

Points of the Draft Horse.

Discussing the points of the draft horse, in his excellent bulletin on the "Principles and Practice of Horse-breeding," Dr. A. S. Alexander, of the Wisconsin Experiment Station, treats in a very lucid way of a number of common unsoundnesses, saying, in part:

Ringbones are deposits of superfluous, granular bone at the upper, middle or lower portions of the pastern bone, and in aggravated cases cause lameness and involve and interfere with the proper action of the fetlock joint above or with the joint between the lower end of the pastern bone and upper part of the coronet bone, at juncture of horn of hoof and hair of hoof-head. They give a bulging appearance to the part of the bone affected, and have the feel of bone, and constitute unsoundness. They affect the pastern and coronet bones of both fore and hind feet.

Sidebones are located at the quarters, near the heels, at the juncture of the hair and hoof. They are due to the lateral cartilages (elastic plates) at these parts changing to bone (ossifying). When present, they may be detected as prominent, hard, bony masses protruding above the hoof at the

hoof-head downward, and prominent projecting growths at the toes, indicating chronic founder (laminitis). The color of the hoof is of little importance, so long as the hoof is sound, fully developed, healthy and properly formed. The hoof is a continuation of the skin of the leg, and takes its color from that of the skin of the coronet and pastern. Dark horn is, however, popular with many horsemen. The hoof-head should be prominent, heels wide, strong, not too close to the ground. The sole should be slightly concave, not markedly convex or flat; the frog large, healthy, elastic, free from deep cleft, bars prominent. Small, brittle, flat, weak, low-heeled, or great spongy, soft, brittle feet, as well as those that are notably unsound, should be avoided in selecting breeding horses.

Chest.—The chest should be of sufficient size, depth and width to give ample capacity for accommodation and free action of the lungs and heart. Large girth back of the elbows generally indicates such capacity, endurance, vigor and easy-keeping qualities. The reverse conformation is objectionable in all horses. Great width of chest, with the fore legs set too far out, causes rolling motion, and is objectionable. Width of chest should be accompanied by properly-laid shoulders, arms and

cross-bred descendants. In draft horses, the very steep, drooping croup, probably traces to the old black horse of Flanders. It is highly objectionable, as it allows less space for the attachment of the powerful muscles of the hind quarters, and is very often associated with slouch action of the hind legs, which are advanced too far under the body when in motion. The amount of muscle upon the croup is, however, of even more importance than the degree of slope of the part. Great development of muscle in every direction is absolutely necessary at this part of the frame in every draft horse, and the same statement applies to the thighs and quarters, which should be similarly well supplied with muscle. The tail should be well set and carried, strong, well haired, free from sores, and without tumors (melanosis) on under side and about anus.

Stiffes.—These joints should be strong, thick with muscle, free from dropsical swellings, showing plain indentations above and below the patella (knee cap), and properly set, so that they are neither too close nor too far from the body when resting or in motion.

Gaskins.—What has been said of the forearm applies here, but in examining this part (second thigh) care should be taken to determine that



x A Prominent Sidebone.



Sound Hoof, showing Wide Heels, Prominent Frog and Strong Bars.



Unsound Hock Joint, showing Large Curb.

sides of the feet, towards the heels, and bulging the hoof under the part involved. When sidebones are absent, the cartilages can be grasped between the fingers and thumb, and moved or bent from side to side, as if they were formed of stout rubber. Sidebones are common in draft horses, and constitute unsoundness. Horses having very wide, flat, low-heeled hoofs are most subject to this unsoundness. Stallions or mares afflicted with sidebones or ringbones should not be used for breeding purposes, unless the unsoundness is confined to a single foot, and known to be the result of a barb-wire cut or other injury. In the case of public-service stallions, a qualified veterinarian should always be employed to decide whether sidebones or ringbones are present, and he will best be able to judge whether or not the condition discovered constitutes hereditary unsoundness.

Splints are abnormal bony excrescences formed at the sides of the cannon bones where the small splint bones (metacarpals in front, metatarsals in

elbows, so that the action is unimpeded and straight.

Ribs.—It is highly important that the ribs should be well sprung, so that the digestive organs shall have ample room. A round, deep barrel bespeaks good digestive capacity, and means strength of constitution and ability for hard work if the body is deeply and evenly clothed with muscle. The last ribs should be deep and come close up to the hip, constituting a close coupling. With this conformation goes a low-carried flank, indicating an easy keeper. The reverse—long, weak, washy, shallow coupling—indicates poor keeping qualities, tendency to scour, constitutional debility.

Back.—The draft horse should have a short, wide, thick, strong, straight back, giving room for attachment of large, powerful muscles, and given its size and shape not only by spring of rib, but development of the muscles alluded to.

"thoroughpins" are not present, as fluctuating enlargements, noticeable at each side and running under the large tendon just above the point of the hock joint.

Hocks.—The draft horse has no more important joint than this, and it is commonly the seat of many diseases or weaknesses. The hock (not "hind knee") has to stand a tremendous amount of strain, and should consequently be large in every direction, clean in all respects, free from meatiness, puffs, gumminess, bony growths, such as spavins and soft distensions termed "bog" or "blood" spavins. The hock joint should look and feel hard, firm, its constituent bones severally detectable under the fingers, its skin fine, and its tendons and ligaments prominent, and free from connective tissue. A "coarse" hock, given that appearance by the size and prominence of its bones, is the best hock, so long as it is absolutely free from all the other features of coarseness and un-



x Splints. Bad "Quarter-crack" on Right Foot.



Unsound Hock Joint, showing Bog Spavin, etc.



"Wind-galls" and Thickened Back Tendons.

hind, leg) overlie the large cannon bones. They are objectionable, cause lameness when forming, are often an indication of light bone, but ordinarily should not be deemed to constitute hereditary or transmissible unsoundness. If found on all legs, of large size, and associated with other bony growths (exostoses), they may indicate a hereditary susceptibility to such bony growths (they diathesis), and the animal should be rejected as unsound for breeding purposes.

Feet.—The hoofs should be of good size, sound in texture, waxy and healthy in appearance, free from wrinkles, ridges, cracks proceeding from the

loins.—What has been said of the back equally applies to the loins. In stallions, a weak, low back will be apt to grow more pronounced in its weakness with age and service. In mares the back is naturally longer, but should be strongly supported at the coupling and deep in flank.

Hips.—There is great diversity of form in the hips of draft horses. On general principles, it may be said that all drafters should have wide, strong-muscled hips, free from prominent angles, smooth, and neither too straight nor too drooping in croup. The straight or level croup is characteristic of the thoroughbred horse and his

soundness. It should be wide and deep, viewed from the front and side. Its point should be prominent, clean and sharp, and the tendons under it straight, distinct, but free from bulging.

Bone spavin is a deposit of superfluous, granular bone upon the surface of or among the small bones on the inner, lower aspect of the hock joint, or may involve the true joint higher up, or appear upon the outer aspect of the joint, high or low. The former is, however, the common seat of bone spavin.

Bog and so-called "blood" spavins are identical, and are soft, fluctuating distensions of the