

THE HORSE.

Action in Horses.

By WHIP.

CERTAIN peculiarities of action are desirable in each class of horses, and certain defects undesirable and objectionable in any breed or class. The general type and conformation of a horse does not in all cases indicate the degree of action he possesses, but in most cases it indicates his general style of action. Horses that naturally hold high heads, have good length of neck, well-developed muscles especially along that portion of the neck just above the jugular vein, a fairly oblique shoulder, fore-arms long and set well under the chest, have, as a rule, free and extensive shoulder action, and in many cases high knee action; while those of the opposite conformation are usually deficient in shoulder action, although the knee action may be high; but in order to get the desirable action in the heavy horse he must have excessive shoulder as well as knee action. A horse that gets his knees high, but is apparently cramped or tied in his shoulders is undesirable for, while he is apparently expending considerable energy and pounding the ground, he has little speed or length of tread; in other words "he does not get away."

The manner of attachment of the fore legs to the chest has marked influence upon action. Those with fore-arms quite close together are deficient in width of chest, and usually go with legs and feet too close, also are apparently cramped in action from want of muscular development, while those whose fore-arms are very wide apart, with a very broad and usually rather flat breast between them, the limbs apparently as though they were attached to the outside of the chest, usually have a clumsy, awkward, shuffling way of going. While the muscular development in this case appears at first sight to be great, a close observation will reveal the opposite, and the fact that the limbs are not placed well under the centre of gravity. When we use the word "chest" we, of course, mean that part of the anatomy of which the ribs are the lateral boundaries. The term is often used to express the space between the fore-arms, this portion is properly called "the breast."

The direction of the fore limb from the elbow to the foot influences action to a marked degree. In order that action may be true, the limb should be perpendicular, a plumb line extending from the centre of the elbow joint should reach the ground directly behind the centre between the heels. Horses whose limbs deviate downward and outward from the elbows cannot have true action, but go wide and ungainly with the fore feet, while those with the opposite direction of the limbs have too close action. The manner in which a horse stands on his fore feet, provided the limbs take the proper direction from above downwards, will, with few if any exceptions, indicate the line of foot action. In order that this may be true and straight a horse should stand with his fore feet straight forward and backward. A straight line commencing at the centre of each toe should pass backward through the clefts of their respective frogs, and continue backward at exactly the distance apart as that at which they started. A horse that when standing turns his toes outward, called "out-toed" or "soldier-footed" will, when in motion, roll his feet, that is each foot will roll or wind itself toward the opposite limb, and in many cases strike the fetlock, cannon, knee or above the knee, according to the height of action. This is called "speedy stroke," but it is no indication that the horse is speedy. This peculiarity of conformation and action may be due entirely to the feet or to a deviation of the limb from the fetlock down. The latter form is the most undesirable and usually indicates weakness. From whatever cause it arises, the defect is very hard to correct. Various methods of shoeing have been tried with indifferent results. In a horse that strikes his knee it can often be rectified by shoeing very light, in order that action may be lower. In some cases when a horse strikes lower down, relief can be given by using a shoe heavy on the inside of the foot, but in most cases little can be done to rectify the defect, as it is very hard to alter action due to mal-conformation. What will be effective in some cases fails in others, and usually the only safe plan is either drive slowly or wear boots.

A horse that stands with his toes turned inward is said to be "in-toed" or "squaw-footed," and when in motion will paddle or dish, that is his feet will wind outward, he goes wide, his foot describes a segment of a circle outward at each step. This defect, while undesirable, does not tend to injury. While perfectly straight and true front action is desirable, it is seldom seen, especially in horses with excessive action. We seldom notice perfection in this respect. It will be noticed that the fore feet of most high actors deviate a little one way or the other. Some go practically straight when going fast, but either roll or paddle a little at a

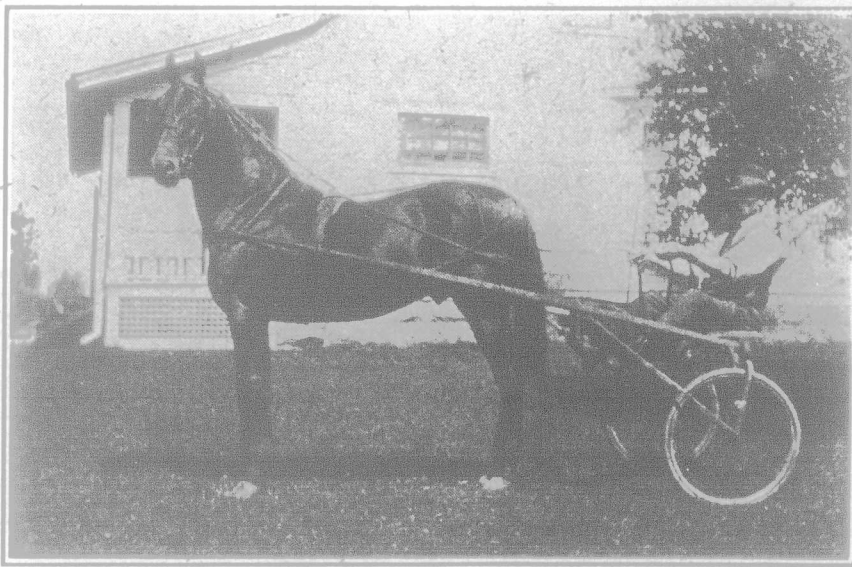
slower gait, and vice versa, even though the defect may not be suspected when the animal is standing. Horses whose limbs deviate outward considerably and stand "soldier-toed," sometimes, when viewed from the front while in motion, appear to go almost straight. They stand with feet wide apart, and when in action the rolling motion of the feet fetches them sufficiently inward to give them almost the proper appearance, without striking the opposite limb, but just before reaching the ground the toe again turns outward and the foot is planted wide. On the other hand, a horse whose limbs deviate inward and whose toes turn inward, will not show the paddling gait as marked as one whose limbs are perpendicular. The true fore action is when the foot is lifted from the ground without the slightest deviation latterly, and brought forward in a straight line.



Craigie Masterstroke.

First aged Clydesdale stallion at the Highland, 1920.

Another defect in action is "forging," that is the striking of the shoe of the fore foot with that of the hind foot of the same side. This makes a click, click, click, that to a horseman is very annoying. Some horses forge while jogging, but not when going faster. Others forge at mostly all gaits faster than a walk. The tendency to forge is indicated by a very short back, especially what is called a "roach back," where there is quite a noticeable elevation in the region of the loins. While all short or roach-backed horses do not forge, we seldom see a forger that is not of this conformation. The defect can often be remedied by shoeing heavy and rather short at the heels in front, and light behind, or by shoeing with tips or half shoes in front. While too short a back is undesirable, too long a back is probably worse; the former may indicate defective action, but indicates strength, while the latter indicates not only weakness and want of constitution but also defective action. A very long-backed horse has usually slovenly, awkward action. It must always be remembered that, while certain conformation indicates certain action, there are always exceptions, and it is necessary in all cases to see the horse in motion to verify our suspicious or discover our mistake. In some cases



Captain Aubrey 2.07 1/4.

This splendid Standard Bred stallion, by Peter the Great, is owned by the Nova Scotia Agricultural College. He has sired at least three in the 2.10 class.

from reasons that we cannot explain, well-marked indications are at fault. A short, drooping croup indicates defective, stilty hind action, with lack of flexion in nearly all joints. When the croup is of fair length too much obliquity is not so serious.

The conformation of the hocks is material. A horse should stand and move with his hocks fairly close together, the points rather closer than the anterior surfaces, that is, with a slight deviation outward. What is called "cow-hocked," that is, with the hocks quite close, especially the points and the limbs deviating downward and outward, and the feet planted wide, usually causes ungainly and a rather shuffling gait,

while the opposite, the hocks wide and feet close together and somewhat in-toed indicates a cross action in the planting of each foot towards the opposite fore foot. A well-marked angle at the point of the hock indicates good hock action, while a poorly marked angle indicates the reverse. The well-formed horse stands with his hind feet fairly close together, and the toes turned slightly outward. Too much of this deviation is undesirable as it usually indicates too wide action, and the reverse indicates too close action, hence a tendency to "interfere," or strike the opposite fetlock with the shoe of each foot.

Wide action behind is undesirable in most classes. It is allowable to a limited degree in the Standard Bred or Roadster, but cannot be tolerated in the heavy harness or carriage horse. We often notice road horses whose conformation is nearly or quite correct, who, when going fast go wide behind, but even in this class closer action is now generally preferred. Interfering is generally hard to correct. In many cases colts interfere when first shod or worked, but cease when they become stronger and accustomed to shoes. In other cases the defect continues, and while various devices and methods of shoeing have been tried, the manner of shoeing depends greatly upon the particular foot, or shoe that strikes. There are many cases that cannot be rectified by shoeing, and the only means of protection is the wearing of boots.

Feeding and Fitting Show Horses.

By DR. GEORGE H. CONN.

THIS is in itself a subject that would require many pages to discuss intelligently, but there are several fundamentals that can be mentioned briefly that may be of interest to those who have not had a great deal of experience in showing horses. First of all every one who is intending to show horses should keep in mind always that while it requires first of all an animal with show-yard qualities if you would fit it successfully, it also requires as much from the one who fits it and shows it. Many an animal has won in a show-ring because the man who fitted it and handled it was an expert.

The first requirement of a show horse should always be soundness. Never should an unsound animal be shown for if a competent judge is in the ring the animal will be disqualified and sent out. The next requirement is that the animal shall be in condition; that does not only mean that he should be well-fleshed, but that the horse should also have a healthy looking, smooth, glossy coat, as well as plenty of lustre in the eye and plenty of life. A horse that has not the bloom that many men like in the ring is very seriously discriminated against. There are several reasons why this happens. In the first place animals that are in this condition never show at their best; there is something lacking and to the experienced judge this is very noticeable. We have seen animals in the ring that were refused a place more on this one point than any other one thing. Such horses never show their characteristic action, which is, with many judges, one of the most important requirements of a successful show horse of almost any kind.

Men who are in close touch with the horse shows year after year know quite well that many horses lose their bloom much sooner than do other animals; this is often due to the care and feeding that they get. Too much stuffing of a horse to get it ready for a show is in most cases very likely to send your horse into the ring, lacking the ability to make a good appearance or a favorable impression upon the judge.

Horses should above all other things be well mannered for no horse can be shown to the best possible advantage which has not learned to do those things that the attendant must expect of the horse in the ring. It reveals a lack of preparation when a horse enters the ring that must be pushed and shoved around and fussed with in order to get it to maintain a given position, while the horse that is well trained will after placed in a pose maintain this position for some little time. Much more time could profitably be spent with many horses in getting them accustomed to being handled and to accustom them to the confusion and noise that they must encounter while being shown. A horse that is taken into the ring and has his mind on every thing but the groom is not at all well schooled. The well-mannered horse will not be taking in all the scenery and watching everything that is going on, but will stand there watching every move that his groom is making. Always teach your horse to keep his attention on you and it will save you much worry when in the ring with him. Nothing detracts as much from the showing of a horse in high class company as the mere fact that it cannot keep its attention centered on the business at hand and must observe everything happening about it.

It has been the practice with some individuals when getting a horse ready for a show campaign, to exercise it only when weather conditions are favorable; usually during the cool part of the day. There is some danger in doing this as it frequently happens in the showing that considerable time is required to make the awards, and a candidate that is soft and washy may enter the contest looking good and possibly has a very good chance of winning but if enough time is consumed in making the decision, the exertion will get the animal in such a heated condition and will produce enough changes in the horse to lose it the decision. Animals which are exercised sufficiently so that their muscles are hard and firm will stand up under a grueling test, which is often necessary where a hard class is being placed. Do not be afraid of giving them plenty of exercise and do not be caught with a horse that is not in good enough condition to stand a hard show.

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