

Meadowlark Pony Club – Introduction to Confirmation Faults

HEAD: The preferred head should be well-shaped, proportional to the body (not too large or too small) and be well-set on the neck. It should be wide in the jaws, with large nostrils and large, kind eyes and a pleasant expression.

- Well-balanced head and wide jaw makes it easier for a horse to respond to the bit and to balance himself
- Large nostrils allow him to take in more air
- Large eyes and a kindly expression often reflect a good temper
- **FAULTS OF THE HEAD:** a coarse heavy head, a head poorly set on the neck, narrow jaw, small nostrils, small eyes, unpleasant expression

NECK: The neck should be slightly arched, of medium length, blending smoothly into shoulders of medium height. It should be clean at the throatlatch, not thick or puffy, and neither too thick nor too thin.

- A good neck allows a horse to more effectively use his head and neck for balance
- A good neck can flex or bend correctly when responding to the bit.
- **FAULTS OF THE NECK:** a short thick neck (bull neck) goes with short, choppy gaits and makes it harder for the horse to balance. A neck that is concave (dips) on the top, and convex (bulging) on the bottom is called a ewe neck. A ewe neck makes it hard for the mount to flex his neck properly, and he may carry his head too high.

BACK: Should be fairly short and muscular, blending smoothly into a wide, well-muscled loin and medium-height withers.

- This type of back is stronger and better able to carry weight.
- Medium-height withers make it easier to keep a saddle in place.
- **FAULTS OF THE BACK:** a long back is weaker and harder to fit with a saddle, especially if the back is hollow. High withers make it difficult to fit a saddle, and low withers, especially when covered with fat, do not hold the saddle in place well.

SHOULDER: Is long and sloping, from the top of the shoulder blade to the point of the shoulder. This conformation allows the mount to have

- Longer stride and smoother gaits
- Ability to fold his front legs when jumping
- **FAULTS OF THE SHOULDER:** Would be a short, straight up and down line from the shoulder blade to the point of the shoulder. This would lead to rough gaits, a shorter stride, and make it more difficult for a horse to fold his front legs when he jumps.

PASTERNS: act like shock absorbers.

- Ideally, they should be
- Strong and springy
- Of medium length and slope
- **FAULTS OF THE PASTERNS:** include short, upright pasterns (almost up and down) and those that are too long. The short pasterns lead to rough gaits which make the horse uncomfortable to ride, and also are hard on his own feet and legs. The too-long pasterns, which slope too much, can be very comfortable to the rider (very smooth), but they break down easily.”

Now that we have discussed some common conformation faults, let's see if you can remember them and identify them on the bottom horse on your handouts. I will ask you about various aspects of the horse on the bottom, as compared with the horse on the top of your handout. Please raise your hands if you are able to point out the conformation fault in the lower horse:

- Head shape and set: Should note that horse on the bottom has a coarse head, set on neck at awkward angle
- Eyes: Small eyes, making a less-pleasant expression. Can be called 'pig eyes'.
- Nostrils: Small nostrils
- Neck: Lower horse has a short neck relative to size of head and body; it has a 'ewe neck', concave, or dipping on top and convex, or bulging, underneath
- Back: Lower horse has a long, hollow back
- Shoulders: The lower horse has shorter and more upright shoulders
- Pasterns: The front pasterns are too short and upright; the rear pasterns are too long and have too much slope

Why is confirmation important?

Why is understanding confirmation important?

Do you know any other confirmation faults than the ones we talked about today?

Where else can we find confirmation faults on a horse?