

Tennessee Walking Horse Mares

With Guest Judge: Lee Ziegler

When I look at conformation in gaited horses, I look at overall balance, factors that will contribute to soundness, and factors that will make the horse more or less likely to perform the gait associated with her particular breed. With simple side view photos, it is impossible to see the straightness of the front and hind legs or to check the overall way of going of the horse. It is also difficult to see shoulder angles, and to see proportions of the hind legs when they are obscured by tails and shadows. So, assuming that all of these horses have good front leg conformation, and are sound as they move, this is what I can tell from these photos.

Mare #1 is well-balanced, with her shoulder and hindquarters well-matched, not heavier in forehand or the haunch. The angle of her humerus (bone between point of shoulder and elbow) and the position of her front legs, relative to her chest enables her to take a long but “scopey” step in front, lifting some, as well as reaching with her front legs.

It is virtually impossible to tell what her shoulder angle is from this picture. Her neck is set on at a moderate height, flows smoothly into her withers, and is long enough to provide good counterbalance to her body as she moves. Her functional back is moderately long, which is to be expected in a Walking Horse, and her loin is strong, deep, and flows smoothly into her hindquarters. Her hip is a little short in proportion to her body, with a definite slope, but is well muscled. It could be a little more full for her to reach ideal proportions in her body.

Her hind legs are somewhat of a mystery because of the position of her tail in the picture, but appear to be set strongly and able to reach well, not camped out or sickle hocked. Her hocks and knees appear to be set at approximately the same height, lending strength to her legs. She carries a bit more of her height in her legs than in her body, as is typical of Walking Horses.

Her head is in proportion to her body, set on smoothly with her neck, refined and feminine, with a nicely defined throatlatch that will make it easy for her to flex at the poll. Her bone is a bit light, but in proportion to her body. This mare would do well on less challenging terrain, give you a smooth, long striding comfortable ride, and might even take a moderate jump or two in stride.

Mare #2 appears to be younger than the other two pictured. Her position in the picture is not exactly square on to the camera, so her proportions may be distorted a bit by the lens. Her balance is difficult to judge from this view, although she seems to be a bit lighter in the hindquarters than would be ideal.

The angle of her humerus and position of her front legs incline her to take a shorter but higher step in front, she will have some action, but not as much reach as a horse with a longer and lower humerus. Again, her shoulder angle is almost impossible to see in this picture.

Her neck is set on relatively low, but carried high, causing that slight dip in front of the withers evident in her topline. Because of this, her neck does not flow as smoothly into her withers as I would like. Her neck also appears relatively short in proportion to her body, although the pose may be accentuating this.

Her functional back is fairly long, perhaps a bit longer than ideal in Walking Horses. Her loin is a bit shal-



low, but may develop with age. Her hip is short in proportion to her body, and somewhat steep. Her hind legs are again somewhat of a mystery, because of the pose, but her hock appears to be a little bit farther behind her buttock than would be ideal for strength. She most likely can take a long step with her hind legs, however. Her hocks are a bit higher than her knees, inclining her to a slight (very slight) rump high balance if the hind legs were positioned with the cannons vertical. She carries a good deal more of her height in her legs than her body, and as a result most likely has a good deal of overstride in her gaits.

Her bone is light, but in proportion with her most likely still-growing body. This mare might do best in a show environment, where her action and long overstride would be appreciated.

Mare #2



Mare #3 is a mature mare. If the foal in the background is any indication, she may have recently given birth. Her sagging tummy is honestly come by!

Her balance is good, although her hindquarters may be a bit heavier than her shoulder. The angle of her humerus and shoulder (in this picture the shoulder angle is visible) incline her to a relatively short but high step in front. Her neck is set on low but carried high, contributing to the slight dip in front of her withers and a very slight outward bulge on the underside of her neck. Her neck is a bit short in proportion to her body, making it less effective as a counterbalance to her hindquarters.

Her back is relatively short for a Walking Horse, and her loin is outstandingly strong and deep. It flows well into her very strong hip which is outstanding. Her hind legs are again somewhat of a mystery because of the shadow and tail, but it appears that she might be a bit sickle-hocked. With her strong hindquarters and those hind legs she most likely takes a long step behind. Her hocks and knees are about even. She carries about even height in her legs and her body, inclining her to power rather than extremely long steps.

Her head is proportionate to her heavy body, but set on in a less than ideal angle, making it difficult for her to flex well at the poll.

Her bone is good, strong and in good proportion to her body. This is a horse that would do well in rough terrain, and could take you out on a ride in the hills and bring you home again easily.

To see how our Guest Judge places these horses, please turn to page 64.

About our Guest Judge:

Lee Ziegler is a trainer, clinician and author, as well as a regular contributor to The Gaited Horse and various other publications.

TGH thanks Grace Larson of the Part Walking Horse Registry and the owners of these mares for providing the photos.



Mare #3



Hydrops Facts

A failure in the fluid exchange through the fetal membranes between the dam and foal.

CAUSE:

... Unknown

... Some literature points to congenital abnormality of the foal, including hydrocephalus, scoliosis, and other defects. Has also occurred with twin and normal fetuses, and placentitis. No breed preference.

SIGNS:

... Abdomen swells rapidly in 6 to 14 days due to accumulation of 40 to 220 liters of fluid (as opposed to 4 to 18 in a normal pregnancy).

... Mare appears larger than normal for her stage of pregnancy

... Edema in the lower abdomen

... Elevated pulse, elevated respiration, normal body temp, depressed appetite, decreased defecation, dehydration

... Abdominal discomfort, resulting in difficulty walking, lying down or rising.

... Onset from the sixth to the tenth month of gestation

... Fetus difficult to detect, even by ultrasound

DIAGNOSIS:

... Transrectal palpation

... Ultrasonography

... Rule out other causes of abdominal distention, including twin pregnancy, prepubic tendon or abdominal wall rupture, heart disease or liver malfunction

TREATMENT:

... Slowly drain excess fluid from placenta

... Terminate pregnancy to prevent rupture of the abdominal wall or tendons, and save mare.

... Electrolyte I.V. support, antibiotics and pain medication.

PROGNOSIS:

... Guarded if diagnosed promptly

... Outlook for future breedings is poor.

COMPLICATIONS:

... Dystocia

... Foals almost always die due to prematurity or abnormality

... Rupture of the prepubic tendon or abdominal wall

... Retained placenta

... Shock if placental fluid is drained too quickly

... Colic or founder from the stresses involved.

... **Can recur, especially if the mare is bred to the same stallion.**

Brown and Bertone (2002), Robert S. Younquist (1997), www.vetlearn.com (2003)



Ladyhawke, noticeably thinner after her ordeal.

women, stood and talked for a good while about the rarity of the case, and about how Ladyhawke and they had beat the odds, and about how grateful the owner was. It took a long while to finally say goodbye, but when Ladyhawke saw the open horse trailer door she emphatically jumped in. She was ready to come home.

Not in photos but very active during the process was Dr. Chase Kohne (Equine intern who admitted Ladyhawke that first night with Dr. Rothschild), Dr. Melissa Hines (Equine Internal Medicine senior clinician), Molly Loiza (Equine Medicine technician), and the Anesthesia crew (for when Lady was upside down during dystocia).

We thank you all!

