

CHAPTER TWO

HORSE JUDGING: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Action. How a horse moves its feet and legs at a walk, trot, etc.

Cannon. The lower leg bone below knee or below hock, and above the fetlock joint.

Chestnuts. The horny growths on inside of horse's leg; also called night eyes.

Coarse. Lacking refinement; rough, harsh appearance.

Conformation. Structure, form, and symmetrical arrangement of parts as applied to a horse.

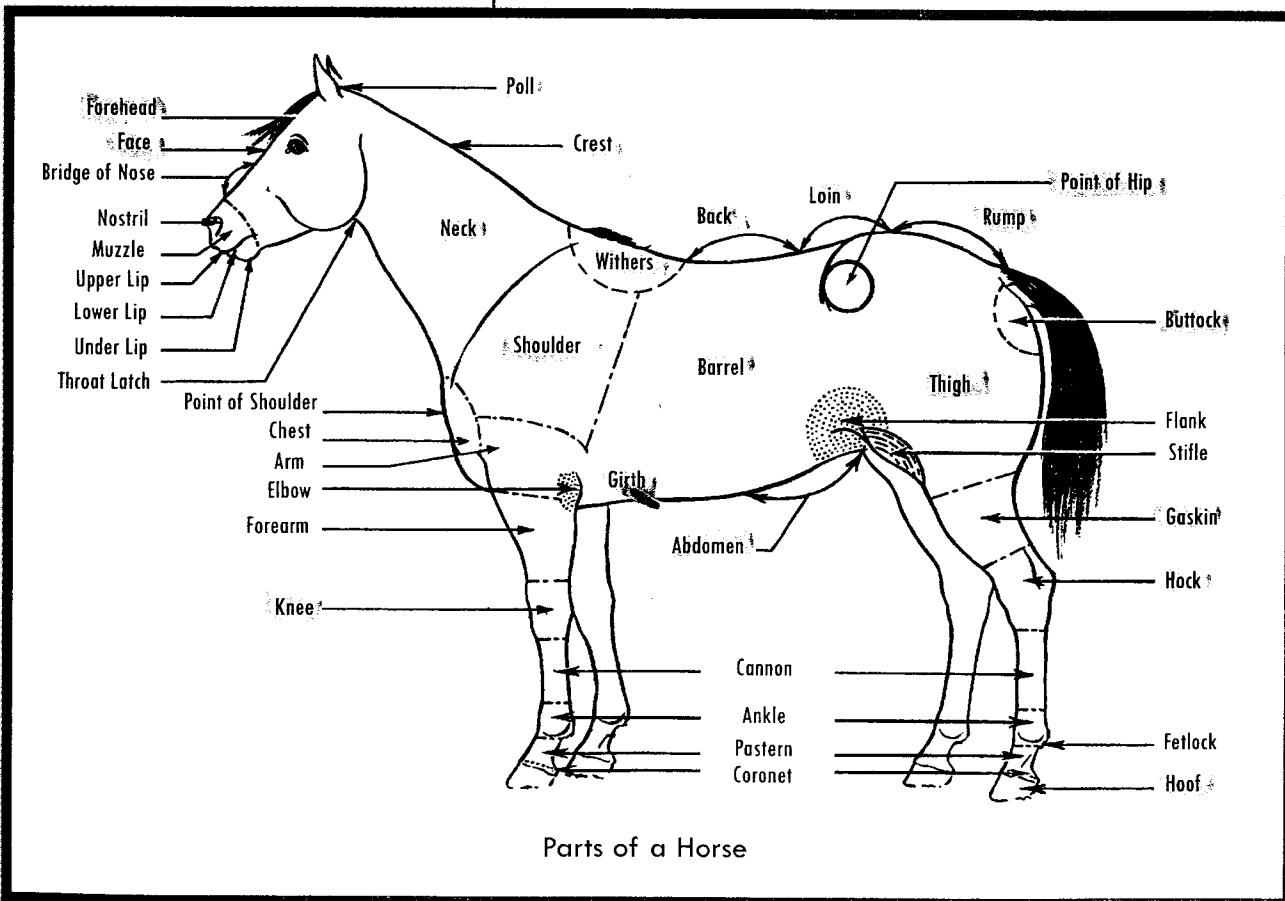
Coon Footed. Long, sloping pasterns throwing fetlocks low.

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 the ideal
- Weigh the good and bad points of each horse
- Develop a system of examining horses so that important points are not overlooked

CONFORMATION

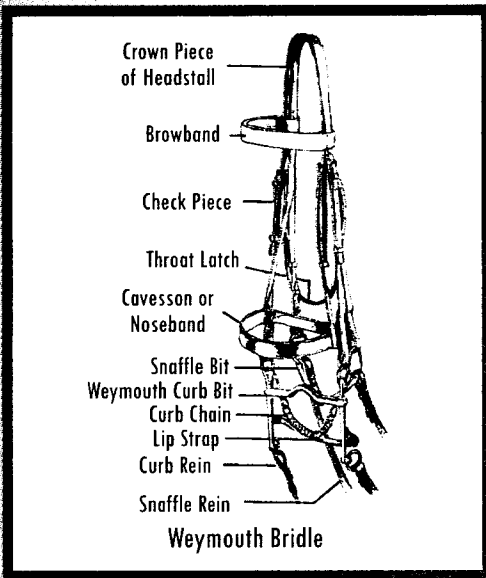
Conformation includes type, muscling, balance, and structural



Parts of a Horse

Coupling. Region of the lumbar vertebrae, loin, or space between last rib and hip.

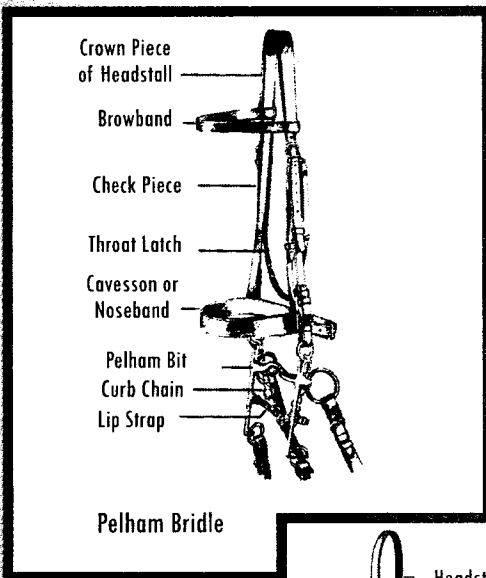
smoothness. It also includes the form and proportion of the various parts of the body.



are two sets of reins. The wider set going to the snaffle, which raises the horse's head, and the narrower set of reins going to the curb used to develop flexion or a head set. The bits act independently and give the rider a greater range of responses for saddle seat riding and dressage.

Pelham Bridle

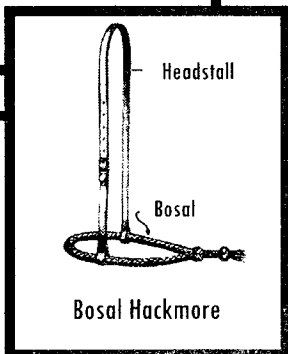
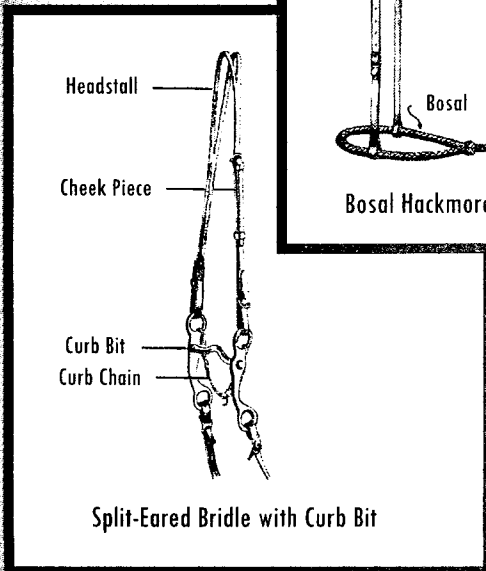
The Pelham bridle has one bit with two sets of reins, the snaffle and the curb. Each set of reins is used separately; the bit acts like a snaffle or a curb. If both sets of reins are used at one time, the result is a general pull on the mouth. The Pelham bridle has parts similar to the basic English bridle, but with a Pelham bit and curb chain. This bridle is used for polo, hunt, dressage and pleasure riding.



Hackamore

The hackamore is a bitless bridle that works by pressure exerted on the underside of the jaw, the bridge of the nose and the poll. The hackamore may either incorporate the use of a bosal or a mechanical device.

The bosal is made of braided rawhide, usually with a rawhide core. The rawhide is braided to create a thicker portion over the nose and thinner underneath the jaw. At the end of the braided section, a heel knot joins the ends of the bosal. A mecate, usually made of braided horsehair rope, is attached to the heel knot. Usually the mecate is long enough so that, when properly tied, it forms a pair of closed reins as well as a lead rope that may be tied to the saddle when riding. The bosal acts primarily on the lower part of the jawbones where the skin covering is thin, but it also applies some

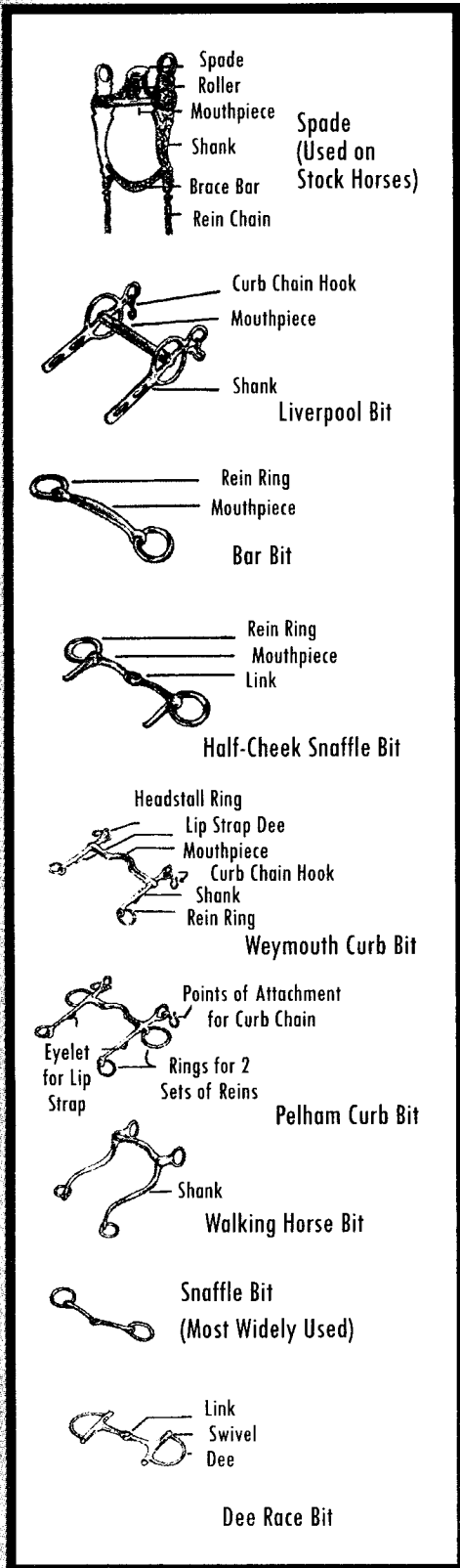


pressure over the bridge of the nose and the poll. The stiffer the bosal, the more severe its action. Improper use of the bosal can make it into a severe instrument, as a hard jerk can break the horse's skin.

A mechanical hackamore has a shorter noseband than the bosal, and the noseband is attached to long-shanked cheek pieces like those on a curb bit. A jaw strap or chain beneath the jaw connects the two cheek pieces. The jaw strap sits higher on the jaw than a curb strap, and using a chain instead of a strap increases the severity. The primary pressure point of a mechanical hackamore is the underside of the horse's jaw, but pressure is also applied over the bridge of the nose and the poll.

A BIT OF COMMUNICATION

Although many of the early bits were rather crude and fearsome in appearance, the principles upon which they operated still remain in use today. Many new bits have been designed, but the basic prin-



ally considered to be mild bits, but certain variations can make them quite severe, such as:

1. The diameter may range from 1/4" to 1" and the narrower the diameter, the more discomfort it may cause.
2. The mildest form is a bar mouthpiece. The jointed mouthpiece creates a pinching effect (more discomfort) on the corners of the mouth, bars and tongue. A mouthpiece can be made more severe by modifying to a twisted mouth, double twisted wire or double-jointed mouthpiece.
3. The horse's head position will determine how effective the snaffle can be. With the nose up, only the corners of the mouth are affected. More pressure points (corners plus bars and tongue) are utilized when the horse flexes at the poll.

Curb Bits

Curb bits operate on a lever principle. It has a functional curb chain or strap adjusted to fit in the chin groove area on the underside of the lower jaw, and reins attach to the shanks. The lever effect produces pressure at the chin groove and the poll, in addition to the corners of the mouth, bars and tongue. The roof of the mouth is affected by very few bits. Certain variations can make curb bits quite severe, such as:

1. The narrower the diameter of the mouthpiece, the more discomfort there is to the horse.
2. Curbs may have mullen mouths (curved bar), ports (low, medium or high) or jointed mouthpieces. The mullen mouth emphasizes pressure on the tongue. The port bits allow room for the tongue and transfer pressure to the bars. Contrary to popular belief, the high port is not necessarily more severe. It does provide more tongue room and it does put additional pressure on the bars. The most discomfort is produced by a jointed mouth curb since it affects all of the pressure points and creates a "nutcracker" action on the bars and tongue. Other variations include rollers (crickets) or hoods or spoons (spade bit).
3. The most obvious characteristic of a curb bit is the shank, and the longer the shank, the more leverage the rider has. A less obvious point to consider is the distance between the mouthpiece and the cheek piece ring. The longer this distance is, the more leverage the rider has.
4. The curb bit is most effective when the horse flexes at the poll. When the horse's nose is elevated, the bit becomes less functional.

The horse should respond to the curb bit by flexing at the poll (tucking its head). It is used alone for western horses or in combination with a snaffle for hunt seat, saddle seat or dressage. The most sophisticated curb bit is the Spade and it is used on highly trained western horses.

Tom Thumb

A Tom Thumb bit is often referred to as a snaffle, but it is actually a jointed curb and not a snaffle. When a jointed mouthpiece is attached to curb shanks and a curb strap, it creates a considerably

more severe bit than a simple D-ring or eggbutt snaffle. Like the curb, the bit works as an axis to exert pressure on the poll and the underside of the jaw. With the curb strap attached, pressure on the shanks of the bit can pull the jointed mouthpiece into a nutcracker action on the tongue.

Weymouth

The Weymouth bit is a curb with a fixed mouthpiece. It is used in combination with a loose ring snaffle or bridoon as a full bridle. The two bits are placed in the horse's mouth with the snaffle slightly higher than the curb.

Liverpool

The Liverpool bit is a curb with a fixed or loose mouthpiece. It is commonly used on driving horses. The Liverpool bit is used with a single set of reins that may be attached closer to the rings for less leverage or lower on the shank for more leverage.

Choosing the right bit

The bit the rider chooses rests largely with the horse, stage of training and the rider's own personal preference. Generally, it is the gentle, soft bit that will give the best results. Above all, a horse must be comfortable to be in control.

General bit care

- To remove oxidation or rust spots, wipe bit with steel wool.
- Clean and wipe dry after each use.
- Oil all moving parts of bit with a light oil regularly to prevent locking.
- Polish all metal bits regularly with metal polish.
- During cold weather, warm the mouthpiece before placing the bit in the horse's mouth.

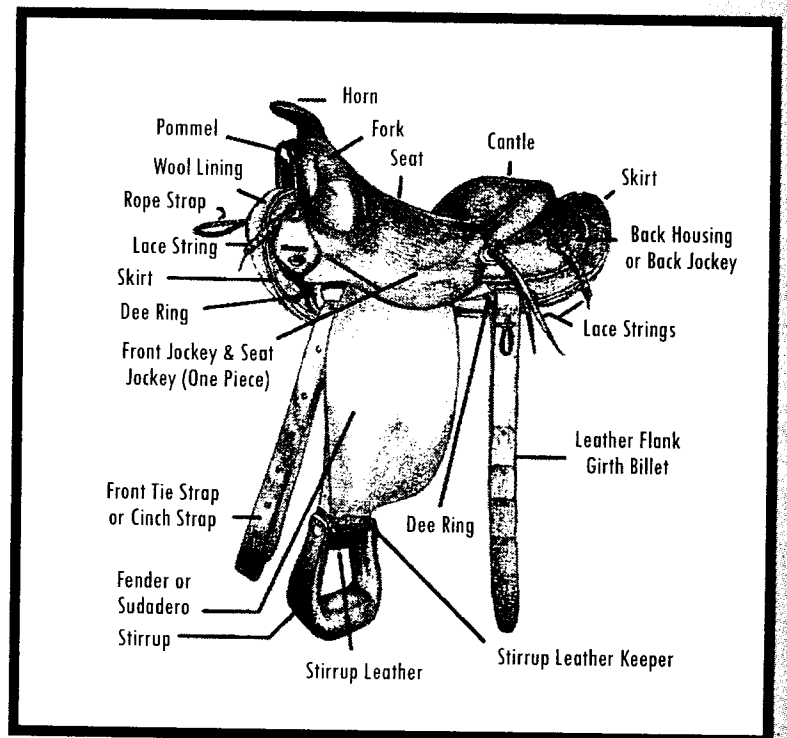
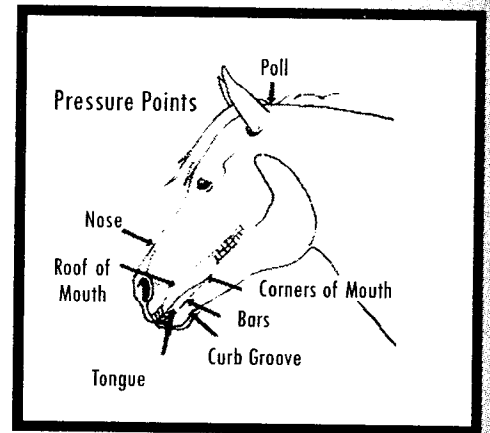
SADDLES

There are several different types of saddles, and the saddle selected should conform to the needs of the rider and riding style as well as the type of horse used.

1. The saddle must fit the horse.
2. The saddle should not interfere with the ability of the horse to perform.
3. The saddle must be appropriate for the riding style and activities associated with that riding style.
4. The saddle should fit the rider.

The tree is the basic structural unit of the saddle.

Trees are made of fiberglass or wood and covered with rawhide. The saddle size and fit is determined by the width and height of the parts and overall size of the tree.



working on a flat arena surface, playing polo, jumping fences, or covering rough terrain in a mixture of flat and jumping work, such as foxhunting.

The flaps are cut more forward and may include padded knee rolls to help the rider when riding on the flat or going over jumps. The forward seat saddle may be cut back.

Dressage Saddle

The Dressage saddle is an elongated version of the forward seat saddle, allowing the rider to sit deeper. It gives balance through the seat and allows greater leg contact. The knee roll is optional and depends on rider preference.

Fitting a Saddle

Not every saddle will fit every horse, just like one size and type of shoe will not fit every person. When fitting a saddle to a horse, the conformation of the withers, the length of the back, slope of the shoulder, muscling and spring of the ribcage should be considered. A saddle must fit without pressing on the horse's spine, particularly around the withers, and it should not pinch the shoulder blades. The width of the saddle should fit so that it rests evenly on the horse's back.

If the saddle does not clear the withers but instead rests on them, then either the fork or saddle is too wide, or the withers of the horse are too high and narrow, or perhaps both contribute to the problem. In any case, the ill-fitting saddle may cause injury to the withers and will be painful, leading to bucking, head throwing and/or "cinchiness."

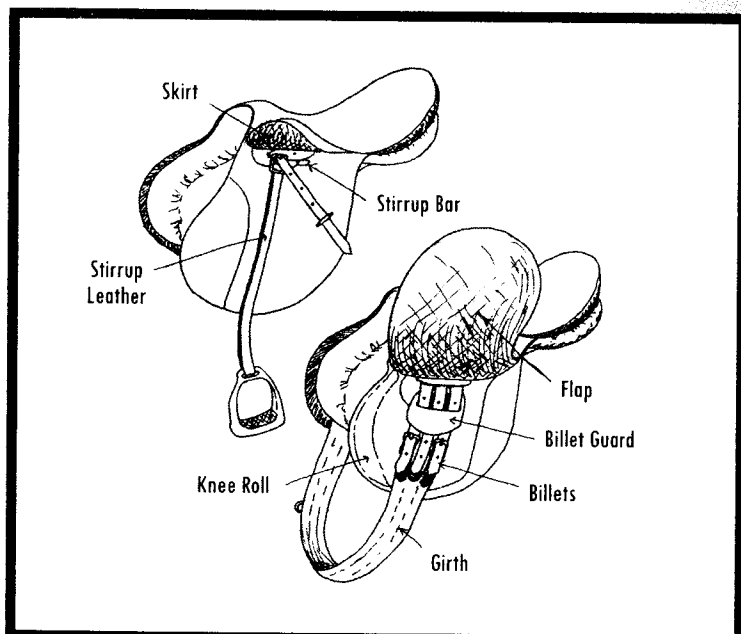
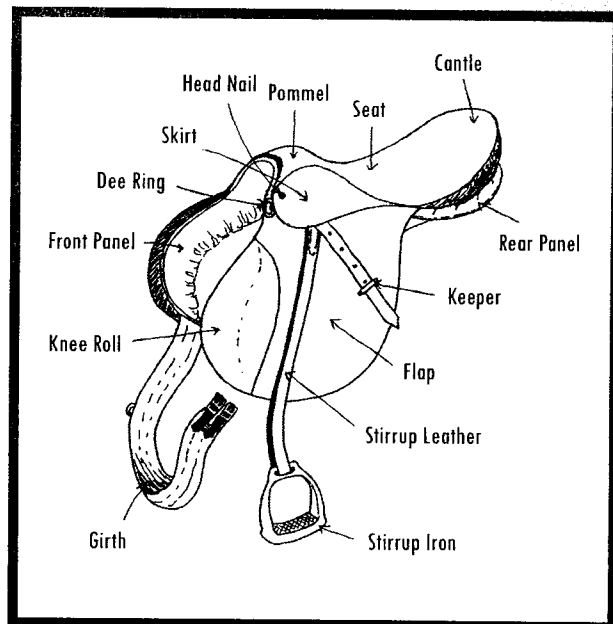
Width of the withers should be measured two inches below the top of the withers, to correspond to the fork width of the saddle. Both Western and English tree widths are measured across the bottom of the gullet.

The seat of the Western saddle is measured from the base of the horn to the front center edge of the cantle. The seat of the English saddle is measured from the head nail to the center of the cantle.

SADDLE PADS AND BLANKETS

Saddle blankets or pads serve at least four purposes:

1. To protect the horse's back
2. To absorb sweat and moisture
3. To protect the saddle
4. To help saddles fit better



COLOR AND COLOR MARKINGS

Black points. Main, tail and legs black or darker than the rest of the horse.

Brand. A mark of identification. A private registered mark burned on cheek, shoulder, or hip.

Cross. A dark stripe across the shoulders.

Flame. A few white hairs in center of forehead.

Tucked up. Thin and cut up in the flank like a greyhound.

Walleyed. Iris of the eye of a light color.

A good horseperson needs a working knowledge of horse colors and markings. The beginning horseperson should become familiar 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 and markings may occur with any basic coat color.

FIVE BASIC HORSE COAT COLORS

Bay - A bay colored horse may be hard to describe, but easy to distinguish. It is a mixture of red and yellow. 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 (black mane, tail, and lower portion of the legs, except for any white markings on the legs).

Black - A black horse almost invariably has black eyes, hooves and skin. The points are also black. Tan or brown hairs on the muzzle or flank indicates that the horse is not a true black but a seal brown.

Brown - A brown horse is one with brown coloration. 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.

Chestnut - (Sorrel) A chestnut horse is basically red. The mane and tail are normally the same shade as the 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 varies from a bright yellowish red to a rich mahogany red.

White - A white horse has snow-white hair, pink skin and brown eyes. The true white horse is born pure white and dies the same color. Very little, if any, seasonal change takes place in the coat color. Age does not affect it.

FIVE MAJOR VARIATIONS TO COAT COLORS

Dun - (Buckskin) The dun horse is one with dominant hair in some shade of yellow. A dun horse may vary from a pale yellow to a dirty canvas color with mane, tail, skin, and hooves grading from white to black. Duns may have a dorsal stripe down their backs and barring on the knees and hocks. There are special colors of dun ranging from cream (the lightest) through palomino color to duns with black points. A zebra dun is one with black points and a zebra stripe or stripes on legs and withers. A red dun has a reddish orange cast, often with a red strip down the back and a red mane and tail. Grullo (grew yo). This dun horse has yellow hairs mixed with brown or black. They always have black points. This coloration is permanent (not affected by age). Most have a mouse-gray appearance, but some seem purple or smoke colored. Most have a dorsal stripe and have zebra strips on legs and withers.

Gray - A gray foal may be born a solid dark color, or it may have a few white hairs mixed with hairs of a basic color. As the horse gets older, more white hairs appear in the coat. As gray horses age, they can become almost solid white. Black horses with the gray gene possessing a higher proportion of black hairs than white

SHOWING THE HORSE WITH SAFETY AND COURTESY

1. Don't try to show a green horse. Teach the horse at home, and not in the show ring.
2. Avoid letting the horse kick when close to other horses. Space horses when possible.
3. Keep calm, confident and collected. Remember that the nervous showman creates an unfavorable impression.
4. Carefully and courteously follow the instructions of the judge and the ringmaster.
5. Be courteous and respect the rights of other exhibitors.
6. Be a good sport; win without bragging and lose without complaining.

SAFETY RULES FOR JUMPING

1. The rider should be able to go over Cavaletti (poles on the ground which are properly spaced) and do this adequately both with and without stirrups.
2. Before starting to jump, the main objective is to instill confidence in the rider and therefore a safe, quiet, but willing horse is a necessity.
3. A great variety of low jumps should be used at first until skill has been sufficiently developed.
4. The rider should go over these low jumps at the trot to develop control and the ability to "stay with the horse."
5. Keep the rider at the low jumps until all errors have been corrected.
6. Riders should wear SEI approved helmets with harness fastened at all times when jumping.
7. Only riders with superior riding ability should be permitted to jump.
8. If a rider should fall from the horse in the process of jumping, the rider should not be moved until checked by a nurse or a physician.

GENERAL SAFETY RULES

Safety Lessens Danger

1. Know your horse, its temperament and reactions. Control your temper at all times, but let it know that you are its firm and kind master.
2. Know your horse's peculiarities. If someone else is riding it, tell him or her what to expect.
3. Horses require kind, gentle, but firm, treatment. There are a few vicious horses. Most of those become vicious through abuse. However, you must be firm and consistent. Decide what you want from your horse, and insist on getting it.
4. Never tease your horse. It may develop bad and dangerous habits for the rest of its life. If so, your safety is in serious jeopardy.
5. Do not punish your horse, except at the instant of the disobedience. If you wait even a minute, it will not understand why you are punishing it. Punish without anger, lest your punishment be too severe. Never strike or kick your horse about the head or legs.
6. Riders and attendants should not be loud or rowdy. Noise makes a horse jumpy and nervous both on the ground and under saddle. Eventually, some horses will react by kicking. A sharp tone of voice may be used for checking an animal, but your voice should never be louder than is required to meet the situation.
7. Ask permission when leading through a group of people.
8. Never race. Horseplay is only for the unmounted horse, not for the horse and rider.
9. Always treat other people on horses and afoot in the same way you would like to be treated.
10. Remember - "Kickin' never gets you nowhere, less'n you're a mule." - Cowboy Proverb