking the same distance apart.

**Rhythm**—Rhythm is also described as how well a horse maintains the correct pace and rate throughout the class. A horse that is very rhythmical will maintain the same rate of speed throughout the class and both ways of the ring. Furthermore, a horse that exhibits a correct rhythm will be very consistent in its speed and performance at all gaits and both ways of the ring.

As discussed previously, the emphasis placed on individual criteria depends on the class specifications. For example, a Western Pleasure class will place less stress on impulsion, whereas a Hunter Under Saddle class will put more emphasis on impulsion. Just make sure to have an adequate idea of each breed type and class description before judging the class in competition. As always, use common sense.

**Manners**—It is important for show horses to respond quickly and promptly to the rider's cues. A well-mannered horse will appear as an extension of the rider and should require no visible cues or aids. Therefore, when judging performance classes, the ideal horse will obey its rider's every wish and show no resistance about the mouth, ears, or tail throughout the class.

**Consistency**—Not only does a horse have to exhibit proper movement and manners in order to win a class, but it also needs to be consistent in its performance throughout the entire class. This means that the horse must maintain the ideal rate of speed throughout the class and be consistent in its performance while moving one way in the ring or the other. It must not increase or decrease speed or change its frame or quality of movement. The degree of collection and impulsion should remain the same at all gaits. Furthermore, the horse must maintain a consistent frame as specified in the class rules.

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## **BASIC CONFORMATION TERMINOLOGY**

### **BALANCE**

#### **COMMENDATIONS**

- More balanced from end to end, top to bottom
- Trimmer/neater/higher/cleaner/more prominent wither
- Neck tied in higher at the shoulder
- Longer/trimmer/leaner neck set higher on a more sloping shoulder
- Longer, more correctly angled shoulder
- More desirable angle to the shoulder
- Shorter, stronger back and coupling
- Shorter backed
- Stronger coupled
- Tighter coupled



- Deeper/longer hipped
- More length through the hip
- Leveler topline
- Shorter and stronger over the topline
- Longer, trimmer underline
- Deeper barreled
- Deeper through the heartgirth
- Deeper through the fore and rear flank
- More shape and turn to the rib
- More spring of rib

## FAULTS

- Less symmetry or balance
- Stands higher at the croup than withers
- Shorter, thicker neck set lower on steeper shoulder
- Shorter neck set lower on flatter withers
- Less angulation to shoulder
- Steeper/shorter shoulder
- Coarser/flatter withers
- Longer backed
- Lower backed
- Looser/longer/lower coupled
- Shorter hipped
- Shorter/steeper croup
- Longer, weaker-topped topline
- Shallow hearted
- Pinched/shallow through heart girth
- Cut up in rear flank

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## **STRUCTURAL CORRECTNESS**

### COMMENDATIONS

- Straighter/squarer/more structurally sound
- More structurally correct in front/rear or when viewed from front/rear
- More correct in leg and bone structure
- Cleaner/chiseled about the knees, hocks, and fetlocks

- Cleaner/flatter/higher-quality/straighter column of leg bones
- Cleaner about knees and hocks
- Cleaner/more defined joints
- Shorter/stronger cannons
- Knees and hocks set closer to the ground
- Longer/more sloping/angulated pasterns
- Toed straighter
- More correct set to the hocks
- Stood straighter down the hocks
- More desirable angulation to the hocks

## FAULTS

- Coarser through the underpinnings
- Puffy/boggy about the knees/hocks/pasterns/joints
- Stocked-up
- Coarser/thicker boned
- Over-at-the-knee/buck-kneed
- Back-at-the-knee/calf-kneed
- Tied-in behind the knee
- Bench-kneed/offset cannons
- Shorter/steeper/straighter pasterns
- Toed-out/splay-footed
- Toed-in/pigeon-toed
- Lacked set to the hock/posty-legged
- Excessive set to the hock/sickle-hocked
- Cow-hocked
- Base narrow/wide when viewed from the front/rear
- Camped-under
- Camped-out

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## **REFINEMENT or BREED CHARACTER**

### COMMENDATIONS

- More \_\_\_\_ breed character about the head and neck
- More refined/stylish/alert about the head
- Sharper/shorter/neater/more alert ear
- Chiseled about the head

- Shorter from poll/eye to muzzle
- Wider between the eyes
- Larger, wider set eyes
- Cleaner/trimmer/refined/finer muzzle
- Larger/flaring nostrils
- Neater/trimmer/cleaner/longer/thinner throatlatch
- Trimmer/cleaner/longer/thinner/slimmer/extended neck
- More correctly shaped neck

## FAULTS

- Shorter/more compact
- Old-fashioned
- Off-type
- Coarser throughout
- Plainer about the head and neck
- Longer from poll/eye to muzzle
- Narrower between the eyes
- Larger/coarser muzzle
- Thicker/coarser throatlatch
- Shorter/thicker/coarser/crestier neck
- Ewe-necked
- Lower neckset

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## MUSCLING

### COMMENDATIONS

- Heavier muscled from every angle/end to end
- Longer/trimmer/smoothier/fuller/athletic muscle pattern throughout
- Stood wider from shoulder to shoulder and stifle to stifle
- More three-dimensional muscle pattern
- More muscle around the forearm
- More circumference to forearm/gaskin
- More prominently V-ed
- Shape/turn/expression/dimension/depth/power/length/scope/tone of muscling through the \_\_\_\_\_
- Carried down deeper into fuller inner and outer gaskins

### FAULTS

- Flatter/softer/soggier/shallower muscle pattern

- Shorter/bunchier/coarser muscled from end to end
- Lighter/looser muscled through the \_\_\_\_

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## QUALITY OF MOVEMENT or WAY OF GOING

### COMMENDATIONS

- Straighter/truer tracking when viewed from the front/rear or fore/aft
- Squarer jog
- More elastic/fluid/freer/softer walk/jog/trot
- Softer hoof-to-ground contact
- More distinct footfall pattern
- Longer/more cadenced/freer/easier/floating stride
- Freer through the shoulder
- Moved/drove deeper off the hocks
- More depth of hock when viewed on the move
- Flatter-kneed
- Cleaner mover

### FAULTS

- Paddled/winged when tracking
- Pigeon-toed/splay-footed, thus causing \_\_\_\_ to paddle/wing when tracking
- Shorter/choppier/more restricted/stiffer stride
- Trailed the hocks when viewed at the jog/trot
- Restricted through the shoulder, consequently, shorter-strided/quicker-legged
- Excessive knee action
- Rolled the hocks at the walk/jog/trot
- Tracked with more deviation from a straight plane of motion
- Short-strided, especially on the \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ (leg)
- Lamé/unsound

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## GENERAL PERFORMANCE TERMINOLOGY

### QUALITY OF MOVEMENT or WAY OF GOING

### COMMENDATIONS

Worked with the head more nearly perpendicular to the ground  
Worked in a rounder frame/rounder over the topline  
Worked rounder from poll to wither to croup  
Worked in a more natural and relaxed frame

Maintained a stronger/higher back position at the lope/canter  
Exhibited more flexion at the poll and hocks  
Worked with knees and hocks closer to the ground  
Worked closer/lower to the ground  
Maintained at flatter knee at the \_\_\_\_\_  
Exhibited longer/lower/more horizontal stride  
Traveled with knees and hocks closer to the ground  
Exhibited more snap and action to both knees and hocks (English-type only)  
Showed brilliance of movement/forearms breaking more nearly parallel to the ground (English-type only)  
Was slower-legged  
Maintained longer/freer/softer/sweepier/cleaner/ ground-covering stride  
Showed greater reach of forearm at the walk, jog/trot, and lope/canter  
Exhibited more natural swing/freedom from the shoulder and stifle  
Exhibited more lift to the shoulder  
Maintained more distinct footfall pattern  
Maintained a more distinct two-beat jog/trot  
Was squarer jogger  
Was deeper looper  
Showed softer hoof-to-ground contact  
Was more cadenced/rhythmic/balanced/fluid at the \_\_\_\_\_

### FAULTS

Worked flatter over the topline  
Elevated in the frame/bridle  
Was above the bit and hollow-backed  
Rooted the nose at the \_\_\_\_\_  
Nosed out at the \_\_\_\_\_, lacking flexion at the poll  
Appeared intimidated through the bridle  
Lacked cadence/balance/rhythmic motion  
Was more labored in the stride at the \_\_\_\_\_  
Was quicker-legged at the \_\_\_\_\_  
Four-beated at the lope  
Was restricted through the shoulder  
Moved heavier on the forehand  
Showed more ground-pounding stride  
Trailed the hocks/strung out  
Was longer backed and looser coupled, resulting in a strung-out \_\_\_\_\_  
Showed excessive knee action  
Had excessive knee and hock usage  
Cross-cantered  
Cantered disunitedly

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## MANNERS

## COMMENDATIONS



Was a more willing performer/partner/worker  
Exhibited a more workman-like/positive attitude  
Was more willfully guided  
Was quieter about the mouth, ears and tail  
Was more accepting of the bit  
Readily yielded to the rider's demands  
Was lighter/more responsive to the rider  
Required less handling  
Looked straight through the bridle a higher percentage of the time  
Stayed more correctly in the bridle and between the bridle reins  
Worked with a lighter/softer/more trusting rein contact  
Showed more desirable drape of rein (Western pleasure only)  
Was smoother and prompter in upward/downward transitions  
Was smoother/faster/prompter in transitions  
Bent easily around the rider's leg when reversing  
Reversed quicker on the haunches in the reverse  
Backed straighter off diagonal pairs  
Backed quicker and straighter  
Backed straighter/quicker between the rider's legs

## FAULTS

Required more aid and cueing from the rider  
Required excessive handling/obvious cues from the rider  
Gummed/chewed/fought the bit  
Was hard-mouthed  
Was sour-eared/pinned the ears  
Wrung/swished the tail  
Missed the right/left lead the first/second way of the ring  
Exhibited slower/sluggish transitions  
Hesitated in the \_\_\_\_\_ transition  
Picked up the wrong lead the first/second way of the ring  
Broke at the \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_ the first/second way of the ring  
Broke in the front/hind at the \_\_\_\_\_ the first/second way of the ring  
Resisted when asked to back  
Backed crookedly while resisting the rider's cues

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## CONSISTENCY

### COMMENDATIONS

Was a more consistent/relaxed/obedient/efficient performer  
Worked at a more consistent/desirable rate of speed throughout the class  
Worked with a more consistent/desirable frame throughout the class  
Was more rhythmic at the \_\_\_\_\_  
Exhibited a smoother cadence at the \_\_\_\_\_ throughout the class

## FAULTS

Traveled excessively fast/slow at the \_\_\_\_\_ throughout the class  
Worked at an inconsistent rate of speed at the \_\_\_\_\_ throughout the class  
Lacked consistency in speed and/or length of stride at the \_\_\_\_\_  
Was inconsistent in head placement throughout the class

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## COLLECTION

### COMMENDATIONS

Worked in a rounder frame/rounder over the topline  
Worked rounder from poll to withers to croup  
Worked rounder over the topline with a more collected frame  
Exhibited more natural collection at the \_\_\_\_\_  
Worked in a rounder frame, thus allowing \_\_\_\_ to drive deeper off the hocks  
Moved along the rail in a more collected way of going at a more ideal rate of speed  
Kept/drove the hocks more underneath the body  
Exhibited deeper loping  
Was deeper hocked at the jog and lope  
Showed more sweep to the hock  
Drove deeper from behind  
Tracked up farther

## FAULTS

Was long-backed and loose-coupled, resulting in a strung-out \_\_\_\_\_  
Worked flatter over the topline with less engagement from the rear  
Stumbled at the \_\_\_\_\_ as a result of lack of collection  
Strung-out behind at the \_\_\_\_\_  
Trailed the hocks  
Dragged the hocks  
Lacked engagement at the \_\_\_\_\_  
Was uncollected at the \_\_\_\_\_

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## IMPULSION

### COMMENDATIONS

Drove with more impulsion from the hock, allowing \_\_\_\_ to be lighter on the forehand and move freer out of the shoulder  
Had a longer, more ground-covering stride with a higher degree of impulsion  
Moved with a more sweeping trot, moving off the hindquarters with a more pendulous stride

Exhibited more extension from the shoulder, moving with a freer forearm and a flatter knee  
Showed more drive and impulsion from the hock  
Showed more drive and forward momentum  
Showed more sweep to the hock  
Was bolder moving with more length of stride as well as more impulsion and drive from the hocks  
Was more determined in stride  
Showed more purposeful stride  
Drove harder from behind  
Showed more energy and purpose of stride  
Exhibited greater forward impulsion from the hindquarters at the canter  
Engaged the rear quarters with more drive

### FAULTS

Was excessively flexed at the poll, moving with more collection and less impulsion  
Moved with less forward motion and drive from the hocks  
Exhibited higher action in the hocks  
Was overcollected and behind the vertical

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## SAMPLE SETS OF ORAL REASONS\*

### AGED QUARTER HORSE MARES

**Balance, structural correctness, and refinement** were the criteria I used to **align** this class of Aged Quarter Horse Mares **2-1-4-3**, starting with 2, the dark bay, who **best** combined balance and femininity to the **highest degree**. In my initial pair I did prefer 2 over 1, the sorrel, as 2 was **undoubtedly** nicer profiling and smoother muscled throughout. 2 had a longer, cleaner neck set higher onto a more correctly sloping shoulder. **Furthermore**, 2 was more correctly balanced. 2 was **shorter** backed, **stronger** coupled, and **longer** hipped. In addition, 2 was deeper through the heartgirth and rear flank and had more shape to the rib. **Yes**, 1 wrapped more muscle around the forearm and carried more muscling down to the lower portion of the quarter; **however**, 1 was coarser through the underpinnings, so I liked her second.

**Even so**, her **obvious advantages** in muscling placed 1 over 4, the liver chestnut, in my intermediate pair. 1 stood wider from shoulder to shoulder and stifle to stifle. **More specifically**, 1 exhibited more prominent V-ing through the pectorals, with more shape and dimension of muscling in the buttock and thigh and a larger circumference of gaskin. 1 was more correctly balanced from end to end, as 1 exhibited a shorter top-to-bottom line ratio and had a longer, more massive hip. **There's no doubt** that 4 stood straighter and squarer when viewed both front and rear, **yet** 4 goes third for the fact that she was the lightest muscled, shallowest bodied mare of the class.

**Despite these criticisms**, it was structural correctness and refinement that compelled me to place 4 over 3, the light gray, in my concluding pair. 4 stood and tracked more **correctly** from all views. **Consequently**, 4 stood straighter from knee to toe and from hock to heel on a cleaner column of bone. 4 also had more quality to her head and neck. This was **due to the fact** that she was wider between the eyes and shorter from poll to muzzle, with a thinner throatlatch and a neck that tied higher onto a more prominent wither. **I appreciate** that 3 exhibited more total muscle volume from every angle, but this **fails to compensate** for the fact that 3 was the smallest framed, **poorest balanced** mare of the class, having the steepest shoulder, which caused her to take the shortest, most

restricted stride of the class. **Therefore, 3 cannot merit** any higher placing in this class today.

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~Thank you.

## WESTERN PLEASURE

**Quality of movement, manners, consistency, and collection** were the criteria I used to **align** this class of Western Pleasure **4-3-1-2**, starting with 4, the red roan ridden in a bosal, who **best combined** quality of movement and manners to the **highest degree**. In my initial pair, I did prefer 4 over 3, the dark bay, as 4 worked in a more **ideal** frame and required less aid and cueing from the rider. 4 worked **rounder** from poll to wither to croup and drove **deeper** off the hock with more natural collection. Furthermore, 4 **undoubtedly** had more length and extension of stride, originating from a **longer**, more angulated shoulder. 4 exhibited more manners, evidenced by the fact that 4 was ridden off a lighter contact and backed **quicker** off diagonal pairs. **Yes**, 3 worked with more flexion at the poll; **however**, 3 was quicker-legged at the jog and lope, so 3 goes second.

Even so, **notable advantages** in consistency of performance placed 3 over 1, the sorrel, in my intermediate pair. 3 worked at a more consistent, ideal rate of speed throughout the class. In addition, 3 was **smoother and prompter** in all transitions and stepped into the lope with more ease. 3 was also more solid as he maintained more **consistency** in his cadence and frame. **There's no doubt** that 1 was flatter-kneed at all gaits, **yet** 1 goes third for the fact that 1 required more handling from the rider, being ridden off a tighter rein and backed with more resistance.

**Despite these criticisms**, it was 1's ability to maintain all gaits throughout the class that compelled me to place 1 over 2, the minimal white sorrel overo, in my concluding pair. 1 was more **natural** and relaxed at the walk and moved **straighter** down the rail. Furthermore, 1 was better able to maintain all gaits. **I appreciate** that 2 was more attractive down the rail, being squarer in the beats of his jog, and drove deeper from the hock, allowing 2 to have more lift to the shoulders, and following through with a longer stride. Yet I criticized 2 and **regretfully** placed 2 last for **breaking** from the lope to the jog twice the second way of the ring. Therefore 2 can **merit no higher placing** today.

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~Thank You.

\* **NOTE:** Boldface type indicates areas to emphasize during delivery.

## *References*

The examples in this manual emphasize stock, huntseat, and saddleseat type horses. For additional information on Horse Judging, please consult the following North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications:

***Developing Effective Oral Reasons***-Order through your County Extension Agent

***NCSU Horse Judging Short Course Manual***, Extension Horse Husbandry, North Carolina State University. 200 pages. Published annually in January. Order from North Carolina Extension Horse Husbandry; (919)-515-5784.

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## PARTS OF THE HORSE

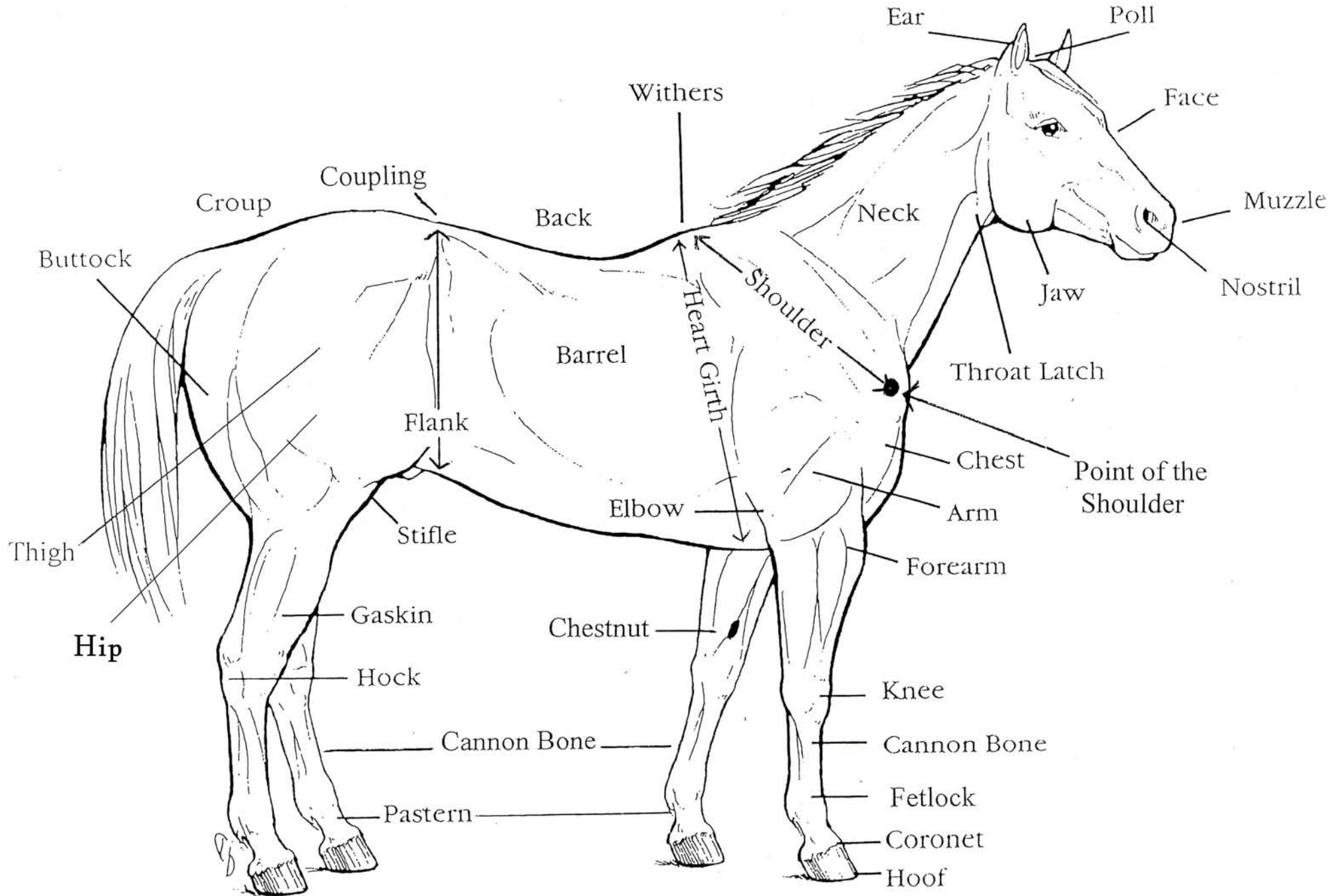


FIGURE 1

**NOTE PAD Organization**

<div>Quarter Horse Mares</div> <div>Class Title</div>		<div>2-1-4-3</div> <div>Placing</div>
Good (Commendations)		Bad (Faults)
1	ID's	
2	ID's	
3	ID's	
4	ID's	

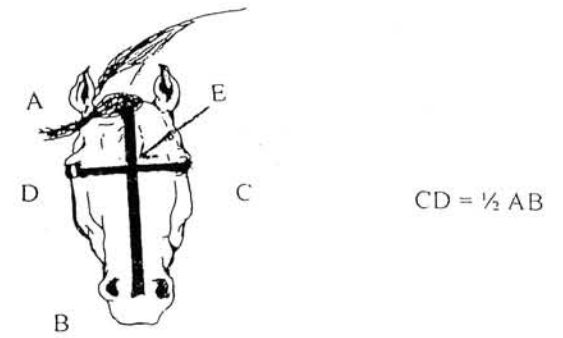
**Circle Major Commendations and Faults**

FIGURE 2

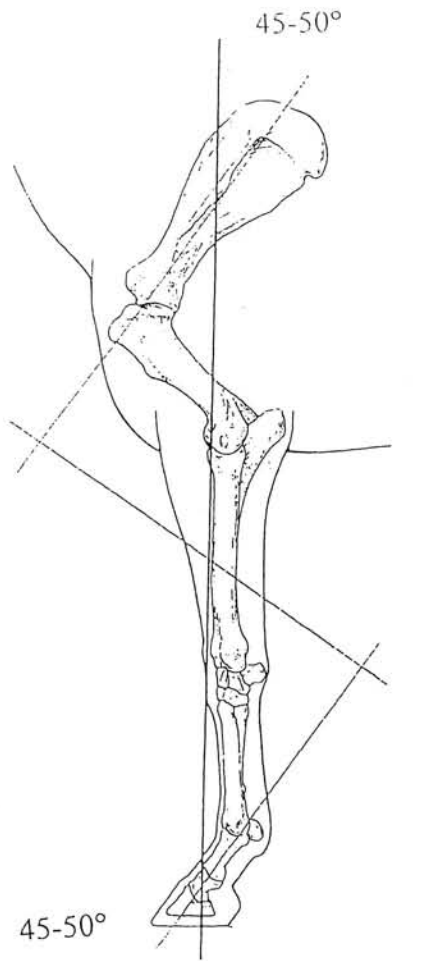
**HOW TO SET UP REASONS**

Quarter Horse Mares			
2-1-4-3			
TOP or INITIAL pair	<b><u>Commendations</u></b>	<b><u>Grants</u></b> (Realize)	<b><u>Faults</u></b> (Criticize)
	2/1 <span>ID's (2) / ID's (1)</span>	1/2	1
MIDDLE or INTERMEDIATE pair	1/4 <span>ID's (4)</span>	4/1	4
BOTTOM or CONCLUDING pair	4/3 <span>ID's (3)</span>	3/4	3

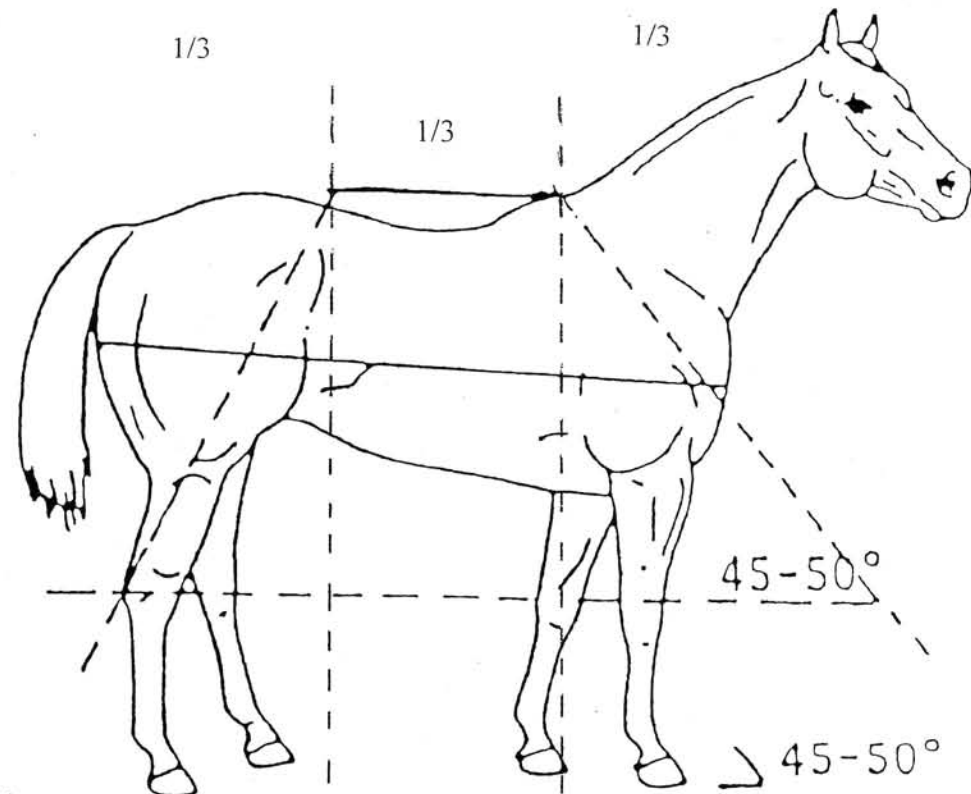
Figure 3a **BALANCE-** Body Proportions



**Head Ratios**

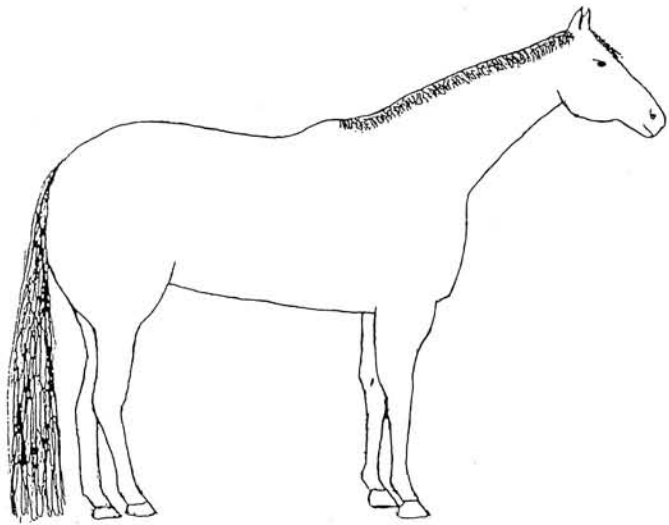


**Shoulder and Pastern Angles**

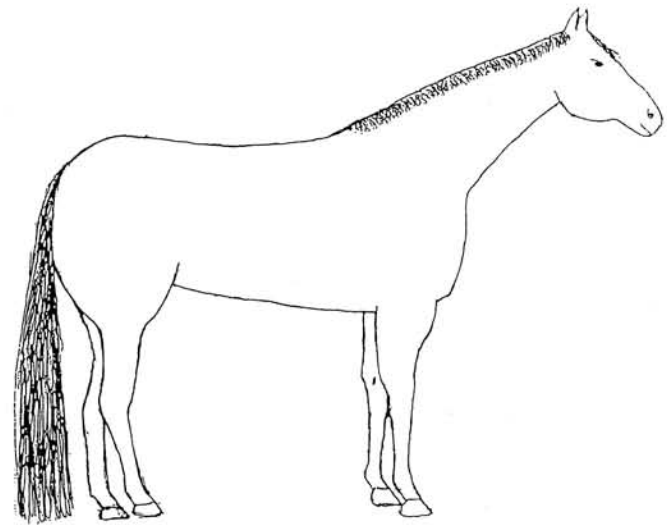


**Body Proportions**

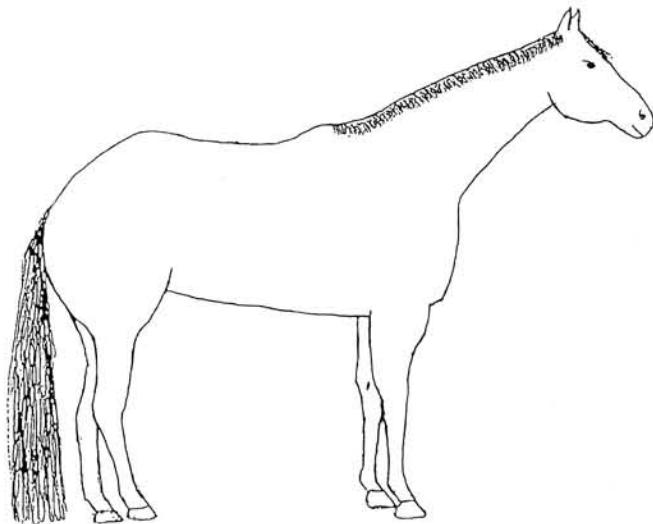
Figure 3b **BALANCE- Toplines**



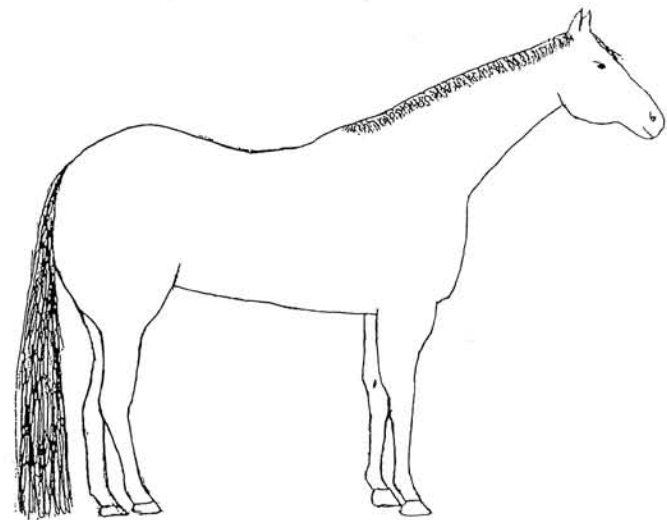
**Short, Strong Back** (Desirable)



**Long Back** (Undesirable)



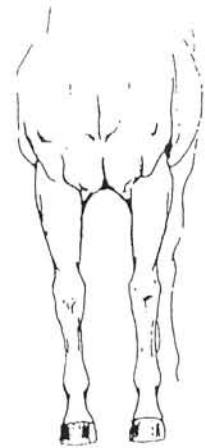
**Steep Hip** (Undesirable)



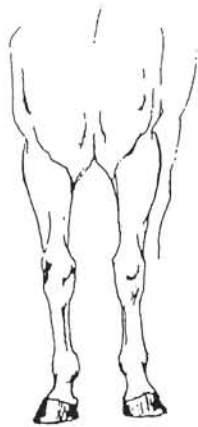
**Low Back** (Undesirable)



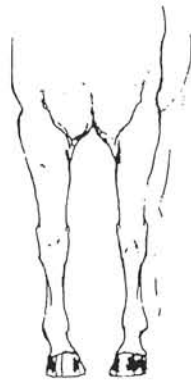
Figure 4a **STRUCTURAL DEVIATIONS-** Front View



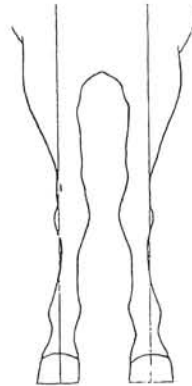
Correct



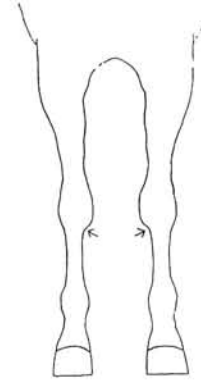
Splay-Footed



Pigeon-Toed



Knock-Kneed

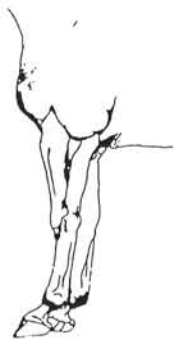


Bench-Kneed

Front View



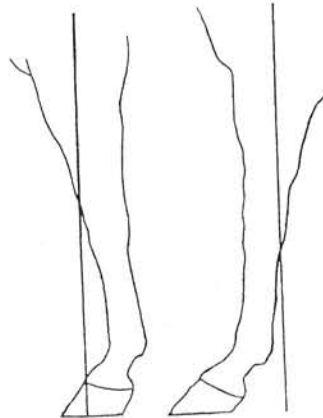
Correct



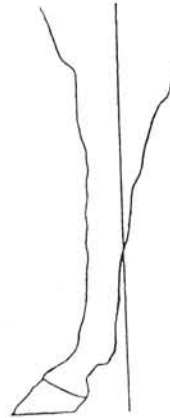
Calf-Kneed



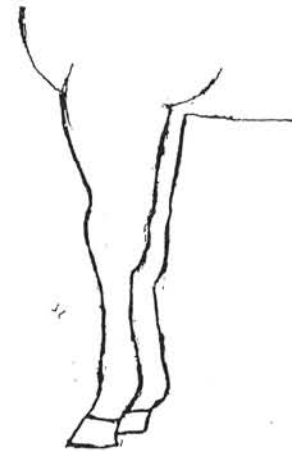
Buck-Kneed



Camped-Under



Camped-Out



Tied-In Behind Knee

Front Profile

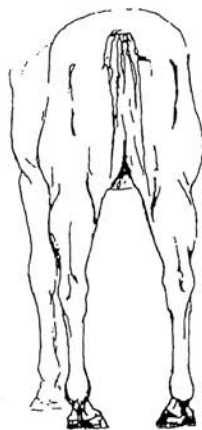
Figure 4b **STRUCTURAL DEVIATIONS- Rear View**



Correct

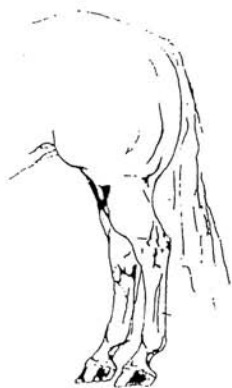


Cow-Hocked



Bow-Legged / Bandy-Legged

Rear View



Correct



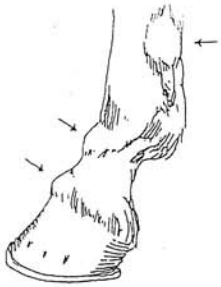
Sickle-Hocked



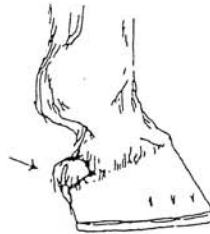
Posty-Legged

Rear Profile

Figure 4c BLEMISHES- Front View



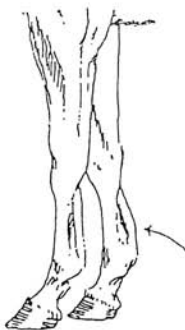
Ringbone



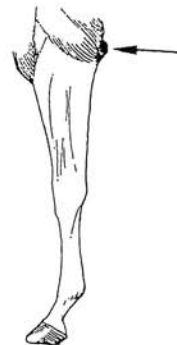
Sidebones



Splint

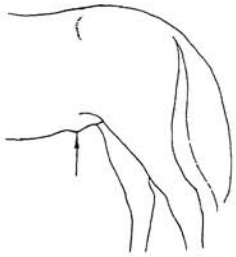


Bowed Tendon

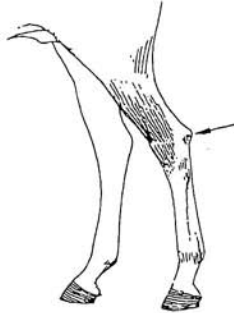


Capped Elbow

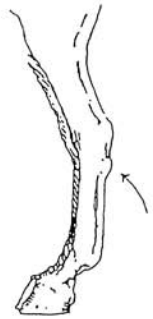
Figure 4d **BLEMISHES-** Rear View



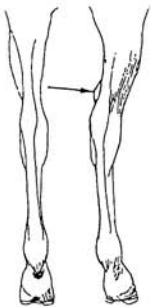
Hernia



Capped Hock



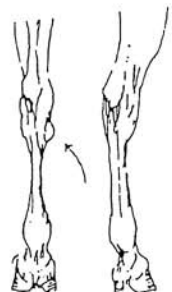
Curb



Thoroughpin



Bog Spavin



Bone Spavin

Figure 5 MAJOR MUSCLES OF THE HORSE

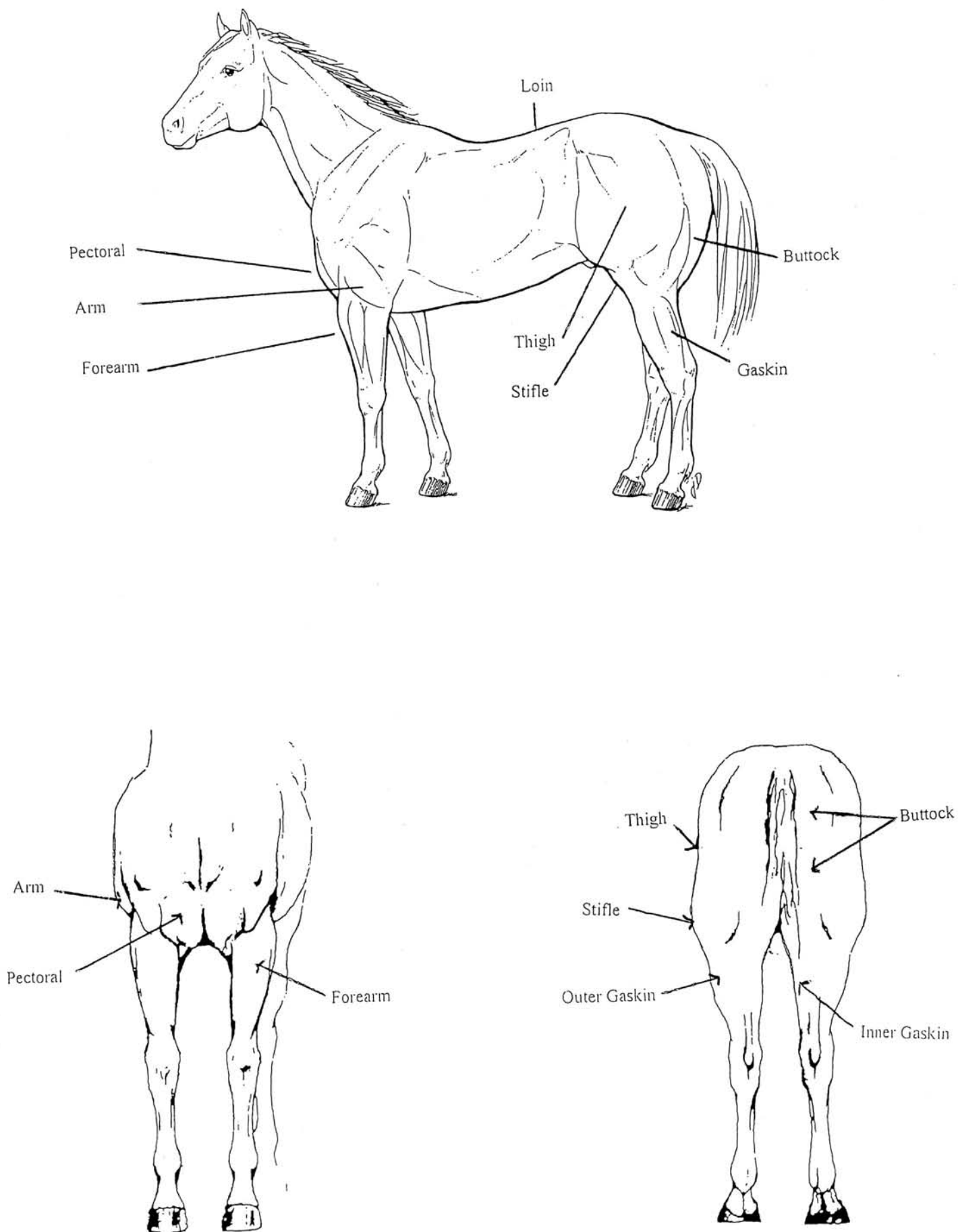
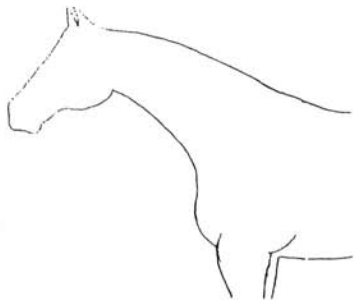
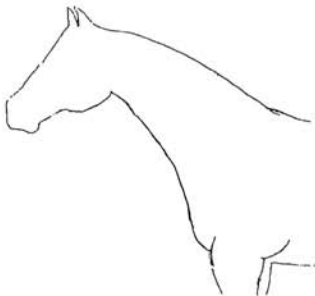




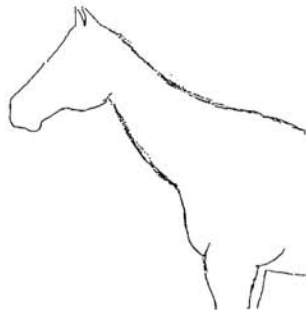
Figure 6      Necksets



**High Neckset (Desirable)**

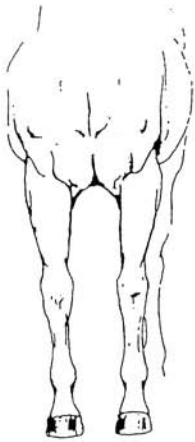


**Low Neckset (Undesirable)**

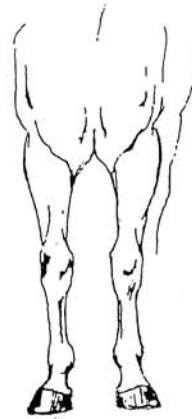


**Ewe Neck (Undesirable)**

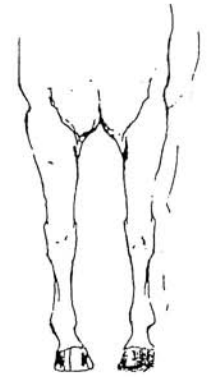
Figure 7     **STRUCTURAL DEVIATIONS- Tracking**



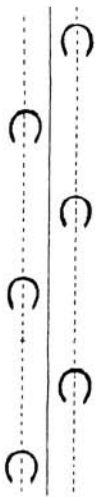
Correct



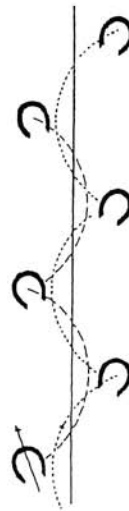
Splay-Footed



Pigeon-Toed

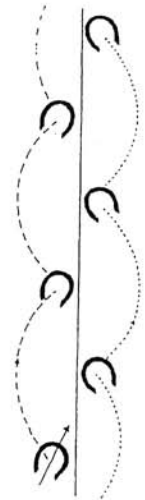


Normal foot moves  
in a straight line



"Splay-Footed" feet move  
forward in inward arcs,  
called "winging"

Splay-Footed = Winging



"Pigeon-Toed" feet move  
forward in wide outward arcs,  
called "Paddling"

Pigeon-Toed = Paddling