# 4-H Horsemanship Program

## Unit 1: Horses and Horsemanship

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A breed is a group of horses having common origin and possessing certain distinguishable characteristics that are transmissible to their offspring.

An understanding of breeds and terms to describe the breeds is important to all horsemen. Description of colors and color markings can be found in the guide sheet of that title. If you desire pictures of the breeds, contact the Secretaries of the Breed Registry Associations at the addresses given in this guide or contact USDA Office of Information for a copy of Bulletin FB 2127 entitled “Light Horses.”

HORSE BREED TERMS

Breed character - Those characteristics of a breed that distinguish it from other breeds.
Breeder - Owner of the dam (female) at the time of service (breeding). The Jockey Club, which records Thoroughbreds, uses the term to refer to the owner of a mare at the time a foal is dropped.
Breed standard - Standard of excellence set up by a breed association for its breed.
Breed type - Those characteristics commonly accepted as ideal for a particular breed.
Cold-blood - A horse of draft-horse breeding.
Crossbred animal - A horse that has purebred or high-grade parents of different breeds.
Dam - The female parent - mother.
Family - A group of animals within a breed, all of which trace directly to a common ancestor.
Get - The offspring of a sire.
Grade animal - A horse that has one purebred parent and one grade or scrub parent.
Half-bred - When capitalized, this denotes a horse sired by a Thoroughbred and registered in the Half-Bred Stud Book.
Hot-blooded - A horse of eastern or oriental blood.
Pedigree - Written record of the ancestry of an animal. It may or may not be used to refer to a registration certificate.
Performance registry - A record book in which the performance of animals is recorded and preserved.
Produce - The offspring of a dam.
Purebred animal - An individual horse whose parents are recorded in the same registry association. A Registered animal is one whose parents are recorded and is itself recorded, and the registration certificate has been issued.
Registration certificate - Written record of the ancestry of an animal, issued by the registry association.
Registry association - An organization formed for the purpose of keeping records of the ancestry of individuals within a breed and to promote the breed.
Sire - The male parent - father.
Stud - A horse breeding establishment or farm. The breeding stallion is usually called the stud horse.
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<tr>
<td>The American Saddlebred Horse Association, Inc.</td>
<td>United States; in Fayette County, Kentucky</td>
<td>Bay, brown, chestnut, gray or black. Gaudy white markings are frowned upon.</td>
<td>Ability to furnish an easy ride with great style and animation. Long graceful neck and proud action</td>
<td>Three- and five-gaited saddle horses. Fine harness horses. Pleasure horses. Stock horses.</td>
<td>Animals not having Appaloosa Characteristics, and animals of draft horse or pony, Albino or Pinto breeding, cryptorchids, and animals under 14 hands at maturity (5 yrs. or older).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appaloosa Horse Club, Inc.</td>
<td>United States, in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho; from animals originating in Fergana, Central Asia</td>
<td>Variable, but usually white over the loin and hips, with dark round, or egg-shaped spots thereon.</td>
<td>The eye is encircled by white, the skin is mottled and the hoofs are striped vertically black and white</td>
<td>Stock horses Pleasure horses Parade horses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabian Horse Registry of America</td>
<td>Arabia</td>
<td>Bay, gray, and chestnut with an occasional white or black. White marks on the head and legs are common. The skin is always dark.</td>
<td>A beautiful head, short coupling, docility, great endurance, and a gay way of going</td>
<td>Saddle horses Stock horses</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cleveland Bay Horse Society of America</td>
<td>England; in the Cleveland district of Yorkshire</td>
<td>Always solid bay with black legs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Connemara Pony Society</td>
<td>Ireland, on the West Coast</td>
<td>Gray, black, bay, brown, dun, cream, with occasional roans and chestnuts.</td>
<td>They range in height from 13 to 14 1/2 hands. Famous as jumpers. Also noted for hardiness, docility, and soundness.</td>
<td>As jumpers, for showing under saddle and occasionally in harness, and for general riding and hunting for medium-sized adults and children.</td>
<td>Piebalds and skewbalds not accepted for registration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Hackney Horse Society</td>
<td>England; on the eastern coast, in Norfolk and adjoining counties</td>
<td>Chestnut, bay, and brown are most common colors, although roans and blacks are seen. White marks are common and are desired.</td>
<td>In the show-ring, custom decrees that heavy harness horses be docked and have their manes pulled. High natural action.</td>
<td>Heavy harness or carriage horses. For crossing purposes to produce hunters and jumpers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Morgan Horse Association, Inc.</td>
<td>United States; in the New England states.</td>
<td>Bay, brown, black, and chestnut; extensive white markings are uncommon.</td>
<td>Easy keeping qualities, endurance and docility.</td>
<td>Saddle horses Stock horses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The National Spotted Saddle Horse Association</td>
<td>United States; from animals of Hackney and Saddle Horse breeding.</td>
<td>Spotted. The secondary color must not be less than 10%, not including white legs or white on the face.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Saddle horses&lt;br&gt;Stock horses&lt;br&gt;Pleasure horses&lt;br&gt;Fine harness horses&lt;br&gt;Parade horses</td>
<td>Animals under 14.2 hands.&lt;br&gt;Animals of draft horse or pony breeding, or showing these characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palomino Horse Association, Inc.</td>
<td>United States; from horses of Spanish extraction.</td>
<td>Golden (the color of a newly minted gold coin or 3 shades lighter or darker), with a light colored mane and tail (white, silver or ivory, with not more than 15% dark or chestnut hair in either). White markings on the face or below the knees are acceptable.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stock horses&lt;br&gt;Parade horses&lt;br&gt;Pleasure horses&lt;br&gt;Saddle horses&lt;br&gt;Fine harness horses</td>
<td>Animals of draft-horse or pony breeding, and the offspring of piebald or albino breeding not eligible for registration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinto Horse Association of America, Inc.</td>
<td>United States; from horses brought in by the Spanish Conquistadores.</td>
<td>Preferably half color or colors and half white, with many spots well placed. The two distinct pattern markings are: Overt and Tobiano.</td>
<td>Glass eyes are not discounted.</td>
<td>Any light horse purpose, but especially for show, parade, novice and pleasure purposes.</td>
<td>Under 14.1 hands; pony or draft horse blood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pony of the Americas Club</td>
<td>United States; Mason City, Iowa</td>
<td>Similar to Appaloosa: white over the loin and hips, with dark round or egg-shaped spots.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s mounts.</td>
<td>Ponies not within the height range; or not having the appaloosa color, including mottled skin and much exposed sclera of the eye. Pinto markings and blue-colored roans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>America Quarter Horse Association</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Chestnut, sorrel, bay, and dun are most common; although they may be palomino, black brown, roan, or copper-colored.</td>
<td>Well-muscled and powerfully built. Small alert ear; sometimes heavily muscled cheeks and jaw.</td>
<td>Stock horses&lt;br&gt;Racing&lt;br&gt;Pleasure horses</td>
<td>Pinto, Appaloosa, and albino colors are ineligible for registration, also white markings on the underline.</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Shetland Pony Club</td>
<td>Shetland Isles</td>
<td>All colors, either solid or broken.</td>
<td>Small size&lt;br&gt;Good disposition</td>
<td>Children’s mounts&lt;br&gt;Harness-show purposes (the American type).</td>
<td>Over 46” in height.</td>
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<td>United States Trotting Association (Standardbred)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Bay, brown, chestnut, and black are most common, but grays, roans, and duns are found.</td>
<td>Smaller and less leggy and with more substance and ruggedness than the Thoroughbred.</td>
<td>Harness racing, either trotting or pacing. Harness horses in horse shows.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' And Exhibitors' Association</td>
<td>United States, in the Middle Basin of Tennessee</td>
<td>Sorrel, chestnut, black, roan, white, bay, brown, gray, and golden. White markings on the feet and legs are common.</td>
<td>The running walk gait.</td>
<td>Plantation Walking Horses</td>
<td>Pleasure horses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh Pony Society of America</td>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>Any color except piebald and skewbald.</td>
<td>Small size; intermediate between Shetland Ponies and other light horse breeds. Those 12-2 hands and under are registered in Sec. A of stud book. Mares and stallions over 12-2 and not over 14-0 hands are registered in Sec. B of the Stud Book.</td>
<td>Children's mounts, Harness show ponies, Roadster and racing ponies, Hunter ponies.</td>
<td>Any white markings on body unless approved by Board of Directors.</td>
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A good horseman needs a working knowledge of horse colors and patterns. The beginning horseman should familiarize himself with the following descriptions of the five basic horse coat colors and the five variations to these colors. These descriptions will be helpful in building the foundation for a working knowledge of horse color characteristics.

The first and most important group is the basic coat colors which are applicable to all horses. These color terms are all commonly used. White feet may occur with any basic coat color pattern.

I. The five basic horse coat colors are:

A. Bay
B. Black
C. Brown
D. Chestnut
E. White

A short descriptive discussion of each of the colors follows:

**A. BAY** - A bay horse is one whose color is hardest to describe, but easiest to distinguish. It is a mixture of red and yellow, being probably as much the color of a loaf of well-baked bread as anything. A light bay shows more yellow, a dark bay more red. The darkest is the mahogany bay, which is almost the color of blood, but without the red overtone. Bays always have black points.

A red bay should never be confused with a chestnut, as bays always have black manes and tails; chestnuts always have red (or occasionally flax) manes and tails. The body color of a mahogany bay and a chestnut can be the same, but the mane and tail provide an easy method of identification.

**B. BLACK** - A black horse almost invariably has black eyes, hoofs, and skin. The points are always black. Tan or brown hairs on the muzzle or flank indicates that the horse is not a true black but a seal brown.

**C. BROWN** - A brown horse is one whose coloration is brown. Many brown horses are mistakenly called black, because they are so dark. A close examination of the hair on the muzzle and around the lips will quickly tell whether the horse is brown or black. The mane and tail are always dark.

**D. CHESTNUT** - (SORREL) A chestnut is a horse whose coat is basically red. His mane and tail are normally the same shade as his body.

If the mane and tail are lighter in color than the body, the horse is termed a flax or flaxen chestnut. The mane and tail of a chestnut horse are never black. Chestnut color varies from a bright yellowish red to a rich mahogany red.

**E. WHITE** - The true white horse is born pure white and dies the same color. Very little, if any, seasonal change takes place in his coat color. Age does not affect it.

The American Albino Horse Club, Incorporated of Naper, Nebraska registers as “Albinos” white horses of clear white body color, with brown eyes (rarely blue), and pink skin. They also register as “Albinos Type A” horses with a very pale ivory body color and white mane and tail. Their eyes are blue and their skin is pink. Geneticists classify a third group of light-colored horses as “Albinos Type B”. Their body color is a very pale cream; mane and tail darker than body (cinnamon-buff); eyes blue. If during the life of a white horse, hairs of color other than white are found, the chances are that the horse is not white, but grey or roan.

II. In addition to the five basic horse colors there are five major variations to these coat colors. These are:

A. Dun (Buckskin)
B. Grey
C. Palomino
D. Pinto
E. Roan

**A. DUN** - (Buckskin) The dun horse is one whose dominant hair is some shade of yellow. A dun horse may vary from a pale yellow to a dirty canvas color with mane, tail, skin, and hoofs grading from white to black. Duns always have a stripe down their back.

There are special colors of dun ranging from cream, the lightest, through palomino color to duns with black points. A coyote dun is one with black points and a black line. A zebra dun is one with black points and a zebra stripe or stripes on legs and withers. A red dun is a dun of reddish orange cast often with a red stripe down his back and a red mane and tail. In the Thoroughbred stud book, these horses are listed as sorrels and sometimes ranchers refer to them as claybanks.

Grullo (grew yo). This a dun horse, with roan characteristics whose yellow hairs are mixed with brown or black. They always have black points. They are a smooth greyish-blue like a mouse, not a blue-roan or grey as the color is more suave and always permanent. Some seem purple or smoke colored. Most are back-lined and have zebra stripes on legs and withers.

*Based on contributions by Don Wakeman, M. Koger, and J. R. Crockett, University of Florida; and John Moore and J. E. Havens, Washington State University.*
B. GREY - Most so-called white horses are really grey. Many people even call an old grey horse an albino, especially if it has light skin, hoofs, and one or more white eyes. Born blue or almost black, more and more white hairs come into this coat until by the age of 8 or 10 this horse will appear almost white. The dapple generally comes between the second and fifth year. Young grey horses are often called roan; when he has a great deal of black still in his coat, he is called steel grey. When small specks of black are present, he is flea-bitten; when more white shows, it is silver grey.

C. PALOMINO - The Palomino has body which is a golden color, varying from bright copper color, to light yellow, with white mane and tail. True Palominos have no black points. The breed description lists the ideal color to be that of a "newly minted coin."

D. PINTO - (Calico or Paint) A pinto is a spotted horse that has more than one color in or on his coat in large irregular patches or spots. Small non-white spots, up to the size of a silver dollar, embossed on a color other than white, do not necessarily indicate a pinto. For example, many chestnut horses have small black spots on their rumps. A great deal of white on the upper legs or face is a pretty good indication of pinto blood, as is any white spot above the knees and hoofs or outside the rectangular area on the face outlined by the ears, eyes and nostrils.

E. ROAN - A roan horse is any horse whose coat carries white hairs intermingled with one or more base colors. Many are born and die about the same color. Whether a horse is light roan or dark roan depends on the proportions of white hairs in comparison to the colored. Most roans are combinations of bay, chestnut, or black with white hairs intermingled. They are known, in order, as red, strawberry, or blue roan. The roan coloration is generally not uniform and some patches on the body will be darker than others.

III. Variations of Color Patterns of Head and Points.

A. HEAD - When discussing or describing an individual horse among many, it is necessary to be more explicit than merely using a general color term with a modifying adjective. Instead of just saying a dark sorrel, it may be necessary to say the dark sorrel with the blaze face.

1. STAR - Designates a small, clearly defined area of white hairs on the forehead.

2. SNIP - A small patch of white which runs over the muzzle, often to the lips.

3. STRIPE - A long narrow band of white working from the forehead down toward the muzzle.

4. BLAZE - A white stripe down the face to the lips.

5. BALD FACE - One which has white over most of the flat surface of the face, often extending toward the cheeks.

6. EYES AND FACE - Normally horses have a rich brown eye with a black pupil, and no white shows around the edge. When this coloration varies, many adjectives are used to distinguish the difference. When the eyeball is clear, some shade between white and blue, he is normally termed China-eyed, Glass-eyed, Cotton-eyed, or Blue-eyed. If one eye is defective, he is called a Wall-eye. In some places, Wall-eye refers to the white in the face covering the eye area. Orey-eyed is also used to denote a horse who shows, because of fright, or because his pupil is overly contracted, white around the rim.

7. A Mealy-mouthed horse is one whose color is faded out around the mouth, and is found especially in bays and browns. Occasionally this characteristic is called mulish because so many mules are Mealy-mouthed.
1. **Coronet** - a white strip covering the coronet bend.

2. **Pastern** - White extends from the coronet to and including the pastern.

3. **Ankle** - White extends from the coronet to and including the fetlock.

4. **Half Stocking** - White extends from the coronet to the middle of the cannon.

5. **Full Stocking** - White extends from the coronet to and including the knee.

C. **MANE AND TAIL** - Black points always indicate a dark mane and tail, while white points or light points refer to a light mane and tail.

1. **Flax** or flaxen, when applied to mane and/or tail, indicates a straw yellow or dirty white. It is normally caused by a mixture of dark hair in with the white.

2. **Silver** is used to denote a mane or tail which is white with a few black hairs giving it a silver cast.

3. **True white** manes and tails have only white hairs.

4. **Rat-tailed** is a horse having but little hair in its tail.

5. **Broom-tailed** or **Bang-tailed** is a horse with a heavy, coarse tail.

IV. **Additional Descriptive Terms.**

There are a number of modifying adjectives used to further describe horse coat colors. Those listed below will be enough to cover most situations.

1. **Black points** - black mane, tail and extremities.

2. **Calico** is the same as patched, although generally applied to the livelier color combinations normally found among pintos.

3. **Cross** designates the dark line over the withers from side to side.

4. **Dappled** means darker spots are embossed on the coat.

5. **Dark** indicates a predominance of black hair or deep color, with little yellow apparent.

6. **Flea-bitten** is a gray or roan horse having small black or blue specks or spots on a predominantly white background.

7. **Golden** refers to the sheen which, when the light strikes certain shades of dun, chestnut, and bay, makes them seem translucent and golden.

8. **Light** indicates a predominance of yellow or white hairs.

9. **Line-back** means a darker ribbon which goes along the back from the mane to the tail. The line may be almost any color, although red and black are most common.

10. **Patched** indicates large roan spots on some base color.

11. **Piebald** - black and white spotting only.

12. **Pure** indicates uniformity, clarity, and depth of color.

13. **Ratty** indicates lack of uniformity in color - a dull, dirty tone.

14. **Ray** - line found along the back of some horses.

15. **Red-speckled** is a grey or roan horse having bay or chestnut specks or spots on a predominantly white background.

16. **Skipabald** - any color except black, with white.

17. **Smokey** means a blue tinge to the color; it is an obscure tone.

18. **Striped** indicates black-strips or bars on the legs.

19. **Spotted** indicates spots of solid color on some base coat.

20. **Toasted** implies darker patches, dull finish, or dark overcast.

21. **Zebra** always means dark stripes on the legs and/or withers.

If the categories of terms listed in this topic are learned and properly used, no one needs to worry about his ability to describe or identify a horse properly.
Judging horses, like all livestock judging, is an art that must be developed through patient study and long practice. A horse judge must:

- Know the parts of a horse and their location
- Know which parts are most important and the most desirable form of each part
- Visualize the ideal horse, perfect in all respects.
- Make keen observations of horses and compare them to his ideal
- Weigh the good and bad points of each horse
- Develop a system of examining horses so he won’t overlook important points

CONFORMATION

Conformation includes type, muscling, balance, and structural smoothness. It also includes the form and proportion of the various parts of the body.

TYPE

Type depends upon the function a horse is to perform. Our study of horse judging will focus on saddle horse type, since saddle horses, or light horses, comprise most of the 4-H projects and judging contests.

Desirable type in a saddle horse requires a horse of medium size and weight, generally ranging in height from 14½ to 17 hands and weighing from 900 to 1300 pounds, depending on the breed. This horse has a long, sloping shoulder, a long croup, a fairly short back, and a short, strong coupling. The bottom-line is much longer than the top-line, allowing a long stride. Both fore and rear quarters show an adequate amount of muscling for the breed. The chest is deep and the ribs well-sprung. Legs are clean, flat-boned, and medium to short in length.

Horses that do not fit this general description are called off-type. They may be too small (pony-type) or too large and heavy (draft-type). The several breeds of saddle horses have distinguishing type characteristics (breed type). Usually, all horses in a judging class will be of the same breed. They should be compared as to how well they exhibit breed type.

Muscling: Both the quantity and the quality of muscle are important. Muscles should bulge and be distinctly visible on the surface under the skin. The muscles in the arm, forearm, V-muscle, stifle, and gaskin should be smooth, long, and well attached. Long, tapering forearm and gaskin muscles that tie well into the knee and hock both inside and outside are preferred to short, “bunchy” muscles.
**Balance.** A balanced appearance comes from the forequarter and hindquarter appearing to be of nearly equal size and development. They "fit" together well. A heavy-fronted horse that is narrow and shallow in the rear quarter is not balanced, neither is a heavy-quartered horse that is narrow, flat, and shallow in front.

**Smoothness.** When all the parts of a horse blend together well and the muscling is long and tapering, then the horse has smoothness. The head and the neck should be in proportion, and the neck should blend smoothly into the shoulder. The shoulder and forerib should fit smoothly together, and the coupling should be short and strong so that the top line is strong and the hips tie in smoothly. A horse with a thin neck and a sharp break at wide, prominent shoulders is not smooth. One with a weak coupling and jutting hips is not smooth, nor is a horse that is extremely "bunchy" in his muscling.

**Head.** Each of the light horse breeds requires slightly different characteristics about the head. These should be considered when breed classes are judged. In general, the head should be well proportioned to the rest of the body, refined and clean-cut, with a chiseled appearance. A broad forehead, with great width between the eyes is desired. The face should be straight as compared to convex (Roman nose) or concave (dished).

The eyes, set wide-apart, should be large and clear. The ears should be medium to small in size, set wide, and active. The muzzle should be small, the mouth shallow, and the nostrils large and sensitive. The upper and lower teeth should meet when biting. A contrast is the parrot mouth where the lower jaw is too short.

**Neck.** The head should join the neck at about a 45 degree angle with a distinct space between the jawbone and the neck. This is the throat latch. It should be clean-cut.

Depending on the breed, the neck should be medium in length to fairly long, the head carried either high or at a moderate level. The neck should be slightly arched, lean and muscular, and blend smoothly with the shoulder. A high-arched or heavy-crested neck is undesirable.

**Shoulders.** The shoulder is long and set at an angle of about 45 degrees from the withers down to the point of the shoulder. Shoulders should be smooth yet well-muscled. The withers should be well-defined, extend well-back beyond the top of the shoulder, and be as high as the hips. Low, flat withers do not hold a saddle well.

**Chest and Forelegs.** The chest is deep and fairly thick, with this depth and thickness extending back into the forerib and barrel. A deep heart girth and well-sprung foreribs give room for good respiratory and digestive capacity. The forelegs are wide-set and blend smoothly into the shoulder. The forearm muscle is large and tapers into the knee when viewed from the back or front. The knee joint should be clean and the pastern medium in length. The pastern and the hoofs are set at about a 45 degree angle to the ground.

**Back, Loin, and Croup.** The top-line should include a short, strong back and loin, a long, nicely-turned and heavily muscled croup, and a high well-set tail. The loin (coupling) must be short and very strongly muscled because it supports the weight of the saddle and rider and lifts the forequarters when the horse is in motion.

**Rear Quarters.** The rear quarters should be thick, deep, and well-muscled when viewed from the side or rear. This muscling shows in thickness through the thigh, stifle, and gaskin. The hind legs are muscled both inside and out, with the gaskin tied in low in the hock joint. The hocks are wide, deep, and clean.

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**ALL THESE HORSES HAVE**

**UNDESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS**

- Goose Rump
- Tail Set Too Low
- Roman Nose
- Pig-Eyed
- Parrot Mouth
**Bone, Legs.** The bones of the legs should be flat, clean, and free from fleshiness and puffiness. The bone should be of adequate strength and substance to support the horse during strenuous performance. The hock should be large, clean-cut, wide from front to back, and deep. Gaskin muscles should tie-in very strongly and low on the hock. The knee should be wide when viewed from the front, deep, and clean-cut. When viewed from the front or rear the knees and hocks should be bisected by an imaginary vertical line down the center of the legs. Tendons below the knees and hocks appear sharply separated from the cannons, giving the leg a flat appearance.

All four legs are set squarely under the body. From the front view, the forelegs are parallel with the feet pointing straight ahead. From the side view, a line drawn perpendicular to the ground should bisect the foreleg all the way from the shoulder to the rear of the hoof.

From the rear view, the hocks should point straight back or turn in very slightly. The hind legs should set well under the horse and the feet point straight ahead. The hock should be set at the correct angle. Too much angle at the hock with the feet set too far under the body is called "sickle-hocked". Too little angle is called "post-legged".

**Feet and Pasterns.** The hoof should be well shaped, roomy and balanced in size with the horse. The heel should be deep, wide, and open. The hoof should appear tough and durable.

The pasterns should be medium in length and set at approximately 45 degrees to the ground. The hoof should have the same angle as the pastern. If the pastern is too straight, it does not cushion the shock of the foot striking the ground and can lead to serious damage as well as a rough ride.
QUALITY

Quality is indicated by cleanliness of the bone and head, general body smoothness, and styliness. The bone should be clean and hard. The joints, free from fleshiness. The tendons in the legs stand back from the cannon bones and give the legs a flat appearance. The head looks clean-cut and chiseled. The body is smooth and the haircoat glossy. However, a slick fat horse might appear smooth and glossy, and still be of low quality.

SEX AND BREED CHARACTER

By sex character, we mean masculinity in the stallion and femininity in the mare. The stallion should have a bolder, stronger head, a more massive jaw, and thicker heavier neck and shoulders than the gelding or mare. The stallion has heavier bone and is larger and more rugged than the mare. Geldings do not show excessive masculinity. Mares should be feminine about the head and neck and more refined than stallions.

Each breed has slightly different characteristics about the head as well as in body conformation. These are the points which make us recognize one breed of light horses from the others. In breed classes or in selecting a horse of a particular breed, these points should be considered. USDA Farmers Bulletin 2127 and page 3 of this manual give some of the breed characteristics of the various breeds.

ACTION

Although the degree of action will vary somewhat with the different breeds of light horses depending on their use (saddle, racing, stock horse, show, etc.), the usefulness of all horses depends on their ability to move well. In all breeds the motion should be straight and true, with a long, well-coordinated, elastic stride. Excess lateral movement of the feet reduces efficiency and detracts from coordination.

Action is affected by the set of the feet and legs. A horse that stands crooked usually moves crooked. A horse that toes in (pigeon-toed) on the front feet will usually paddle or wing out. Some horses place the front feet too close together, sometimes interfering as they move. A horse that toes out (splay-footed) in front will usually dish or wing in.

Fairly close hock action, with the hindlegs moving straight forward is desirable. Lateral movement of the hocks is undesirable. The horse should move with snap and determination, as if he knows where he is going and is sure to get there. A halting, sluggish movement is undesirable.

Some common defects are:

- **Cross-firing.** A “scuffling” on the inside of the diagonal forefeet and hindfeet; generally confined to pacers.
- **Dwelling.** A noticeable pause in the flight of the foot, as though the stride were completed before the foot reaches the ground; most noticeable in trick-trained horses.

Forging. - Striking forefoot with toe of hindfoot.

Interfering. - Striking fetlock or cannon with the opposite foot; most often done by base-narrow, toe-wide, or splay-footed horses.

Lameness. - A defect detected when the animal favors the affected foot when standing. The load on the ailing foot in action is eased and a characteristic bobbing of the head occurs as the affected foot strikes the ground.

Speedy Cutting. - The inside of diagonal fore and hind pastern make contact; sometimes seen in fast-trotting horses.

Stringhalt. - Excessive flexing of hind legs; most easily detected when a horse is backed.

Trappy. - A short, quick, choppy stride; a tendency of horses with short, straight pasterns and straight shoulders.

Winding or Rope-walking. - A twisting of the striding leg around in front of supporting leg, which results in contact like that of a rope-walking artist; often occurs in horses with very wide fronts.

Winging. - An exaggerated paddling particularly noticeable in high-going horses.

Paddling. - Throwing the front feet outward as they are picked up; most common in toe-narrow or pigeon-toed horses.

Pointing. - Perceptible extension of the stride with little flexion; likely to occur in the long-strided Thoroughbred and Standardbred breeds — animals bred and trained for great speed.

Pounding. - Heavy contact with ground instead of desired light, springy movement.

Rolling. - Excessive lateral shoulder motion; characteristic of horses with protruding shoulders.

Scalping. - The hairline at top if hindfoot hits toe of forefoot as it breaks over.

UNSOUNDNESS AND BLEMISHES

A major point in judging horses or examining one prior to purchase is the recognition of unsoundness and blemishes and calculating the importance of each. A blemish is an abnormality which may detract from the appearance of a horse, but does not affect his serviceability. An unsoundness is an abnormality that interferes with the usefulness of the horse.

Certain unsoundnesses have a tendency to be inherited, and these are more serious than those which are acquired by accident. Inherited unsoundnesses make a horse undesirable for breeding, showing or performance.

The common unsoundnesses and blemishes are described in the Horse Science Unit.

MORE ABOUT JUDGING

Refer to page 13 for information concerning a system for examining horses, horse terms, judging contests and giving oral reasons.
The main points of horse judging are described in *Horse Judging I: What to Look For*. Other things which the 4-H horse judge needs to learn are:

- How to judge a class
- Terms to use
- How to give oral reasons

**HOW TO JUDGE A CLASS**

A good horse judge follows a pattern or system, when placing a class. He considers the most important points, comparing each horse to his ideal. He then ranks them accordingly.

Usually, horses are judged at the halter. In 4-H contests, there are usually four in a class, and these are numbered from 1 to 4, left to right. Study the class from a distance (10 to 20 paces), looking at a side view, a front view, and a rear view. You should make a tentative placing at this time.

Then watch the horses in action. They should be led toward you and away from you at the walk and the trot. Observe the action of feet and legs and overall coordination.

When the horses are lined up again, you can move among them for a close-up inspection. In judging contests you should make notes on the class as you judge.

- **Rear view (from a distance), look for -**
  - General width and proportional width over hips and through thigh or quarter and stifle
  - Length and width of inside and outside gaskin muscle
  - Set of hind legs and hocks (correct, cow-hocked, bow-legged)

- **Front view (from a distance), look for -**
  - Shape and expression of head; size and setting of ears
  - Width of chest and muscling of arm, forearm, and V-muscle
  - Set of front legs (correct, splay-footed, pigeon-toed, knock-kneed, or bow-legged)
  - Alignment of knee and cannon

- **Side view (from a distance), look for -**
  - Type, style, balance
  - Proportional depth of leg and depth of body
  - Slope and length of shoulder
  - Length and setting of head, neck, and ears
  - Length and strength of back
  - Shortness of coupling, length and turn of croup
  - Width of forearm, arm, stifle and gaskin muscles
  - Set of front legs (correct, calf, or buck-kneed)
  - Set of rear legs (correct, sickle-hocked, post-legged), slope of pastern
  - Height at withers, Length of underline

- **On close inspection, look for -**
  - Close view of above points
  - Height and cleanliness of withers
  - Shortness and muscling of coupling
  - Soundness of feet and legs
  - Shape and texture of hoof, depth of heel
  - Unsoundness: lameness, blindness, curbs, spavins, splints
  - Defects, blemishes, Spring of ribs
  - Parrot mouth (ask exhibitor to display the horse’s teeth)

Where horse is in action, (Walk horse to judge. Trot horse away from judge), look for:

- A long step, true and free, with enough joint flexion for feet to clear ground
- Good head carriage and action in front when coming toward you
- Length of stride and hock action as horse travels away from you.
**TERMS TO USE**

The following list includes some of the terms commonly used in comparing horses. The desirable qualities are listed on the left in *comparative* form. The undesirable qualities are listed in *critical* terms, and each is listed across from a corresponding comparative term.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative Terms</th>
<th>Criticisms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typer (more breed) type</td>
<td>Off type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoother</td>
<td>Rough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher quality</td>
<td>Coarse; low quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More nicely balanced</td>
<td>Poorly balanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More stylish</td>
<td>Plain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavier muscled</td>
<td>Light-muscled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer, cleaner muscling</td>
<td>Short, bony muscling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head and Neck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorter, broader head</td>
<td>Long, narrow head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More alert eye</td>
<td>Sleepy eyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neater muzzle</td>
<td>Coarse muzzle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More massive jaw</td>
<td>Small jaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorter ear</td>
<td>Long, mule ear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaner at the throat latch</td>
<td>Coarse throat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoother-necked</td>
<td>Coarse, thick neck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neck blends smoothly at shoulder</td>
<td>Rough at shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More bred character</td>
<td>Plain head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer neck</td>
<td>Short neck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More desirable set to neck</td>
<td>Low headed, high headed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoulder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More prominent withers</td>
<td>Low flat withers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaner withers</td>
<td>Mutony (flat) withers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More angle in the shoulder</td>
<td>Steep shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deeper shoulder (longer)</td>
<td>Shallow shoulder (shorter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More sloping shoulder</td>
<td>Steep shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoother shoulder</td>
<td>Rough shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest and Forelegs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deeper-chest</td>
<td>Shallow-chest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broader-chest</td>
<td>Narrow-chest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider set forelegs</td>
<td>Narrow-set forelegs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavier forearm</td>
<td>Light forearm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer tapering forearm muscle</td>
<td>Short, bony forearm muscle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoother knee joint</td>
<td>Coarse jointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deeper jointed</td>
<td>Shallow jointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorter cannon</td>
<td>Long cannon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More medium length pattern</td>
<td>Long, weak, short, stiff pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More correct set of pattern</td>
<td>Weak pattern; steep pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrel and Top</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deeper in the heart</td>
<td>Shallow in the heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More spring of forefeet</td>
<td>Flat-ribbed; flat-sided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorter back</td>
<td>Long back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorter, stronger coupling</td>
<td>Long weak coupling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closer-coupled</td>
<td>Slack-coupled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stronger-back</td>
<td>Weak back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoother-hip</td>
<td>Rough hips; bony hips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer underline</td>
<td>Short underline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comparative Terms**

- Quarter and Rear Legs
  - Heavy-quartered
  - Longer croup
  - Nicer-turned croup
  - From the side:
    - Wider stifle
    - Wider gaskin
    - Deeper hock
  - From the rear:
    - Thicker, fuller quarter
    - Thicker through stifle
    - More gaskin inside and out
    - Smoother locked
  - Bone, Feet and Legs, Stance
    - Heavier bone; stronger bone
    - Flatter, cleaner cannons
    - Cleaner joints
    - Rougher, well-rounded feet
    - Deeper, more open heel
    - Smoother, harder hooves
    - Straighter legs
  - Front Legs
    - Straighter on front legs
    - Knock-kneed; bow-legged; buck-kneed; call-kneed
    - Straighter on feet
    - Pigeon-toed; splay-footed
  - Hind Legs
    - More correct on hind legs
    - More correct set at the hock
    - Sickle hock (too much angle); post-legged (not enough angle)
  - Action
    - Truer action
    - Faulty action
    - Rolling the hocks (lateral movement); jerks the hocks
    - Stumbles; interferes; forges (hitting front foot with back)
  - Stiff (hock, knee, ankle); too much flexion (lifts feet too high)

**GIVING ORAL REASONS**

In a judging contest, you will have an opportunity to tell exactly why you believe some of the classes should be placed the way you placed them. Two minutes is the usual time limit for discussing a class of four animals. Ordinarily it shouldn't take this long.

The key to success in giving reasons is practice. This is the only way to develop a good, smooth delivery. As you learn to place the classes, you learn to use the proper terms in comparing the animals and to organize a set of reasons. Then, practice, practice, practice. Do it aloud, with someone listening. If you must practice alone, look into a mirror. This is hard at first, but it helps develop your ability to concentrate on the class.
ORGANIZING YOUR REASONS

Accuracy is most important in giving reasons. However, unless you can present your reasons pleasantly and clearly, the value of accuracy is largely lost because much of what is said doesn’t “get through” to the listener.

The way you organize your reasons largely determines how easy the reasons are “to follow”. There are many different ways to organize reasons. The system used should be logical and clear. When discussing points about any animal in the class, cover these points in the order in which they are located on the animal. For example: (general observations first) . . . One was a larger, more powerful muscle, tipier more than 3. Then start at a particular point on the animal and go from point to point on your mental picture of the animal. Number 1 was wider through the chest, deeper in the barrel, and cleaner about the withers. She was shorter coupled and longer in the croup than 3. One was especially thicker through the stifles and gaskin muscles and stood straighter on her legs. She had more breed character and femininity about the head and moved with a truer stride than 3.

By using this system, you are not likely to forget any points, your reasons are much easier to follow, and you gain confidence by knowing exactly what points you will discuss next. It doesn’t matter where you choose to start and stop, but you should develop your own pattern and make this a habit. Many times, you will find no difference worth mentioning in some of the points. In this case you simply skip over these and go to the next point you wish to mention in the order in which you see it on the animal.

It is essential that you form a mental image or picture of each animal as you judge a class. When you give a set of reasons on that class you should visualize the animals. It is impossible to give a good set of reasons by trying to memorize your notes on a class.

OTHER RULES FOR GIVING REASONS

Do not claim strong points for one animal unless it has them. Claim the points where one is superior and then grant to the other animal its points of advantage. Emphasize the major differences strongly. Giving big differences first on each pair helps.

Be concise and definite. Don’t hunt for things to say. If you don’t remember, go on to the next pair you are to discuss.

Give your reasons with confidence and without hesitation. Talk with enough vim and vigor to keep the judge interested, but do not talk too loudly.

End reasons strongly. Give a concise final statement as to why you place the last animal last.

Be sure you have your reasons well organized, so you will not hesitate when you present them to the judge. Stand about six feet away from the judge as you give your reasons. Stand with your feet spread apart, hands behind you, and look him straight in the eyes.

HOW YOUR REASONS ARE GRADED

The judge will determine the value of your reasons by -

Accuracy - You must tell the truth. This means that you need to see the big things in the class correctly. Accuracy is very important. You will lose points for incorrect statements.

Presentation and Delivery - Present your reasons in a logical, well-organized manner that is pleasant to hear, and clear and easy to follow. If reasons are poorly presented, the value of accuracy may be lost because the listener cannot grasp much of what you say. Speak slowly and clearly. Use well organized statements. Be sure to use correct grammar. Speak loud enough to be understood. Avoid talking too loudly and too rapidly. Emphasize the important comparisons.

Completeness - Bring out all of the major differences in your reasons. Omit small things that leave room for doubt.

Terms - Use correct terms. Incorrect terms greatly detract from the value of your reasons.

REASONS ON A CLASS OF QUARTER HORSES

As an example, the following set of reasons is given on a class of Quarter Horse Mares. You should study this set of reasons as to organization and terms used. It is not to be memorized or used for any class you may judge because it will not fit any other class.

1 placed this class of Quarter Horse mares 4-2-3-1.

In the top pair, 1 placed 4 over 2 because she has more balance and Quarter Horse type. She has a more correct slope to the shoulders, more prominent withers and a shorter, stronger coupling than 2. Number 4 has a longer, nice-turned croup and is thicker through the stifles and gaskin. She also moves with a freer, truer stride than 2. I grant that 2 has more muscling in the forearm and stands straighter on her front legs than 4, but I criticize Number 2 because she is short in the croup and light in the gaskin muscles. She is too low at the withers.

In the middle pair, I placed 2 over 3 because she has more balance and style and is straighter on her legs. Number 2 has a breedier, more feminine head, and her neck blends more smoothly at the shoulder. She has a longer, smoother muscling and moves with more snap and flexion than 3. I fault 3 because she is bunched in her muscling and plain about the head. She is sluggish in her movement and forges occasionally.

In the bottom pair I placed 3 over 1 because she is heavier muscled and has more Quarter Horse type. She is shorter in the cannons and has a more durable hoof. I grant that 1 is more alert and handles her feet and legs better than 3, but I placed her last because she is off-type and very light-muscled. Number 1 is steep-shouldered, narrow through the chest and barrel and shallow bodied. She is weak in the coupling, very light in the rear quarter, and too long in the cannons. For these reasons I placed this class of Quarter Horse mares 4-2-3-1.
The rhythmic characteristic movement of a horse’s feet and legs in motion are called gaits. The three natural gaits of the horse are the walk, trot, and gallop. The rack and slow gait of the American Saddle horse, running walk of the Tennessee Walking horse, and the pace of the Standardbred may be natural or acquired. A natural gait is one that is performed by natural impulse and without training. The acquired gaits are the result of specific training and practice. The acquired gaits are the canter, rack, and the slow gaits. The slow gaits are the stepping pace, the running walk, the fox trot, and the amble.

WALK

The walk is a slow, natural, flat footed, four beat gait. Each foot takes off from and strikes the ground independently of the other three feet. It is known as the foundation gait, as the horse may be asked to change to other gaits while working at the walk. The sequence of hoof beats after the horse is in motion can be described according to this pattern: right fore, left rear, left fore, right rear. Although a natural gait, it is one that can be improved with training.

The horse must move straight and true at the walk. The feet of the straight moving horse point and move in the exact direction the horse travels. This horse moves efficiently as the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. The walk must show vigor and be brisk, with a stride of reasonable length in keeping with the size of the horse. The American Saddle horse must pick up his feet with energy, displaying a proud walk. His ankles and knees are easily flexed, while the hocks should be carried well under his body producing high action and animation. Horses with a short, stubby stride are rough to ride and are more prone to soreness and other faults. Horses whose hind hoof prints contact or over-reach the front hoof prints have good length of stride and absorb more road shock than those having shorter strides. Horses with a longer stride move with less effort in covering greater distance.

At the walk a horse has never more than three nor less than two feet bearing weight at the same time, making up a triangular base of support. A well trained horse should walk at least four miles an hour.

TROT

The trot is a rapid two beat diagonal gait. The forefoot on one side and the opposite hind foot take off and strike the ground at the same time. The horse works from one pair of diagonals to the other pair. The weight of the horse is distributed first by one diagonal and then the opposite diagonal. Then all four feet are off the ground at the same time for a moment. The trot should be square balanced and springy with a straight forward movement of the feet. The Hackney displays the collected trot with extreme flexion of knees and hocks that produces a high stepping gait. The Standardbred exhibits the extended trot with length and rapidity of individual strides. The jog-trot is a slow, smooth, ground covering gait exhibited in western classes.

CANTER

The canter is an easy rhythmical three beat gait. It is not a straight forward gait as the walk, but is a slight diagonal movement, either right or left. It is executed with either a right or left “lead”. The independent moving front leg is the “lead”. The horse has a hind lead that corresponds to the front lead. A horse that
leads with the left front and also with the left hind is coordinated. This can be observed by looking over the horse's shoulder and observing which front leg reaches farthest ahead in the stride. The canter starts with one hind foot striking the ground, then the other hind foot and diagonal front foot strike the ground together followed by the remaining front foot striking the ground. The hoof beats of a horse cantering correctly to the left are (1) right hind, (2) the diagonal left hind and right front together, and (3) left front. The correct sequence of beats in cantering to the right are (1) left hind, (2) the diagonal right hind and left front together, and (3) right front. The two unpaired legs that beat alone bear more weight and are subject to more strain than the diagonal legs that beat together. The lead should be changed at intervals because of the added strain on the legs and feet that strike separately. A horse can execute a sharper turn with greater ease and start quicker if he leads with the inside (correct) leg lead. The lope is a medium fast, collected canter exhibited in western classes.

**GALLOP OR RUN**

The gallop is generally considered as a fast, three beat gait. The sequence of hoof beats is similar to that of the canter. A hind foot makes the first beat, followed by the other hind foot and diagonal front foot striking together, and the remaining front foot makes the third beat. (Study of film in slow motion indicates the rear diagonal foot strikes the ground slightly before the front diagonal foot). The horse is thrust clear of the ground and a hind foot makes the first beat in a new series. The horse should change both front and hind leads at the same time during the period of suspension after the lead front leaves the ground. The drive develops mainly from the hind legs, however, the front legs are subject to considerable concussion. The gallop in an extended form is known as the run.

**STEPPING PACE**

This is a slow, lateral, four beat gait. Each of the four feet strike the ground at separate intervals. In the take off, the lateral hind and front feet start almost together, but the hind foot strikes the ground ahead of the front foot on the same side. The horse moves with his weight well back on the hind quarters and with high action in front. It is a modified pace without the rolling action of the true pace. The sequence of beats is right hind, right front, left hind, and left front. This is the fourth gait of five-gaited show horses.

**RUNNING WALK**

This is a natural slow gait of the Tennessee Walking horse. It is a diagonal four beat gait. Each foot takes off and strikes at separate intervals with the front foot striking the ground before the diagonal hind foot. The hind quarters propel the horse in motion. The hind feet over-reach the front feet from several to over 36 inches producing a smooth gliding motion. This gait is very comfortable to both horse and rider. Front action is desired with little hock action, as this would prevent his long overstep and characteristic walk. The Walking horse must flick his ears, nod his head, and chomps his bit in rhythm with his action to be genuine. Normal travel expected of the horse is 7 to 8 miles per hour.

**FOX TROT**

This gait is a slow, short, broken, somewhat uncollected nodding trot. The hind foot strikes the ground an instant before the diagonal front foot. It is not as comfortable to ride as the running walk or the stepping pace.

**AMBLE**

The amble is a lateral gait. It is different from the pace by being slower and more broken in cadence. It is not a show gait. The hind foot may land slightly before the fore foot.
RACK

The rack is a fast, flashy, evenly timed, four beat gait. The feet start and stop at the same intervals of time of each other. The sequence of beats is similar to the sequence of the stepping pace. It is characterized by considerable knee action and extreme speed. The squatting form and climbing action of the stepping pace are apparent. The front legs appear to trot and hind legs appear to be pacing with rather stiff back action. The gait must be performed with ease and grace and ample height to the stride but with form and action maintained. Speed is not as necessary for the 3-gaited horse as it is for the five-gaited horse. The horse can rack for only several minutes without breaking as practically every muscle is used in the gait. It is an easy gait to ride. It is the fifth gait requested of the American Saddle horse.

PACE

The pace is a fast, two beat gait. The front and hind feet on the same side start and stop at the same time. The feet rise little above the ground. All four feet are off the dirt for a moment. The base of support is always on the two lateral legs. Pacers have the ability to start quickly at considerable speed. The pace does not produce the concussion evident in the gallop or run. It produces more or less side or rolling motion. The pace is a speed gait rather than a road gait.

IMPORTANT FEATURES OF A STRIDE

1. Balance — the ability of a horse to control his action in order to travel collectedly and in correct form.
2. Directness — the line in which the foot is carried during the stride.
3. Height — the amount of foot elevation in the stride, determined by the radius of the arc described.
4. Length — the distance from the point of breaking over in preparation for flight in a stride to the point of surface contact of the same foot.
5. Rapidity — the time used in taking one stride.
6. Regularity — the precision sequence with which each stride is taken in turn.

DEFINITIONS

Diagonal gait — is one in which the front foot and opposite hind foot take off and stop at the same time. The legs and feet move in diagonal pairs in performing the gait. (Trot)

Easy gaited — is the expression used when the rider’s reactions to a horse’s gaits are pleasant and enjoyable.

Free Going — is the expression used when horses gaits are executed in a smooth, collected manner, and action is not excessive or labored.

Rough or Hard gaited — is the expression used when the stride lacks spring or action, therefore causing unnecessary rider fatigue.

Flashy or High gaited — refers to the action when a horse folds his knees, with the forearm nearly horizontal momentarily, flexes the hock noticeably, and lifts his body high from the ground.

Lateral gait — the legs and feet move in lateral pairs in performing the gait. The front and hind feet on the same side of the horse start and stop at the same time. (Pace)

Labored action — is the term used when a horse’s action in motion is difficult to perform and plainly excessive.

Action — the characteristic stride in which the horse lifts his front and hind feet very high, flexing or bending his knees and ankles.

Stride — the distance from imprint to imprint by a horse’s foot when completing one step.
True horsemanship is the art and science of riding. There are horsemen and there are riders. Every horseman is a rider but not every rider is a horseman. Horsemanship is the art of riding that helps the horse move freely with its natural grace and balance while carrying the weight of the rider and saddle. The horse must move at the will of the rider.

The horseman’s body is in rhythm and balance with the action of the horse, helping the horse move easily, but never interfering by being behind the action.

Proper training of the horse is necessary. The horseman must know and use basic principles to ride as a horseman. A horseman will change his style of seat, as seen in racing and cutting horse seats but the basic principles remain the same. The rider has shifted his seat to place his body in balance with the action of the horse.

Horsemanship should become a habit that is used every time you handle a horse.

**MOUNTING**

Proper riding begins with proper mounting. First get your horse under control by adjusting the reins evenly with enough tension to feel the bit and hold the horse steady. Do not get the reins too tight. Hold the reins in your left hand and place this hand on the neck in front of the withers. Grasp the ridge of the neck or a lock of mane.

Twist the near stirrup with your right hand and place your left foot in the stirrup with the ball of your foot resting securely on the tread. Brace your left knee against the horse and move your right hand to grasp the saddle horn. You are now braced against the horse with your two hands and left leg forming a triangle of support.

Two body positions for mounting are acceptable in good horsemanship. Figure 1 shows a safe position for mounting strange or green horses. You stand by the horse’s left shoulder facing a quarter turn to the rear. Your head is turned so you can watch both ends of the horse. You are ahead of the saddle so any move made by the horse will help you swing into the saddle. If the horse moves while you are mounting, stop him before moving out. This teaches the horse to wait until you are ready to move out and may prevent a runaway.

The position shown in Figure 2 should be used only on a gentle horse. Stand by the stirrup fender and face squarely across the seat of the saddle. Do not get the habit of standing by the back cinch – you may be kicked.

From either of these two positions you push with your right leg and spring up and over the seat of the saddle. Spring up – do not pull yourself up. Shift your weight to your left leg to maintain balance, steady yourself with your hands, and settle easily into the saddle.

Your right foot should slip into the off stirrup.

**THE BASIC SEAT**

You are in the saddle but are you sitting properly?

Study Figure 3. This is the basic seat position. Sit erect, seat deep in the saddle, with your body balanced and relaxed. Sit “tall in the saddle”, do not slump. Note the lines from the point of the shoulder to the heel and from the point of the knee to the toe. The leg maintains light contact with the horse’s body through the inside thigh and upper half of the calf. The foot is turned out slightly in a natural position with weight on the ball of the foot and the heel lower than the toe. Your ankle is flexible in this position. Keep your hand and arms relaxed and supple, elbows close to your body. The reins should be held just above and in front of the saddle horn.

In this position you are balanced, comfortable, your weight is where it will help the horse, and you are free to control your horse with aids.
As your horse moves you will lean in the direction of movement to stay in balance. Keep your seat deep in the saddle and lean forward from the hips up. Flex at your waist to stay in rhythm with the horse’s motion. If you stay in balance your body will remain relaxed and supple. If you get out of balance you will stiffen your body and lose the rhythm of motion with your horse.

Your hands are very important. They should be used to guide and help your horse. Use them lightly or they will become instruments of torture. Body balance is very important to prevent the habit of bracing yourself by pulling on the reins. Your hands control the horse’s forehand through the reins, bit and mouth. Keep your hands and fingers relaxed and flexible for light, soft signals through the reins. Signal your horse by using light pulls and slacking (called “give and take”) of the reins with your fingers. Repeat these signals until you get response. Never pull steadily with all your strength — this ruins the mouth. Use training and patience — not force.

True neckreining is the response of your horse to the weight of the neckrein against the neck, not to the pull of the neckrein. Pulling forces the horse’s head in the opposite direction you wish to turn. Legs are used to signal speed and movements of the horse’s hindquarters. Pressure is given by squeezing with the calves of your legs and your heels. Use spurs only to touch, not to jab.

Your weight is used as an aid by shifting your body. The horse will shift its body to attempt to balance your weight. The horse will feel the lightest weight shift so train it to respond without getting the habit of “throwing it around” with excessive weight shifts.

USING AIDS

FORWARD MOTION:

“Gather” your horse by settling in the saddle and “taking in” on the reins. Release tension on the reins and squeeze with the calf of your leg. Control your speed by the amount of leg pressure and rein tension. Keep your horse moving “up in the bridle” by the leg pressure. Incline your body forward from the hips to stay in balance and flex at the waist to stay in rhythm.

WALK

The rider first must “gather” the horse by settling in the saddle and “taking in” on the reins. This alerts the horse for action. Next release the rein tension and apply just enough pressure with the leg and heel to move the horse.
The rider’s body is inclined forward just slightly to remain balanced, and flexes at the waist with the movement. Maintain enough leg pressure to keep the horse moving “up in the bridle.” The reins are slack but not loosely flapping.

SLOW TROT (JOG)
The trot is ridden Western style with the rider’s body deep in the saddle, but with weight enough on the ankles to absorb the motion. The body is inclined forward slightly more than at a walk.
More leg pressure is applied to move the horse forward, and just enough tension is maintained on the reins to hold the horse to the desired speed. The rider’s arms are close to the body and the fingers flex with the movement of the horse’s head as this movement is transmitted through the reins.
The feet and legs are steady and the heel is down, with the ankles flexing to absorb weight.

GALLOP OR LOPE
Train the horse to go into the lope from the walk in the lead the rider wishes to assume. Take up on the reins to collect the horse and then release rein tension enough to allow the horse to assume the gait. Leg pressure is strong enough to move the horse directly to the lope. The heel is used to aid in obtaining the correct lead as explained under the section on leads.
The rider sits deep in the saddle with the body inclined forward from the hips. Relaxed hands are very important at this gait to allow for rhythm with the movement of the horse’s head. The legs are kept in close contact with the saddle and horse.

STOPPING
Signal for a stop when the horse’s rear legs are moving forward under its body. Allow for one or two extra strides. Give a light pull on the reins, shift your weight slightly forward and then to the rear. Keep your body erect and your seat deep in the saddle. Grip with your thighs and force your heel down to let your ankle absorb weight at the stirrup. Keep your hands low and signal with repeated “give and take” on the reins. Do not throw your body back, shove your feet forward, and pull on the reins.

CORRECT LEADS
When a horse gallops its body is turned at an angle or diagonal to the direction of travel and it is moving one fore-leg and one rear leg, both on the same side of the body, ahead of the other two legs. This is called “leading” and is very important for smooth turns. Use of aids, to get your horse into the proper lead, requires practice and patience. The horse must be settled. Working in circles at a slow lope will help.
The aids used to obtain the lead you want guide the horse’s body into the correct diagonal for the lead. To obtain the left lead apply pressure with your right leg which signals the horse to move out and to swing the hindquarters into the diagonal. At the same time neckrein very slightly to the right and lean forward to shift your weight very slightly to the left. The proper steps are leg pressure, weight shift and neckrein, but they are all done at almost the same instance.

For the right lead apply pressure with the left leg, lean forward slightly to shift weight to the right, and neckrein slightly to the left.

Study how the neckrein, weight shift, and leg pressure move the horse’s body into the correct diagonal for the lead the horse takes.
TURNING:
Neckrein to move the horse's forehand in the direction of the turn. Slight pressure with your leg on the side of the horse opposite the direction of turning will hold the hindquarters in position so the horse will pivot on the hindquarters instead of swinging them wide.

SIDE PASSAGE:
This movement is important for opening gates. Hold your horse in to prevent forward motion. Neckrein in the direction you wish to move the forequarters. Use your outside leg to move the hindquarters.

BACKING:
Set erect with your body weight forward. Grip with your thighs. Hold the reins low and pull lightly on the reins - "give and take". Control the direction of backing by pressure of either leg to guide the hindquarters and light rein tension to guide the forequarters.

DISMOUNTING:
Take up on your reins to hold the horse in control. Grasp the saddle horn with your right hand, loosen your left foot in the stirrup and shift your weight to your left leg. Brace with your left knee and swing out of the saddle keeping your right leg close to the horse. Don't hit the cantle and horse's rump as you swing down. Keep your right leg close to the horse as you come down so you will be facing slightly forward when your foot touches the ground. When your right foot is securely on the ground, shift your weight to it, push down on your left heel and let your foot slip out of the stirrup.

Horsemanship requires practice and patience. You must know what to do and do the same every time as your horse learns by habit. If you work carefully you will find your horse responding to your signals more quickly and easily each time. When this begins to happen you will then be experiencing the first pleasures of riding like a true horseman.
An owner of a horse needs equipment with which to use or work the animal in the desired duty. Etiquette has been built up in the use of a horse so that a definite pattern of tack is used according to the use of the animal. Tack and equipment can run into a lot of money. Good sound tack can be procured by careful selection. The simpler a horse is rigged, the more comfort to the horse and the rider. Accessories such as tie-downs, martingales have a place but lead to the suspicion that the horse has bad habits. Therefore, if your horse does not head toss, rear, or lag on the bit, forget them. The only place for fancy, highly trimmed dangles, etc. is on a parade horse. A horse well trained with a good mouth can be ridden with the minimum of equipment.

**SELECTION AND CARE OF LEATHER**

Many 4-H members purchase used equipment. Leather is perishable yet it can be taken care of in such a manner to give years of service. In buying any piece of leather goods, study it for strength, pliability and service. Certain items as stirrup straps should be sound and have sufficient strength to hold one’s weight in any period of stress. Inspect each item carefully, particularly around buckles, bends and attachments. Leather which is stiff or dried out cracks and is very brittle. Thin areas designate that the leather is worn and therefore not as strong as the maker intended. Leather tears or rips around the tongue of buckles. On all stitching be sure it has life. Dried thread at stitchings is very weak and can lead to trouble. Leather should be kept dry and clean. Spousing after use to remove the dirt and sweat is very important. Use saddle soap or leather oil to keep leather pliable. A system whereby you can hang your tack is best. A dry area where air circulates is best. A stable is a poor place for leather because of dampness and the ammonia liberated from the manure. Never, no matter how wet leather gets, place it near heat. Use Neats Foot Oil or vaseline to get softness into the leather. Good glycerine or special soft soaps are available and are cheap in comparison to the replacement of parts. Regular cleaning and inspection add to the use and life of any leather article.

**GROOMING SUPPLIES**

The character of an individual is often judged on how well his animal looks. A dirty, shaggy looking animal designates that the owner is shiftless, lazy and does not pay attention to details. Whenever you put your animal to work he is on exhibition. It does not matter if you are just going to the store or to a show. Appearance is the first essential.

Curry combs come in many styles, such as rubber, metal, square, round, and it is a matter of personal preference. Curry combs should be used with sufficient pressure to get the job done. Be careful on parts which are not heavily muscled. The curry comb roughs up the hair in order to get the deep dirt and dandruff.

Rice straw brushes are stiff and if used in a rocking stroke will penetrate the hair and lift out the dirt. Many owners depend only on a rice straw brush and can present a well groomed animal.

Body brushes are a finishing brush. They are not intended for getting out deep dirt. Usually, they are made of hair. Therefore, they are softer and tend to bring the oil into the hair adding gloss and bloom to the coat.

Rubbing cloths are used to further enhance the bloom and remove the last particles of dirt. A good woolen rub cloth should be washed frequently to keep it sweet, clean and soft.

Scrapers are essential if one washes his horse. They help a lot if you have really sweated a horse up. Never, by an intent of purpose, put a horse away when sweated.

Cool out your horse before stabling. This is one reason why you should walk your horse home the last half mile of your ride.

Hoof picks are a very essential item. The hoof is a prime feature of a horse. To let manure collect in the foot leads to thrush and other difficulties. The collection of stones and gravel in and about the frog can soon lead to lameness. Keep a healthy foot on your horse. A hoof should contain moisture to stay pliable.
A dried out hoof does not have springiness to absorb the shock which could injure the whole leg. Hoof dressings are available to those that have to keep a horse housed. Horses on pasture run in the dew or streams which aids materially in keeping the hoof in good condition.

Mane combs can also be used in the tail to keep them untangled and free flowing. Shears may be required to trim the foretop, roach the mane, trim the ears, head and legs. The type of horse you own dictates where you trim. Under no circumstances clip all the hair on the inside of the ear. Nature put this hair there as a protection. Keep it that way but trim it attractively.

**BRIDLES**

Bridles come in many styles. Each style calls for a special complement of bits. Here is where the etiquette begins. We do not use a driving bit in any saddle horse bridle. We do not, likewise, use English type bits in a Western bridle or vice versa. Depending whether you ride English, Hunt, or Western there is a definite pattern to follow in rigging your horse.

The reins, bits and headstall compose the bridle. The different types of bridle commonly used are the Western, Snaffle, Pelham, Walking Horse and Weymouth or double bridle. The Western bridle has long cheek pieces. They are often wide and curved in various shapes. It has one set of reins and may have curb straps. The double bridle is most commonly used on three and five-gaited horses for bridle path and show. It is composed of the snaffle and curb bits. On each end of the bit are large rings where the reins are attached. The snaffle bridle is a single bit bridle commonly used for hunting, jumping, or trail riding. The reins and cheek pieces of the hunting snaffle bridle are sewn into rings of the bit for safety. There is only one set of reins and they are plaited to prevent them from slipping through the fingers. The Pelham bridle is used for polo, hunting, park, and country riding. It has a single bit with double reins. The bit might be described as a combination of the curb and snaffle bits. The Walking Horse bridle is similar to that used for the Western type horse. It has one set of reins with a Walking Horse curb bit. The bit may have a slightly curved bar which fits between six and nine inch cheek pieces. The cheeks are often curved and the rein fits on the lower end of the cheeks giving leverage. The longer shank or cheek piece helps raise the head and maintain the gait. The hackamore has one set of reins and an ordinary headstall that holds a braided rawhide or rope noseband with a knot-like arrangement under the horse's jaw. A hackamore can be used to control and train a young horse without injuring his mouth. A properly adjusted hackamore rests on the horse's nose, about 4 inches from the top of the nostrils or on the base of the cheek bones.

![Bosal Hackamore](image)
SADDLES

Saddles come also in many styles. The saddle indicates the style of riding you are doing. This is more true than the type of your animal. Some horses look better tacked one way than they would in another type of gear.

A saddle should have a spread in its tree to fit comfortably on the withers of your horse. A poorly fitting saddle can cause sores. A poorly fitting saddle can also roll on mounting and dismounting. For the comfort of both you and your mount, pay strict attention as to the tree. Your horse may require a narrow, high tree or it may do best with a cut back. Regardless, seek some advice and don’t use just any saddle.

A saddle should be light and pliable in order that you can use your leg aids to advantage. A new saddle takes time to get broken in whereby one can best get his signals across to the mount.

Pay strict attention to the seat. This must fit you. To get a proper seat, the length and depth must be suitable. A good rider cannot look good if the saddle does not provide comfort.

Stirrup hangings are placed in various positions on saddles. Be sure that the stirrups hang so that you can get full weight in them. Stirrups set forward throw one into the cantle. Stirrups set back throw one into the pommel or fork. A rider must feel at home to enjoy his ride. If you are not secure in the saddle, your horse knows it and is not likely to give you his best.

SADDLE TREE

The saddle tree shown here has many advantages. Besides holding the saddle when not in use, it can be used to properly clean your saddle. Note, you set the saddle on one end to store. To clean the under side of the saddle just tip it over into the U. at the other end. The tray makes a convenient and neat place to store supplies. Some horsemen prefer to suspend western saddles from an overhead pole or rafter through the saddle fork or around the horn.

ENGLISH SADDLE
BITS

Bits are made in various styles. Each was designed for a definite purpose. Much injury can be done to the tender bars of the horse’s mouth with bits and heavy hands. The bit is just one of your aids. A rider sends a message from his hands down the reins to the horse’s mouth. Reins and bits are not necessarily the emergency brake found on an automobile. The slightest movement of a finger or dropping or raising of the wrist should carry your intent to your mount.

Straight, jointed and ported bits are found everywhere. Select a bit of the proper length of mouth piece to fit your horse. Adjust the bridle so that the bit just raises the corner of the mouth. In this position the bit will rest on the bars of the mouth. Try the simplest first and if this does not do the job, try another. Short and long shanked curb bits are available. A long shanked heavily parted or spaded bit is not essential. English curb bits are fitted with a flat curb chain. Western bits utilize a flat strap for their curbs. During cold weather remove the frost in the bit by warming it before placing in the horse’s mouth.

WEYMOUTH CURB BIT

PELHAM CURB BIT

WALKING HORSE BIT

SNAFFLE BIT:
THE MOST WIDELY USED

DEE RACE BIT:
OFTEN USED ON THOROUGHBRED

HACKAMORE BIT:
USED ON MOST COW PONIES

ROPER CURVED CHEEK BIT:
USED ON MANY ROPING HORSES

SPADE MOUTH BIT:
USED ON MANY STOCK HORSES

LIVERPOOL BIT:
A CURB BIT USED ON HEAVY HARNESS HORSES

BAR BIT: USED ON TROTTING HARNESS HORSES, WHICH CARRY CHECK REINS AND ARE DRIVEN WITH STRONG HAND

HALF-CHEEK SNAFFLE BIT
USED ON HARNESS RACE HORSES, ROADSTERS AND FINE HARNESS HORSES

ART WORK COURTESY, DR. M. E. EMSMINGER AND WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Good grooming is essential to the health and appearance of all horses that are stabled or that are exercised or ridden. Grooming cleans the hair and the pores of the skin. This results in a cleaner and healthier skin which is less likely to become infested with skin parasites such as lice and mange mites. Good vigorous grooming massages the body muscles underneath the skin and thus improves their condition or fitness. However, no amount of grooming will make your horse look his best if he is thin and out of condition. Proper feeding must accompany regular grooming in order to present your horse looking his very best.

Efficient grooming is possible only when you take personal pride in the appearance of your animal. The value of grooming depends upon the thoroughness and speed with which it is done. You should learn to work hard and rapidly and to do a thorough job in a minimum time.

NECESSARY EQUIPMENT

Most good horsemen will use the following pieces of equipment to groom their animals:

1. Brushes. Two types of brushes are generally used — (a) a stiff-bristled cleaning brush (rice root or corn brush), and (b) a smooth fibered body brush which will pick up the fine dust and dirt particles missed by the cleaning brush.

2. Currycomb. A rubber currycomb is preferred to the metal type. A metal currycomb is used only to remove thick dry mud or heavy loose hair. For ordinary cleaning, a rubber currycomb is used since a metal currycomb is too severe for the thin skin of a horse.

3. Hoof pick. Several types of hoof picks or hooks are available for cleaning out the feet. If a commercial hoof pick is not available, an old screw driver will serve the purpose. Bend it over about an inch from the blade end.

4. Grooming cloth. Old Turkish towels or a woolen blanket can be cut into pieces of suitable size. These are used to wipe around the eyes, nostrils, ears, lips, dock and sheath. A grooming cloth is also used to give a final polish to the haircoat and to aid in drying off the coat of a wet, sweating horse. Sometimes a clean, damp sponge is used to clean around the face.

5. Mane and tail comb. This small metal comb is sometimes used instead of the brush to keep the mane and tail free of tangles. The comb is also used to aid in thinning heavy, shaggy manes and tails by plucking or pulling out some of the excess hair.

6. Clippers and/or scissors. In order to have your horse presented in a neat, trim appearance, it is necessary to clip or trim the hair in certain areas of the body. An electric animal hair clipper with sharp blades is necessary to do a smooth clipping job on many areas such as the mane and legs. Sometimes scissors are used, but with them it is usually more difficult to do a smooth job.

STEPS IN ROUTINE GROOMING

Horses that are stabled should be groomed thoroughly every day. If they are exercised, they should be groomed both before leaving the stable and again on return.

Most horsemen develop a procedure that they follow in grooming. The following steps are routine with many horsemen.

COOLING OUT

If the horse has just returned from exercise, his tack should be removed and quickly put aside. If he is wet from sweating, his haircoat should be rubbed briskly with a grooming or drying cloth to partially dry the coat. Sponge the eyes, nostrils, lips and dock. He should then be blanketed and walked until he has “cooled out.” A couple swallows of water every few minutes aids the cooling out. However, if you do not have time to walk your horse following a hot work-out, do not give him his fill of water until he has cooled out. A “cooled out” horse is neither hot to the touch nor breathing hard.