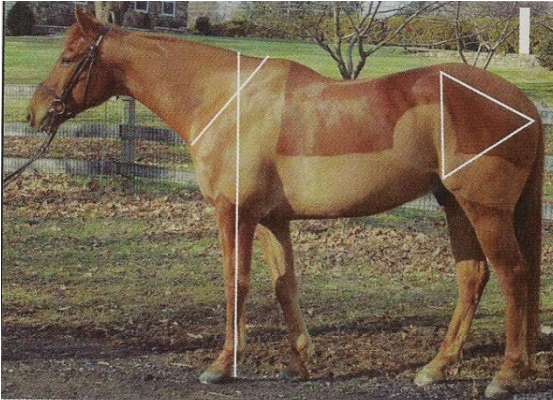


Horse Conformation

The material on this worksheet will NOT be tested on any COR exam. This worksheet is simply for you to practice the information you read in the Advanced Intermediate Reference Manual.

Adapted from a section in Practical Horseman by sporthorse judge Julie Winkel.

Place these Thoroughbred Hunter horses in order of preference.



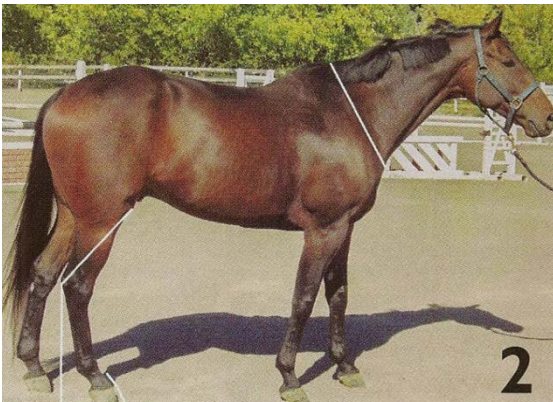
This month's winner is a very balanced, correct individual. He lacks an attractive face, and his small eye emphasizes his common head. However, his head connects nicely to a clean throatlatch, then to a neck of good length. His neck also ties in well to his shoulder.

This horse has great length and slope to his shoulder for maximum stride. He also stands quite correct in both his front- and hind- leg structures. A plumb line dropped in front of his shoulder evenly dissects his forearm, knee and cannon bone, ending at the back of his heel. And a straight line drawn

from his point of buttock travels along his point of hock, back of his cannon and fetlock to the ground.

His back is a bit low, but he looks very level from withers to croup. He shows a powerful hind end: An equilateral triangle can be drawn from his hip to point of buttock to stifle, indicating strong and efficient motion.

This gelding's quality, balance, and smooth topline point him toward a promising hunter career. I don't see him as a top-level dressage contender due to his head and neckset, but his correct balance portends success at the lower levels.



Our second-place horse offers a prettier head than our previous contestant, and he has a kind, intelligent looking eye. However, he might be slightly parrot-mouthed. This condition is basically an over-bite where his top teeth protrude and do not line up with his bottom teeth. Though not the case here, in extreme cases, this is considered a fault as it requires extra dentistry to keep proper wear on his teeth.

He has a straighter shoulder than our first horse, and his neck joins a bit low onto his shoulder. This will somewhat restrict the range of the motion of his shoulder and forearm. His prominent wither and low dip in

his back may make saddle-fitting difficult. He looks a touch weak (lacks muscling) over his loins just in front of his croup, which may lead to back soreness.

I like his strong, well-developed hindquarter, though. He shows equal length from his stifle to hock and from his hock to the ground. This allows him to step well under himself. His hind pasterns look a tad upright with the angles changing where the pasterns enter his hooves, which is undesirable for soundness. His left hind fetlock may have some filling.

Overall, this gelding makes an attractive impression.



Although the handler has done a good job standing up this horse to disguise flaws, our third gelding's balance is too uphill for an ideal hunter type.

He has an attractive head with a beautiful, sweet, kind eye and a clean throatlatch, but his neck appears a bit short in relation to the rest of his body.

He has an extremely high wither. A horizontal line drawn from his wither back shows how much higher it stands than the point of his croup. This can create problematic saddle-fit issues such as slipping back or pinching, causing wither sores. While his

shoulder is long, in a more natural stance, it will reveal itself as too upright.

Furthermore, his croup looks long and weak with a thick-looking thigh muscle in his hindquarter, which will restrict his coordination and flow of movement. He is also "tied-in" below his knee where the tendons narrow just behind it, instead of running parallel to the cannon bone from his knee to fetlock. This type of conformation causes uneven weight distribution, putting stress on his tendons and ligaments.

I don't envision this horse being as successful in the hunter ring as the previous two.

Place these Dressage horses in order of preference.



This month's winning gelding shows the best overall balance of the group, no question. His basic structures look the most correct in terms of his ability to have a long career due to soundness.

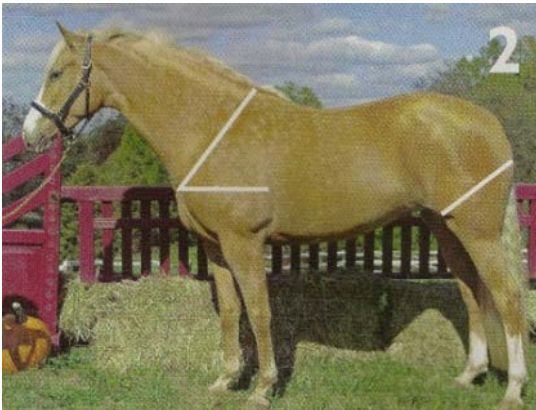
His body—shoulder, midsection and hindquarters—can be divided equally in thirds. However, he is built a bit downhill for a dressage horse. His croup is higher than his withers.

He has a typy head but a thick throatlatch and cresty neck due to excess weight. Paints and Quarter Horses, in general, are known to be easy keepers. However, it is not healthy or

helpful for athletic performance and soundness to carry unnecessary weight. The heavier burden of stress on tendons, ligaments and joints only invites injury or soundness problems.

He has a good shoulder length and slope and powerful hindquarters with good bone and straight lines down the back of his cannons to his heels. He also has good slope to his pasterns and good ankles and feet. I just wish his legs were longer.

This gelding's structural correctness places him on top over our other candidates.



Our second-place mare has a more uphill balance, which is desired for dressage, but her conformation shows weakness in other areas that compromises her athletic potential and soundness.

Her average head shows the white sclera of her eye that, in my experience, often denotes a spooky or suspicious character. She has a nice throatlatch and a long upright neck, but it is thick and attaches too low on her shoulder. This restricts freedom of movement in her forelegs.

Additionally, her forelegs are placed too far back, causing her center of gravity to ride too far forward. Her forearm, cannons, pasterns

and feet all look fine except that she appears back at the knee, which will put undue stress on tendons, ligaments, and joints down the road.

Her average midsection joins hindquarters that stand too far out behind her. This makes engagement and true collection more difficult. In a dressage horse, the ideal femur is tipped forward to allow for spring and extension, while this mare's is tipped back. Also, her hind legs are "camped out," limiting her ability to reach underneath herself and track up.

Here, conformation raises questions about how well this horse can execute movements.



This month's third-place gelding is built to be a shorter striding, rougher riding individual than the other horses in the class.

His cute head has sweet eye, but his throatlatch is thick and undefined. This makes flexion at the poll more challenging. He has enough length to his neck, but its attachment to his shoulder is also thick and undefined. This impacts his ability to be supple and limits the mobility in his shoulders.

He has a rather straight, upright shoulder angle and very short, upright pasterns. This yields not only a short, jarring gait, but the

harder concussion causes excessive wear and tear on tendons, ligaments, and joints.

He is a bit high in his withers and bit low in his back, but he looks strong enough. He shows good hip length and more correct hind leg in better proportion than our second horse's, but he still looks very short and steep in his hind legs and pasterns. This means stiffer gaits due to limited flexibility.

This horse's upright angles make him the least athletic of the three and the most prone to soundness issues.

Place these pony jumpers in order of preference.



This month's winning pony is in beautiful condition. He looks a touch on the fat side, but his beautiful coat shines. Overall, he has a well-balanced body.

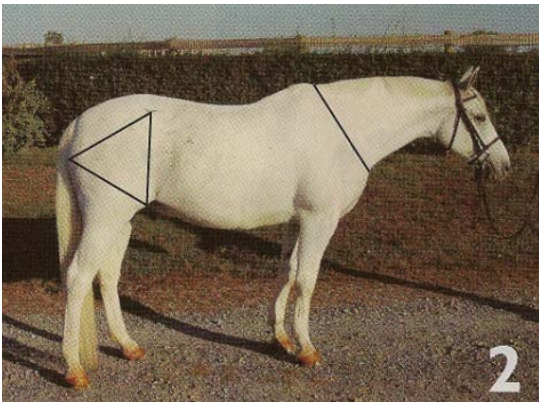
He sports an attractive head with a knowing eye. His throatlatch is a bit thick, and although his neck has adequate length, it also appears thick as it ties into his shoulder a bit low.

His shoulder shows good length and slope, and he has a strong chest and muscled forearm. His prominent withers tie into a strong, short back. His hindquarters are average. I like a bit more length in the croup for power. However,

this pony stands on a very nice hind-leg construction that looks clean with correct angles and good bone.

Although he's a bit back at the knee, his knees are strong and flat. He also has short, strong cannons and clean ankles with good length and slope to the pasterns. This pony has great feet that are well cared for and are an excellent example of good shoeing.

Overall, this pony is a strong, athletic type for the Pony Jumper division and a good candidate to remain sound for his job.



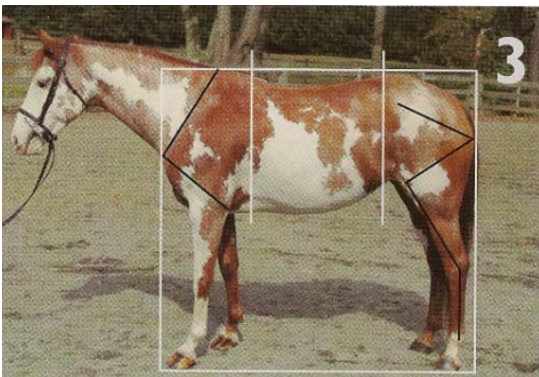
Our second-place pony also shows good overall balance. His body parts can be divided into equal thirds: one-third shoulder, one-third barrel, one-third hindquarter.

He has a nice eye with an attractive head and neck. His neck shows good length and sits well-placed on a nicely sloped shoulder. His stance, however, makes him appear calf-kneed (back at the knee) and heavy on his forehead. His straight pasterns concern me a little, as this can minimize shock absorption and stress ligaments, bones and hooves.

We see a good equilateral triangle in his hindquarter. This symmetry allows for

muscular strength for speed and thrust. However, his hocks are small and undefined, which restricts movement in the joint. The hock is equivalent to the human ankle, with the point of hock corresponding to the human heel. We want a large, flat joint to allow for sufficient movement, aid shock absorption and withstand the stress of pushing off the ground for jumping, as well as for stopping and turning.

This is a nice pony with good balance and symmetry, though he lacks bloom to his coat and appears less fit than the first horse.



This pony is the weakest in our group due to her overall balance being unequal across her body parts, which you can see by the lines I've drawn.

Her head appears a little coarse, and her eye with its white sclera makes her head less attractive to me. She has a nice clean throatlatch and very good length and set to her neck; however, her neck meets a short shoulder that makes for a short, stiff stride.

Her wither is less defined than our other ponies'. This trait, called "mutton-withered," is common in ponies and can make saddle-fitting difficult because saddles tend to slip.

Her long barrel and very long, weak back join quite a short hip and hindquarter. This makes collection difficult. In addition, her very straight lower thigh, stifle to hock (termed "post-legged"), will limit her reach and power behind. She has a small hock, constructed similar to that of the second place horse.

This mare's foreleg looks calf-knee, which puts undue stress on her tendons, ligaments and joints.

Here an uneven build limits athleticism and power and makes this mare prone to soundness problems.

Adapted from a section in Practical Horseman by sporthorse judge Julie Winkel.