Judging and Conformation of Horses
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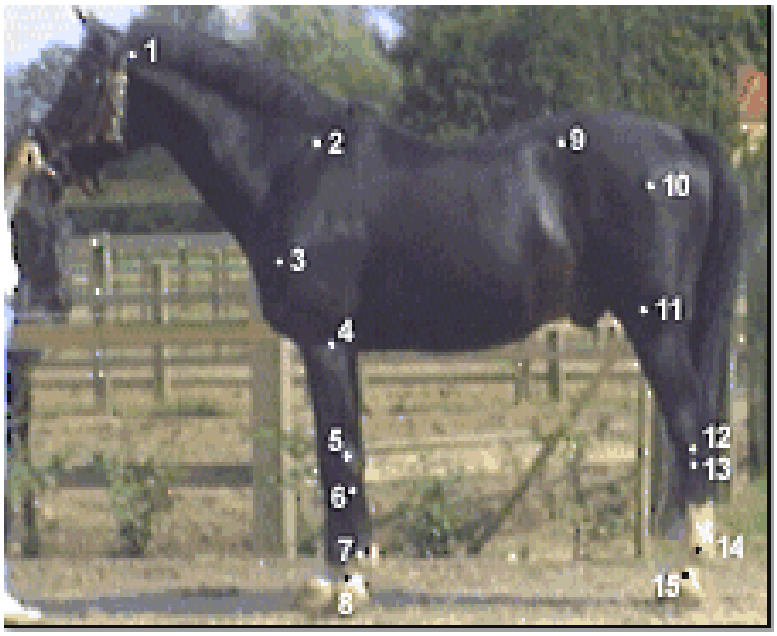
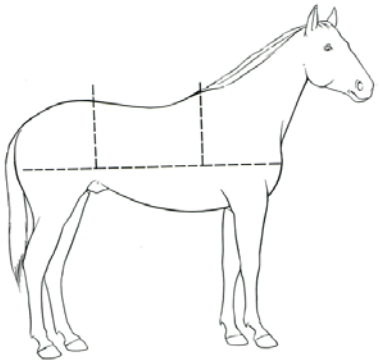
Balance



1. *Balance* = the relationship between the forehand and hindquarters, the limbs and the trunk of the body, and the right and the left sides of the horse
   - A well-balanced horse has a better chance of moving efficiently with less stress
   - Divides equally into thirds



2. *Center of gravity* = theoretical point in the horse's body around which the mass of the horse is equally distributed
   - At a standstill, the center of gravity is the point of intersection of a vertical line dropped from the highest point of the withers and a line from the point of the shoulder to the point of the buttock.
   - The center of gravity remains relatively constant when a well-balanced horse moves, most horses must learn to rebalance their weight when ridden
     - To pick up a front foot to step, the horse must shift his weight back
   - If the forehand is larger than the hindquarters, or a downhill topline, the horse's center of gravity tends to be forward
     - This causes the horse to travel heavy on his front feet
   - When the forehand and hindquarters are balanced and the withers are level with or higher than the level of the croup, the horse's center of gravity is located more back

3. *Ratios* = A balanced horse has approximately equal ratio between his front "leg" (lower limb length) and his depth of body
   - The "leg" is measured from the chest floor to the ground
     - It should be equal to the distance from the chest floor to the top of the withers
     - Proportionately shorter lower limbs are associated with a choppy stride
   - The horse's height is measured from the point of withers to the ground
     - It should be equal to the length of the horse's body, measured from the point of the shoulder to the point of buttock.
   - When viewing a horse overall, the right side of the horse should be symmetric to the left side.
     - Asymmetry from left to right can lead to stiffness in one direction, difficulty bending or performing maneuvers to one side, or even lameness

Conformation

Front Legs (side view)

- First, in order to see faults in leg conformation we need to compare an ideal leg
- Figure 2, shows a plumb line dividing the leg into equal parts
- There is also a plumb line drawn on each of the legs with faults to help see the conformation fault (see Figure 2b)

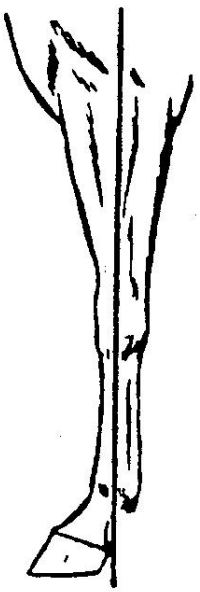


FIGURE 2. Side View of Ideal Foreleg

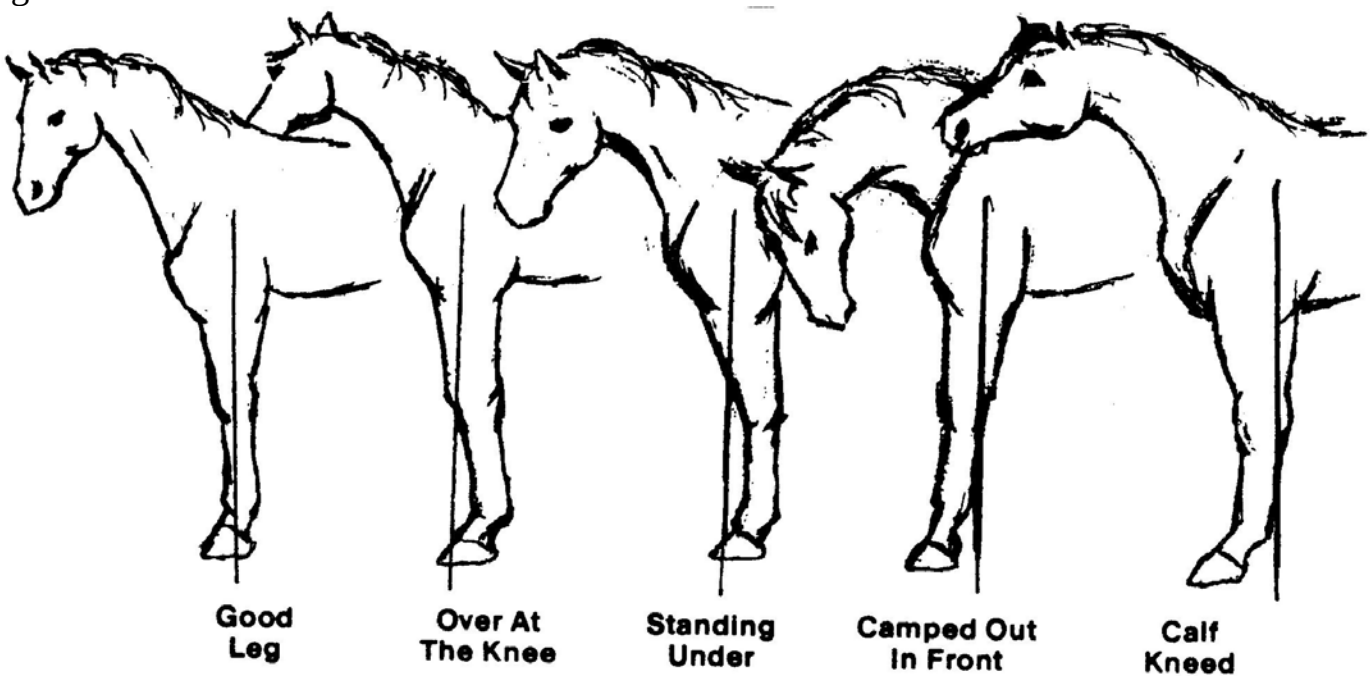
1. *Over at the Knee* = The horse's knee is well ahead of the plumb line and the cannon bone is offset towards the back of the knee

2. *Calf Kneed (or Back at the Knee)* = Is the opposite of #1. Here the horse's knee is behind the plumb line and the leg is offset towards the front

3. *Standing Under* = Can be mistaken for if the horse is not standing square. This is when the front legs (starting with the forearm) are set behind the plumb line

4. *Camped Out (in front)* = Just the opposite of #3. Here the leg (starting at the forearm) is set out in front of the plumb line

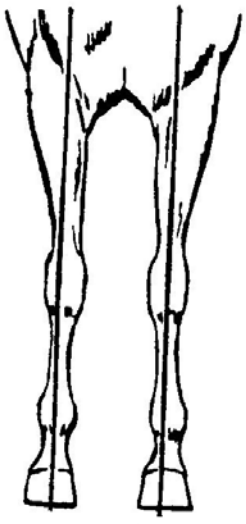
Figure 2b.



Front legs (front view)

- The ideal legs from the front view (Figure 3) are seen when the line is drawn from the point of shoulder, perpendicular to the ground
- If the halves look equal then the horse is straight
- Faults viewed from the front in Figure 3b

FIGURE 3. Front View of Ideal Forelegs



1. *Base Narrow* = Is when the horse stands with its feet placed inside the plumb line or not shoulder width apart

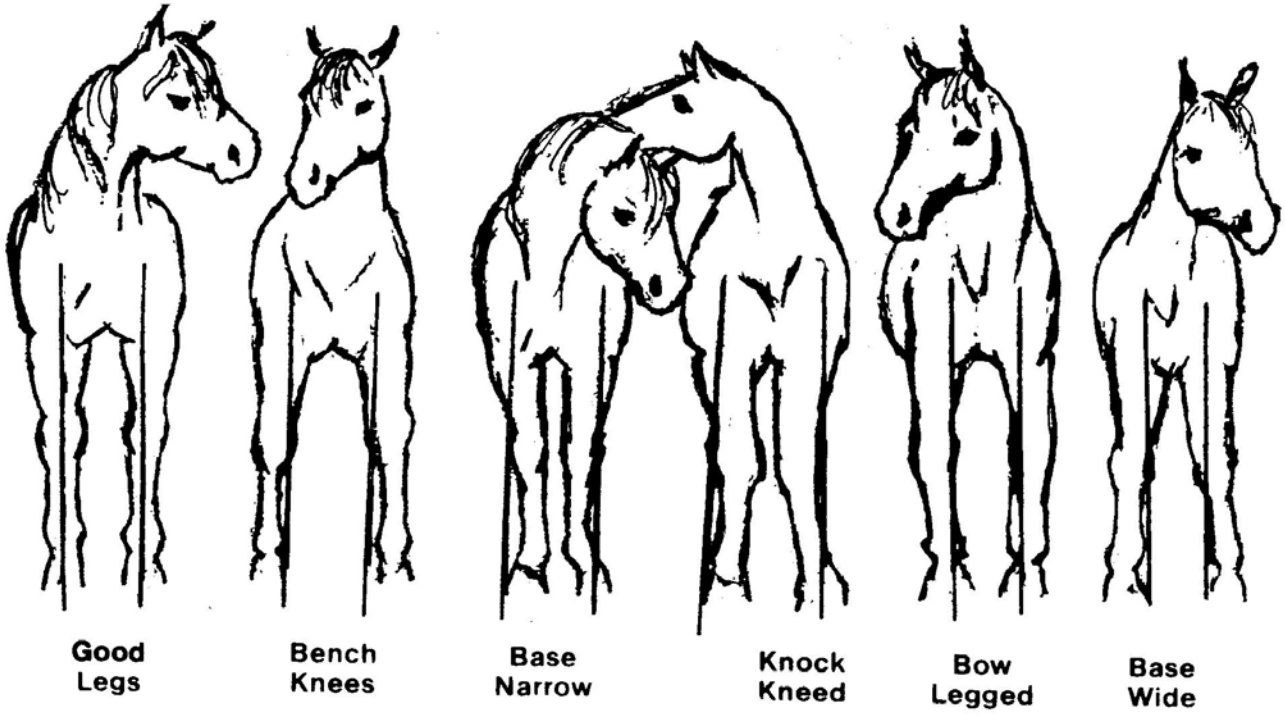
2. *Base Wide* = Opposite of #1. Horse stands with its feet outside the plumb line or more than shoulder width apart

3. *Knocked Kneed* = The horse's knees are to the inside of the plumb line

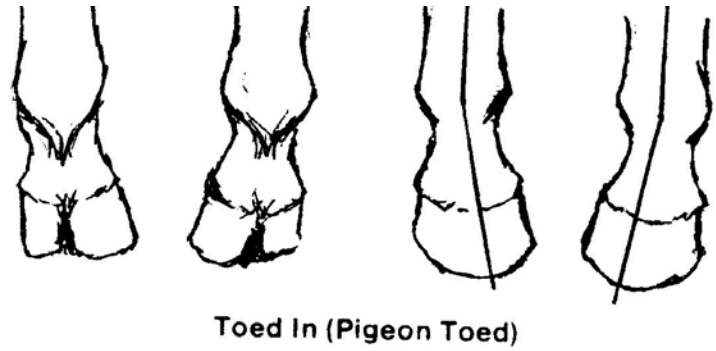
4. *Bow Legged* = Opposite of #3. Here the horse's knees are to the outside of the plumb line

5. *Bench Knees* = The horse's cannon bones appear to be farther apart then the knees, and the cannon bones are off center

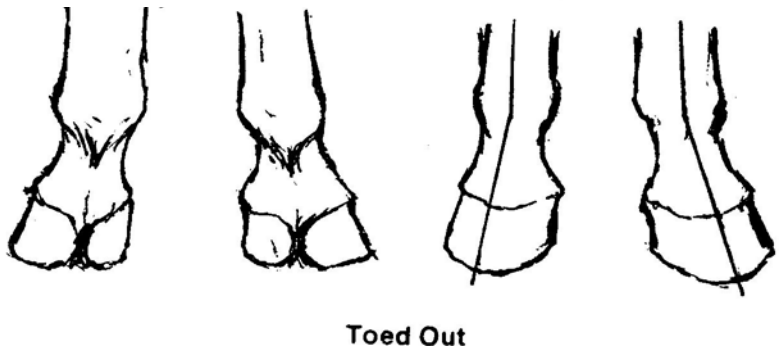
Figure 3b.



6. *Toed In (or Pigeon Toed)* = Here the toes point inward. Can occur in one or both feet



7. *Toed Out* = Here the toes point outward. Can occur in one or both feet



Hind legs (hind view)

- The ideal hind leg (Figure 8) should be seen when a plumb line is given straight down from the point of the hip, perpendicular to the ground
- If the legs are straight they should be divided into equal halves
- Figure 8b shows faults viewed from the back

FIGURE 8.
Rear View of Ideal Hindlegs

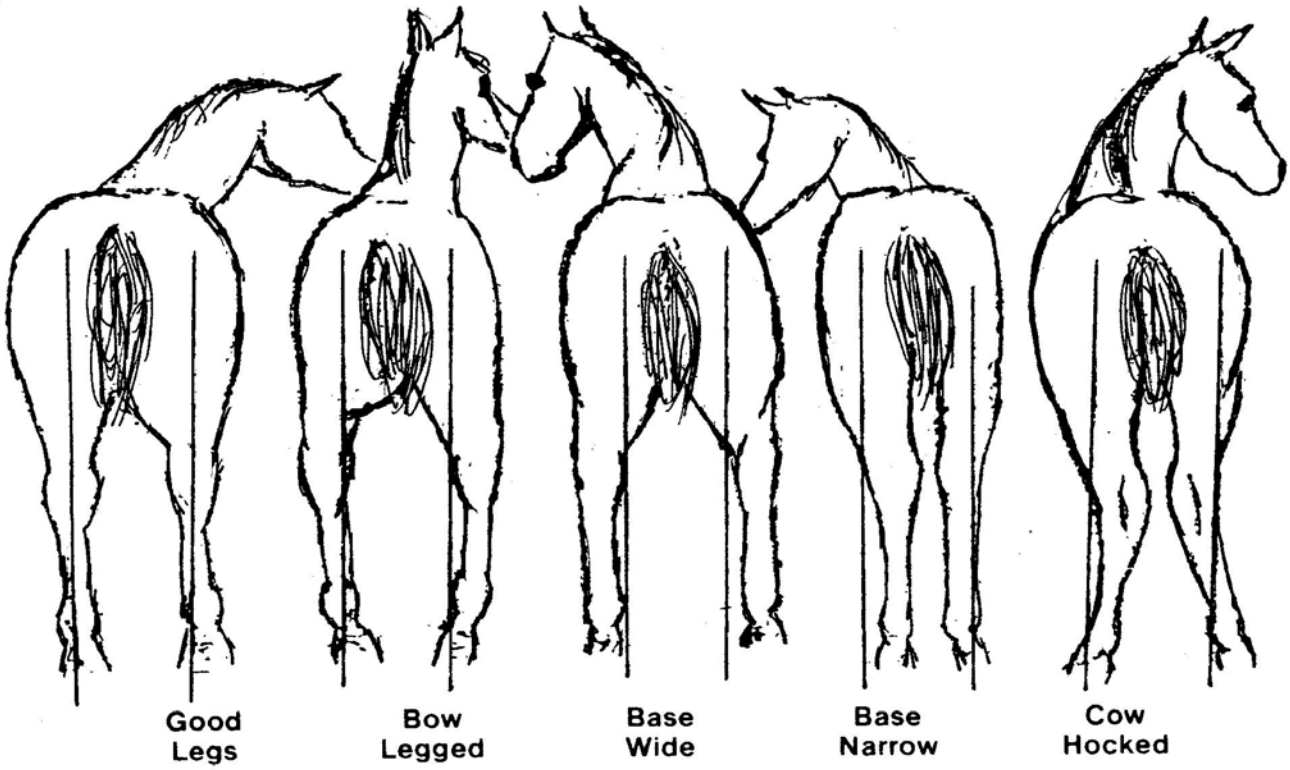
1. *Bow Legged* = Is the same as in the front legs, the hocks are outside of the plumb line

2. *Cow Hocked* = Is opposite of #1. The hocks are to the inside of the plumb line

3. *Base Wide* = Is the same as in the front legs; when standing the feet are placed outside of the plumb line

4. *Base Narrow* = Again is the same as in the front legs; when standing the feet are placed inside the plumb line

Figure 8b.



Hind legs (side view)

- Again when looking at an ideal hind leg (Figure 10) a line can be drawn from the point of hip, perpendicular to the ground and the cannon bone should pass parallel to the line just in front of it
- Figure 10b shows faults when viewed from the side of the hind legs

FIGURE 10. Side View of Ideal Hindleg

1. *Sickle Hocked (or Standing under)* = This is when the cannon bone is in front of the plumb line and angled well under the horse

2. *Post Legged (or Leg too straight)* = Here the hock joint is too open and the horse's leg is too far under their hip

3. *Camped out (in back) (or Leg too far back)* = When the cannon bone is too far behind the plumb line. (Need to make sure the horse is standing square again or this may be falsely assessed)

Figure 10b.