

Conformation

General Impression of the Equine. Ask yourselves the following questions?

-Is the horse attractive? Does he look intelligent and alert? Are the parts of his body generally in proportion? Does he move well? The walk will normally give a clear indication of the quality of his other paces.

The Eyes

Should be large, clear and set well at the side of the head, with width between them to give a broad range of vision and a bold. Bad tempered equines often show the white of the eye.

The Feet

The front feet and the hind feet should each be a pair and point straight forwards. Avoid narrow "boxy" feet.

Ideally the front feet should be rounder than the hind feet and should slope at an angle of 50 degrees to the ground. The angle of slope of the hind feet should be slightly greater.

Ideally the heels should be wide, the frog big and full to absorb concussion, while the sole is slight concave. Flat feet are not ideal; they soon are bruised and are prone to corns.

The feet should not turn outwards as this is likely to cause brushing. The wall of the foot should be smooth and free from rings and grooves.

The Forehand

The head – Should be in proportion to the size of the equine to help the equine look in proportion with the rest of the body. The angle at which the head meets the neck is most important. The head should not be long and heavy as this tends to put the equine on his forehand.

The Ears – These should be of medium size, finely pointed, alert and carried forward & pricked. Ears frequently laid back indicate bad temper.

The Neck – Should be in proportion to the rest of the body. The following are types of poorly shaped neck: Bull neck – Short and thick. It's difficult to obtain any flexion with this type. Ewe neck – Curved like a sheep's neck with no crest and with a bulky lower line.

Cock-throttled Neck – Like a cocks, causing the head to be carried very high.

Low Set – cause the equine to be on his forehand.

The Shoulders – They should be deep and should slope well back from the point to the withers. Ideally at 45 degree angle for the withers to the point of shoulder and point of shoulder to the point of breast.

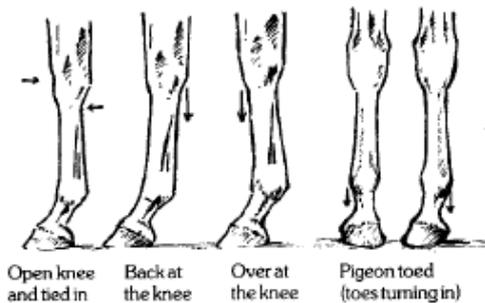
The Withers – These should be well-defined and of reasonable height. Withers that are too high may cause complications when fitting a saddle and are often associated with a narrow chest. Low, thick withers are undesirable because they interfere with the freedom of the shoulder. They can also cause saddle-fitting problems.

The Front Legs- should drop straight from the elbow to the floor with plenty of bone immediately below the knee. Should be well muscled and long. The elbows should be well clear of the body thus not interfering with the action of the limbs. The knees should be broad, flat and deep from front to back, allowing enough room for the muscles and for the tendons. Indentation at the front of the knee can be a sign of weakness as are calf knees (which is back at the knee).

The cannon bone- should have plenty of bone, and be short and straight so that the back tendons will be liable to strain. The tendons and ligaments should stand out in the clear, hard lines.

The fetlocks should have a clean appearance, be free from blemishes and signs of wear such as windgalls, especially on the inside of the leg.

The pasterns should be of medium length and slope. Long, sloping pasterns give a springy, comfortable action but are prone to strain. Upright pasterns absorb less concussion so that more jar is transmitted to the joints higher up.



The Body

The rib-cage should be well sprung, i.e. giving the barrel a rounded appearance to allow ample room for the heart, lungs and bowels.

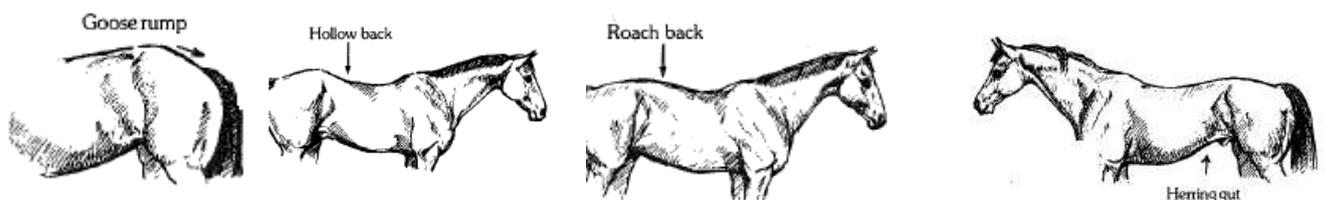
The lower line should slope only slightly upwards as it approaches the stifle.

Depth from the withers to the elbows, and a large girth measurement are considered indications of staying power in an equine.

A narrow-chested, flat-sided equine, with little room for the heart and lungs usually lacks stamina and is a poor doer. The forelegs will be too close together and so the equine will be liable to brush. If the chest is too wide, the equine will have a short, rolling gait and be uncomfortable ride. An under lower line that runs up like a greyhound "herring gutted" is a sign of lack of stamina and horses having this loose condition quickly with hard work.

The Back

An equine required for fast work should have some length of back, but the loins should be short, muscular, broad and deep, to provide a good foundation for those muscles used in galloping and jumping. Mares are sometimes longer in the back than stallions or geldings. An over short back makes for an uncomfortable ride and the equine is apt to over reach. You can get equine with a hollow back which is unduly dipped or roach back where the curve is upward.



The Quarters

The quarters should be muscular with, in particular well-muscled thighs and plenty of length from the stifle to hock. The hock should be large with a prominent point and the tendons should drop straight to the fetlock. Wide, well-muscled, flat quarters are found in fast horses; rounded quarters are typical of cobs and ponies. Quarters that slope sharply from croup to dock often indicate good jumping ability.

The points of the hips should be symmetrical and not too prominent.

The Hind Legs

When viewed from the side, the thighs and the gaskins should appear well muscled, with the point of hock placed directly below the point of the buttock.

The Hocks

These should be large, with a prominent point, wide and deep with plenty of bone below the joint. There are different hock presentations:

Bent or sickle hocks – are liable to strains and should be avoided.

Cow hocks – (toes turned out) causes the limbs to move outwards instead of forwards in a straight line and this results in strain.

Bowed hocks – (toes turned in, hocks out) cause the horse to twist the hock outwards as the foot touches the ground.

Bog Spavin – are soft swellings on the inside and to the front of the hock.

Bone Spavin – are a bony enlargements on the lower part of the inside of the hock. They are much more serious than a bog spavin and are a permanent condition.

