

Below is a Document I used to provide as a handout for the Judges clinics I taught at one time in my career.

It may well still be of some value to those that are in the market of purchasing a horse or those looking to create a breeding operation of quality horses.

The show world has changed considerably so I don't know how much of this is still recognized or ruled on in today's arenas.

Liz



Unsoundness and Blemishes in Horses

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As a judge of horses in any show arena only those that are sound or serviceably sound should be considered for placement be it in performance or conformation.

A Sound Horse

A horse without any pathological deviations from the idea. Very few horses are free from some sort of unsoundness.

The Serviceably Sound Horse

A horse in which any pathological deviations present do not interfere with serviceability for work intended.

Example: small splint, small wind puff

Unsound Horse

When Pathological deviations interfere with a horses ability to do work.

Unsoundness may be:

1. Acquired or
2. Hereditary

Hereditary unsoundness should be cause for elimination in conformation judging.

Acquired unsoundness that interferes with serviceability should be cause for disqualification in conformation judging.

Blemish

A mark on the skin from an injury or cut, which does not interfere with a horse's ability to work in a serviceably sound manner.

May be scrape, scar, white hairs growth from an injury.

Note: This does not include scars in pastren area that indicate violation of the scar rule of the Horse Protection Act.

Common Unsoundness in Horses

Head:

1. **Blindness:** Blindness, whether acquired or hereditary, in one or both eyes is reason for disqualification.
2. **Periodic opthalmia or moon blindness:** Cloudiness of the eye, which comes and goes. Lesser flaw than complete blindness but should not be placed.
3. **Feather:** Small white scar on the cornea of the eye. A blemish than unsoundness unless it interferes with vision.
4. **Cataract:** Cloudy growth over the cornea of the eye may be heredity or acquired. Since this limits vision and serviceability, must be severely penalized.
5. **Parrot Mouth:** Overbite of the top teeth over the bottom, due to short under jaw. A hereditary unsoundness that should be cause for disqualification in conformation judging.
6. **Undershot jaw or monkey mouth:** Under bite of the bottom teeth over the top teeth, due to a long under jaw .A hereditary unsoundness that should be a disqualification in conformation judging.
7. **Paralysis of the lips:** Acquired, untreatable unsoundness in which the lips are slack. Condition interferes with horse's ability to eat and may affect serviceability.
8. **Poll Evil:** Inflamed condition of the poll, an acquired, treatable unsoundness.

Withers and Shoulders:

1. **Fistulous withers:** Inflammation and swelling of the withers, acquired treatable unsoundness.
2. **Sweeney:** Depression in the shoulders due to atrophied muscle. Acquired, untreatable unsoundness that affects serviceability.

Back and Spine:

1. **Sway back or Lordosis:** Acquired or hereditary unsoundness which the back sags to a concave curve between withers and hip. If sever enough, will affect serviceability. To be penalized in conformation judging.
2. **Hunters Bump, rackers bump, pacers bump:** Enlarged hard ossification of the back generally at the highest point of the croup. An Acquired unsoundness of the lumbar/sacral area that may interfere with serviceability.

Front Legs

1. **Shoe boil/capped elbow:** Fibrous enlargement of the point of the elbow. Acquired unsoundness which may or may not interfere with serviceability.
2. **Jumpers Knee:** Soft, movable enlargement or swelling on the front of the knee. Acquired unsoundness that may or may not interfere with serviceability.
3. **Broken Knee:** Hard bony enlargement on the front of the knee. Acquired unsoundness which reduces serviceability and is a serious defect.
4. **Buck Knee:** Acquired unsoundness in which the knee is maintained permanently flexed. May be injury of knee, or to the flexor tendons. Reduces serviceability.
5. **Bowed Tendon:** Acquired unsoundness characterized by a chronic thickening of the tendons in the cannon region. Can be high near the knee or low near the fetlock. A serious defect thwart reduces serviceability.
6. **Bucked Shin:** Acquired unsoundness in which there is a bony enlargement on the front of the cannon bone. In a healed state, may or may not affect serviceability.
7. **Splint:** Bony enlargement along the cannon bone. May be high, low, forward, back. Acquired unsoundness that may or may not interfere with serviceability.
8. **Windpuffs:** Soft swelling of the fetlock joint, caused by enlargement of the synovial bursa. Acquired unsoundness that does not generally affect serviceability.
9. **Enlarged sesamoids:** Bony enlargement of the back of the fetlock joint. Acquired unsoundness that often results in lameness. To be severely penalized in conformation judging.
10. **Ringbone:** Acquired unsoundness characterized by bony enlargements on the pastern bone. Can be high or low. Low articular ringbone is always a cause of lameness. High ringbone may not result in lameness immediately. Either type will affect serviceability and must be severely penalized in conformation judging.

11. **Sidebone:** Acquired unsoundness characterized by ossification of cartilage and bulging of the coronary band and hoof wall on one side of the pastern.
Usually results in lameness and must be severely penalized in conformation judging.
12. **Quarter crack, toe crack:** Acquired and treatable in most cases. Unsoundness of hooves and most often seen in front hooves. May result in lameness and affect serviceability.
13. **Club foot:** Acquired or hereditary unsoundness which the hoof appears abnormally upright at the heel with a short upright pastern. Usually in one front hoof but can be seen in both front hooves. A serious defect and should be cause for disqualification in conformation judging.

Body Area

1. **Hernia:** Congenital or acquired condition in which is a gap in the abdominal wall in which some organ may protrude under the skin in a pouch. Most often in the area of the umbilicus. May or may not affect serviceability.
2. **Cryochid:** In a stallion or ungelded colt, presence of only one descended testicle. Serious hereditary defect. Cause for disqualification in conformation judging.

Hind Legs

1. **Knocked down hip:** Acquired unsoundness which the point of the hip has been fractured, giving the hip an uneven appearance from behind. Affects serviceability and is cause for disqualification in conformation judging.
2. **Gonitis, stifle enlargement or sticking:** Acquired or hereditary unsoundness which the structures surrounding the stifle joint are swollen surrounding the stifle. A horse can tend to drag the hind toe or a stickiness affect in the hind leg when advancing forward Also can result in a stifled condition which the stifle inadvertently locks the stifle joint. Also known as "upward fixation of the patella". Affects serviceability and should be cause for disqualification in conformation judging.
3. **Stringhalt:** Acquired or inherited unsoundness which the horse takes spasmodic, jerking steps at the hock. May or may not affect serviceability.
4. **Capped Hock:** Acquired unsoundness which the back of the hock is permanently enlarged. May or may not affect serviceability depending of severity.
5. **Bone or Jack spavin:** Acquired unsoundness which bony enlargement at the lower inside of the hock as it attaches to the cannon bone. May or may not show immediate lameness. Spavin always limits serviceability and should be cause for disqualification in conformation judging.
6. **Bog spavin:** Soft filling or swelling on the front of the hock joint. Acquired but often treatable condition. Unsoundness is possible which can affect serviceability.
7. **Thoroughpin:** Puffiness or bulging in the web of the hock, seen from the side. Acquired unsoundness which may or may not affect serviceability.
8. **Curb:** Acquired unsoundness which a chronic thickening at the lower back edge of the hock as it attaches to the cannon bone. May or may not affect serviceability.
9. **Splints:** Splints can occur in the hind legs alongside the cannon bone, more often on the inside. Acquired unsoundness that may or may not affect serviceability.
10. **Cocked ankles:** Stands with the fetlocks bent forward. Can occur in hind or front legs. Generally affects serviceability in which the horse lacks ability to move freely in the fetlock.