

VETtips

The signs of good health

It is important to recognize the signs of good health and to watch for any deviation from them. You will soon learn the characteristics of any horses in your care and will know if all is normal and well with them. The following are indications of good health:

- Standing and behaving normally; a confident and alert look.
- Coat sleek and lying flat.
- "Skin loose and supple to the touch and easily moved over the underlying bones.
- At rest, no visible signs of sweating except in very hot weather.
- Eyes wide-open and bright. When examined, the membranes under the eyelids and linings of the nostrils should be salmon pink in color.
- Eating up well and chewing normally.
- "Body well filled out (bone structure well covered) but not gross.
- Limbs free from swellings or heat (cool to the touch).
- Standing evenly on all four feet.
- Resting a hind leg (but not a foreleg) is quit normal.
- Sound in action; taking strides of equal length.
- Urine fairly thick and either colorless or pale yellow and passed several times a day.
- Droppings, which will vary in color with the diet, passed approximately eight times daily, in the form of damp balls that break on hitting the ground. Their smell should be inoffensive. When the horse is at grass the droppings may be looser but should not be as sloppy as a cow's.
- Respiration (breathing rates) - when at rest 8 to 12 inhalations per minute.
- Temperature: 38 °C
- Pulse: 36 to 42 heart beats per minute

Dressage

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WORKING ON TWO TRACKS

A distinction must be made between the following movements:

Leg yielding
Shoulder in
Travers
Renvers
Half pass

The aim of movements on two tracks is:

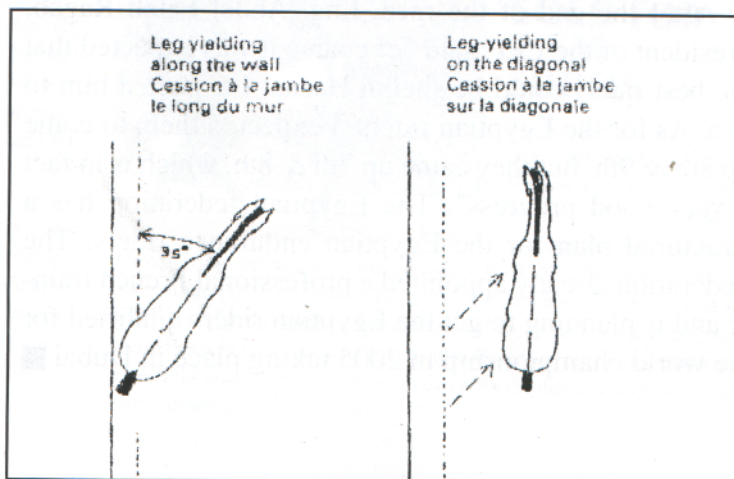
- 1- To improve the obedience of the horse to the co-operative aids to the rider.
2. To supple all parts of the horse, thereby increasing the freedom of his shoulders and the suppleness of his quarters, as well as the elasticity of the bond connecting the mouth, the poll, the neck, the back and the haunches.
3. To improve the cadence and bring the balance and pace into harmony.
4. To develop and increase the engagement of the quarters and thereby also the collection.

Leg Yielding

The horse is almost straight, except for a slight positioning at the poll away from the direction in which he moves, so that the rider is just able to see the eyebrow and nostril on the inside.

The inside legs pass and cross in front of the outside legs. Leg yielding is the most basic of all lateral movements and should be included in the training of the horse before he is ready for collected work. Later on, together with the more advanced movement shoulder-in, it is the best means of making a horse supple, loose and unconstrained, for the benefit of the freedom, elasticity and regularity of his paces and the harmony, lightness and ease of his movements.

Leg yielding can be performed "on the diagonal", in which case the horse should be as nearly as possible parallel to the long sides of the arena, although the forehand should be slightly in advance of the quarters. It can also be performed "along the wall", in which case the horse should be at an angle of about 35 degrees to the direction in which he is moving ■



The Right... Food

Feed according to work, temperament, and condition

Work

Feed according to the work done and the size of horse or pony. As exercise and work are increased, the diet must be adjusted to produce more energy and to build up muscle.

If work is decreased, or if the horse is laid up through injury or illness, the concentrates must be reduced and the roughage in the diet increased to compensate.

Temperament

All horses are individuals and must be treated as such. Some become excitable on oats and require an alternative form of concentrate. Sluggish horses sometimes benefit from more energy-giving foods to encourage them to be active.

Condition

Whether a horse is stabled and working hard, or resting out at grass, he should be in good condition. If he is not, it may be that he is not receiving the correct amount or type of food, and his diet must be adjusted accordingly. For example, if he is too thin he may need more food or more nutritious diet; and if he is too fat, he may need less.

Other factors which may influence his well-being are:

Age: old and young horses need specialized feeding. Old horses may lose condition easily because they are no longer able to make such good use of food. They may need an increase of cooked or processed concentrates which are easier to digest.

Young horses which are growing may also need more concentrates in a correctly balanced ration. They need more vitamins and minerals than a mature animal.

Brood Mares: Pregnant mares or those feeding a foal at foot (lactation) need extra concentrates. Specially formulated stud cubes contain the extra feed value, vitamins, and minerals.

Type: Horses of the same height and weight do not necessarily thrive on the same diet. For example, horses with thoroughbred or Arab blood may require careful feeding - perhaps a more palatable diet - to maintain condition; whereas native ponies are more accommodating, thrive on bulk feeds (hay or grass), and may easily get laminitis if the diet is too rich.

Climate: A large part of a horse's food is used to maintain body temperature. A horse or pony living out in cold, wet weather will need extra food to maintain condition and keep warm.

Company: Loss of condition could be due to constant bullying by companions, which may impede eating and resting. However, an animal that is used to company may pine and lose condition if suddenly isolated.

Illness: Your vet should advise you with the required special diet.

Worms: They are the most likely cause of poor condition.

Stable Vices: Wind sucking and crib-biting can interfere with digestion. Weaving and bow-walking wastes energy ■

Show Jumping

Phases of the jump - The Horse

Analysis of the Jump:

It is important to understand exactly how a horse jumps. For this reason the jump is here divided into five phases:

1. The Approach
2. The Take-off
3. The Moment of Suspension
4. The Landing
5. The Get-Away (or Recovery)

Phase 1: The Approach

The horse must be going forward in balance, with impulsion and rhythm. The quality of the jump is closely related to the quality of the pace during the approach. The jump itself depends largely on a correct approach.

Phase 2: The Take-off

Before the moment of take-off, the horse lowers his head and stretches his neck, measuring up the fence and preparing for the spring. At the moment of Take-off he shortens his neck slightly, raises his head and lifts his forehead off the ground, immediately bending his knees and folding up his forelegs. He then brings his hocks underneath him and, as his hind feet touch the ground, he stretches his head and neck and uses the power of his hindquarters to spring forward and upward.

Phase 3: The Moment of Suspension

While in the air, the horse stretches his head and neck forward and downward to their

fullest extent. He rounds his back. The forelegs are tucked up. The hind legs, having left the ground, follow the parabola of the body. If the horse fails to lower his head and neck and hollows or flattens his back, the jump will be inefficient and he will need to make more effort to clear the fence.

Phase 4: The Landing

The horse straightens his forelegs and prepares to meet the ground. He momentarily raises his head to balance himself. His forelegs touch down one after the other, followed by the hind legs.

His back should remain supple so that his hind legs can move well under him before they touch the ground.

Phase 5: The Get-Away (Recovery)

The get away stride should be fluent, with the horse's hocks coming well underneath him, so that the balance, rhythm and impulsion of the pace are re-established as soon as possible. This is important because the approach to the next fence may have already begun