

American Morgan Horse Association, Inc.

Morgan Youth Program Judging Guide



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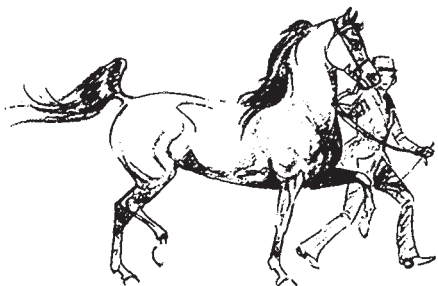
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MORGAN YOUTH PROGRAM JUDGING GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to help the beginner learn to develop successful Morgan horse judging skills.



Judging horses is truly an art. It can only be mastered with practice and patience.

There are several characteristics of a good judge. *They include:*

1. Knowledge of the breed's standard of perfection and undesirable traits.
2. Deductive reasoning skills.
3. Keen powers of observation.
4. Confidence in class placements.
5. Articulation skills to defend class placements.
6. The ability to weigh differences.
7. Mental and physical stamina needed to make decisions.
8. Honesty and accuracy.

Skill in horse judging can be achieved regardless of age or ability to ride, drive, or handle horses. For those who are active with horses, judging offers the challenge of learning new skills and

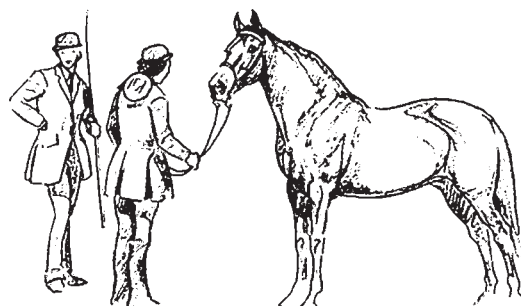
helps increase the ability to select horses with desired traits.

The following skills can be learned through judging:

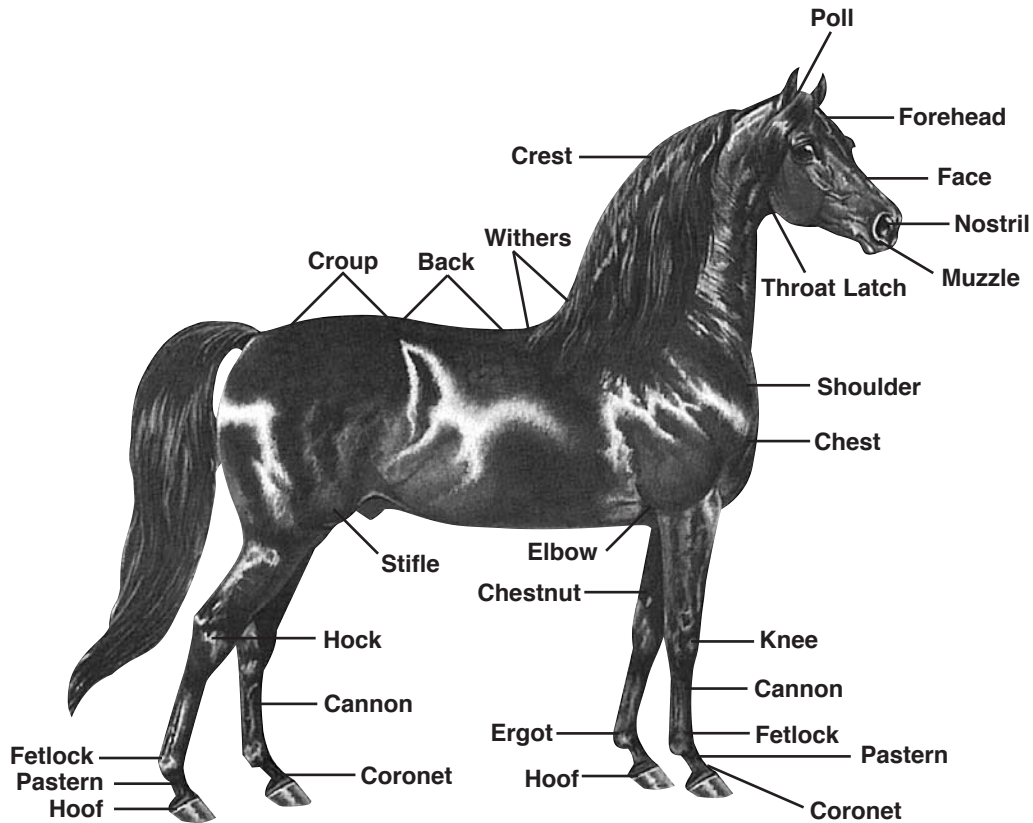
1. Understanding the parts of the horse, their relationships, functions, and abnormalities.
2. Evaluation of the horse in motion.
3. Ways to quickly and completely evaluate a horse and weigh differences between horses.
4. Methods of taking notes in an organized manner.
5. Public speaking and communication skills.

The skills attained from judging horses can carry over into other facets of life. Judging helps people improve confidence and poise, develop reasoning skills, and learn about sportsmanship. The Morgan breed as a whole also benefits from judging. Breed improvement will occur as people are trained to select and breed for the horses who come closest to the standard of perfection (as described in *The Morgan Horse Judging Standards*).

It is the goal of the Morgan Youth Judging Guide to enable Morgan enthusiasts to differentiate between horses and learn what qualities make one animal superior to others in a class.



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ANATOMY OF THE HORSE

The first thing you must learn in judging is the name and location of the various parts of the horse. The arrangement of the parts is called conformation. The **conformation** of a horse refers to the physical placement and interrelationship of muscle, bone, and other body tissue. Conformation will directly effect the manner in which the horse will be able to perform certain tasks.

It is necessary to understand conformation so that you will know what you are looking at and will be able to tell someone else what you have seen. Study the diagram above to learn the parts of the horse. This will serve as the foundation for all your judging skills.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MORGAN HORSE

Once you have mastered the anatomy of the horse, you can move on to evaluating horses. *The following points are to be considered when judging Morgan horses:*

1. Morgan Type
2. Legs and Feet
3. Gender Characteristics
4. Quality
5. Head and Neck Motion
6. Body Character

MORGAN TYPE

Morgan type denotes all the qualities which distinguish the Morgan from other breeds. True Morgan type is exemplified by the stallion, mare, and gelding pictures on the next page. Height ranges from 14.1 to 15.2 hands, but some individuals may be slightly over or under. Weight ranges from 900 to 1100 pounds. The Morgan is distinctive for its stamina and vigor, willing personality and eagerness, and strong natural way of going.

GENDER CHARACTERISTICS

The stallion has a masculine appearance. The mare is feminine and more refined, particularly in the head, neck, and size of bone. The mare may have a slightly longer ear and barrel than the stallion. The gelding often retains some masculine character, but should be more refined and tractable than the stallion. No matter what gender, each animal should be physically developed for their age.

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HEAD AND NECK

The ears are small and tapered. The mare may have a slightly longer ear. Large eyes are set across a broad forehead. The face may be straight or slightly dished and should taper into a small, well-shaped muzzle. The nostrils are large, and the lips are firm. The jaw is chiseled and blends into a deep fine throat latch. The neck sets atop the back and attaches to a well laid-back shoulder. A straight shoulder is a severe fault in Morgans because it shortens their naturally long stride, as well as interfering with proper neck set. The neck should be of sufficient length to allow the muzzle to be above the height of the withers. The neck should have substance without appearing coarse. The stallion may have more crest.

BODY

The chest is deep and wide and has a large volume of defined musculing. The topline is smooth. Withers and croup are the same height. The back is short and straight. The croup is long with little downward slope. The tail is set high. The barrel is deep with well-sprung ribs. The mare may have a slightly longer barrel. This is a functional adaptation so she will have room to carry a foal. The underline is long relative to the topline. The hindquarters are deep and well-defined, with ample length from hip to stifle.

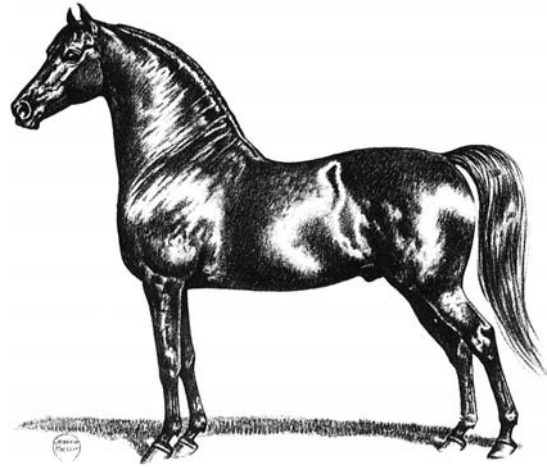
LEGS AND FEET

The forelegs are set slightly forward on the body. This is a result of the deeply angled shoulder. Legs are straight and clean. The forearm is longer than the cannon. The forearm ties in straight at the knee, and tendons are visible from the side. The hocks are properly angled so the cannons are perpendicular to the ground when the hocks and buttocks are in the same vertical plane. The thigh and gaskin should be well-muscled. The gaskin is longer than the cannon. Pasterns are of medium length and slope. Hooves are round, strong, and open at the heel.

QUALITY

The Morgan horse has a neat and well-chiseled head. Hair is fine textured. All bones are clean and flat. Joints and tendons are well defined. The Morgan horse has substance and muscle without appearing coarse or heavy. The body is symmetrical and all parts are proportionally balanced to achieve a pleasant overall picture.

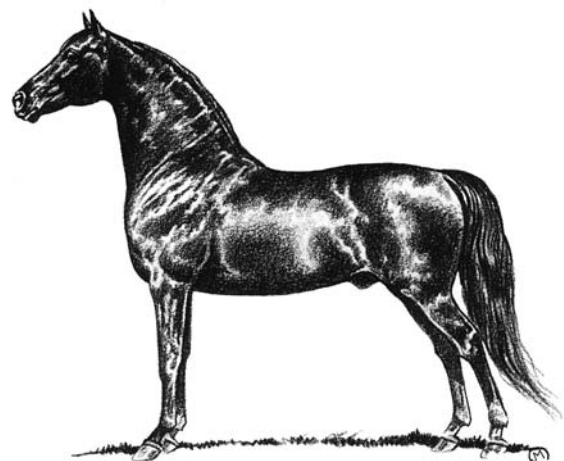
IDEAL MORGANS



Ideal Morgan Stallion



Ideal Morgan Mare



Ideal Morgan Gelding

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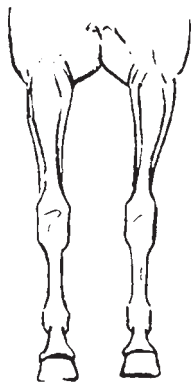
MOTION

The horse must track straight at all gaits. All movement is balanced, springy, and has impulsion. The stride is long at the walk. The walk should be a definite four-beat gait. The two-beat trot is elastic and free moving with flexion at the poll, knees, and hocks. It is imperative that height of action not take precedence over true balanced motion both in front and behind.

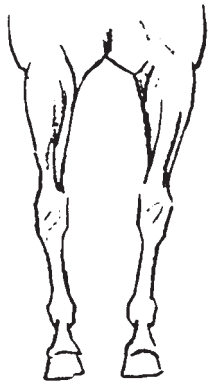
CHARACTER

The Morgan horse has an enthusiastic attitude and an energetic and willing disposition. Stallions may possess additional vigor, but should still be attentive and tractable. Morgans have a stylish and confident appearance. All horses should exhibit good manners in the ring so that they may be properly evaluated.

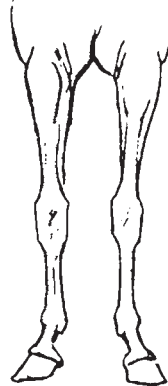
LEG CONSTRUCTION & RESULTING ACTION



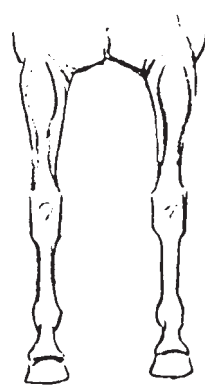
Correct



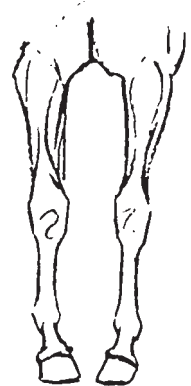
Base Narrow



Toe-Out



Base Wide



Toe-In



Straight



Winging



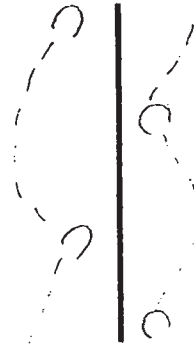
Winging



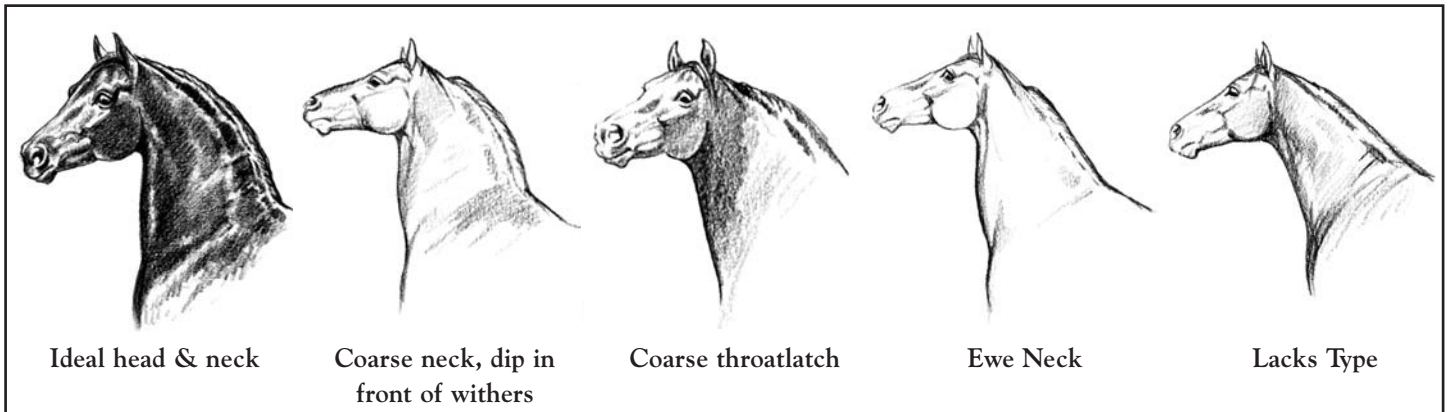
Paddling



Paddling



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OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

When looking at a group of Morgans, you will be comparing their favorable traits and determining which animal comes closest to the Morgan standard of perfection. As you begin judging horses, you will develop your own judging system. It is very important to depend on your own judgment when evaluating horses. You will do this because you must define, in your own mind, what kind of animal you are looking for. Be resigned to the fact that you will never find the PERFECT horse and the horses that place first are not flawless. The key is determining which flaws are the biggest and most important. You will gain more confidence in your decisions as you become more experienced at horse judging.

It is necessary to look at the big picture when judging. Notice big faults first, because they are the ones which will most easily divide the class. A poor horse would be one whose faults might include little or no Morgan type, severe problems in motion, or poor proportions. Animals who have severe faults like these would be penalized much heavier than a horse who has a small splint or a small cut.

It is helpful to know that the structure of one body part can influence the structure of another part. Structure can also affect function. *Examples include:*

1. The proportions of the head are a rather accurate index of the body proportions to be expected. Long, narrow heads are com-

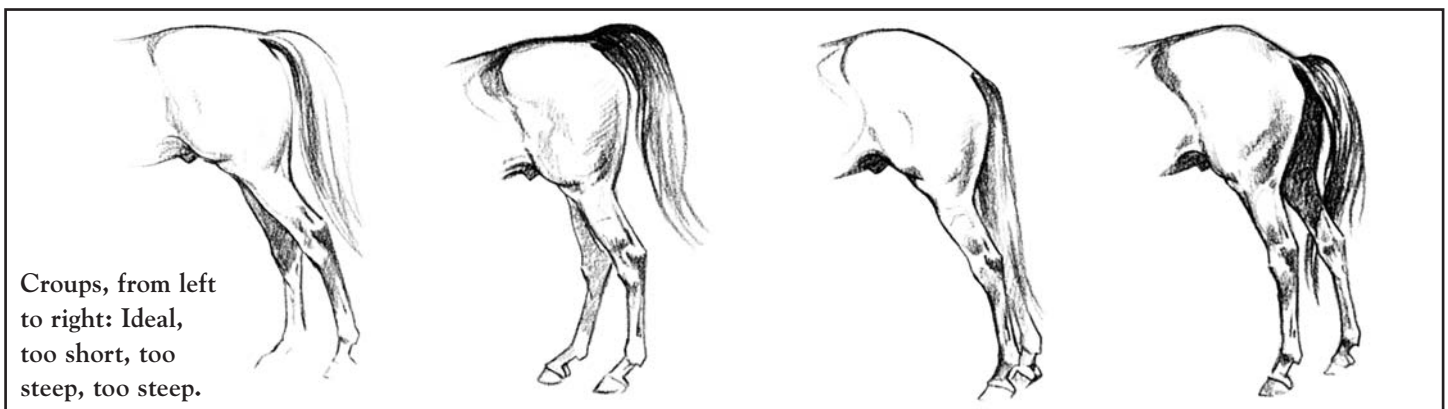
monly associated with long, shallow, narrow bodies.

2. Long, sloping shoulders are correlated with long, sloping pasterns.
3. Likewise, short, straight shoulders are often seen with short, straight pasterns.
4. Long, trim necks and clean throatlatches are associated with balance, agility, and the ability to work off the hocks.
5. Depth of heartgirth and the spring of the rib are correlated with good lung capacity and endurance.

Certain structural features also impact the motion of the horse.

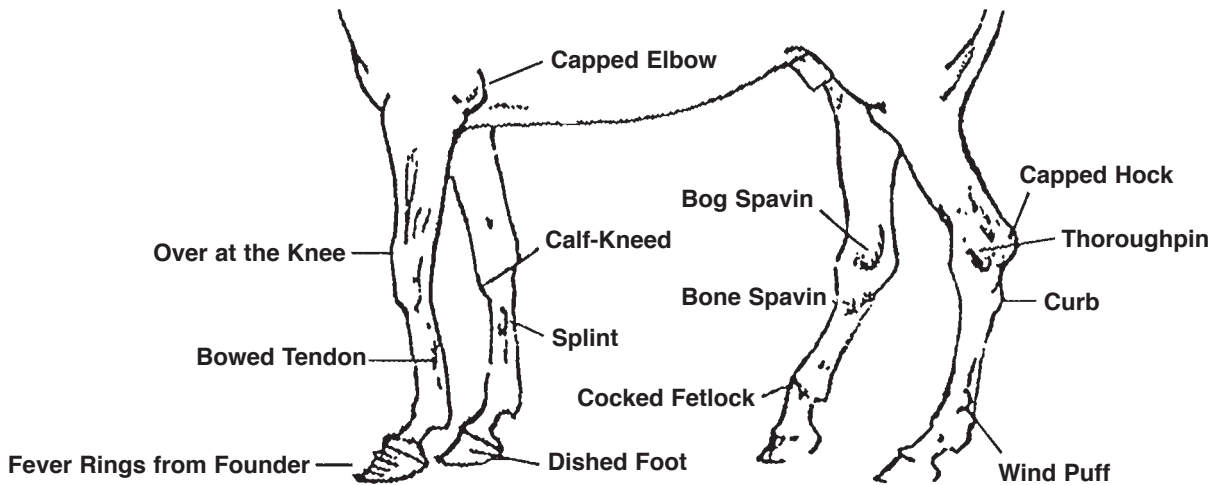
1. Long forearms are correlated with long strides.
2. Horses who stand with their toes straight ahead on their front feet are most likely to express true motion.
3. Sloping shoulders and front pasterns are correlated with a graceful, springy stride.
4. When horses stand with the points of their hocks turned slightly, the hind toes turned slightly out, and hind cannons in parallel plans, the hocks will be carried closer together instead of rotating wide apart. This position is associated with collected action rather than spraddled action behind. A more pronounced turning inward of the hocks (cow hocks) is undesirable.

When you observe horses with any of the above conformational traits, check to see if, when the animal is in motion, he moves as you would predict.



Croups, from left to right: Ideal, too short, too steep, too steep.

BLEMISHES, FAULTS & UNSOUNDNESSES



COMMON FAULTS

Unsoundnesses and blemishes detract from the overall perfection of an individual. Being able to define and recognize them is an important part of horse judging.

An **unsoundness** is any deviation in structure or function which interferes with the intended use of the animal.

A **blemish** is something which may detract from the overall attractiveness of an animal but does not affect soundness. Blemishes are not transmissible to future generations. Blemishes can generally be referred to as the “battle scars” which horses may acquire during day-to-day activities. Examples of blemishes are: warts, rope burns, scars and wire cuts.

Blemishes and unsoundnesses combine to form a category called “fault.”

Some faults are easy to recognize while others are more difficult. Viewing a variety of horses is the best way to make yourself familiar with faults. To improve your knowledge, ask an experienced horse person to show you some of the unsoundnesses listed below. Use the list below to see how many faults you can describe. For those you are unfamiliar with faults, refer to the “Terminology” section for definitions.

HEAD

Plain Head
Roman Nose
Long Ears
Parrot Mouth
Small Nostrils
Ears Set too Far Forward
Lack of Gender Characteristics

Lop Ears
Pig Eyes
Vision Impairment
Coarse Muzzle
Broken Wind
Narrow, Long Head

NECK

Fallen Crest
Coarse Throatlatch
Short Neck

Ewe Neck
Upside Down Neck
Neck Lacks Arch

WITHERS

Mutton Withers
Dip in Front

Low
Coarseness on Sides

SHOULDERS

Short
Too Loosely Attached

Straight

BODY

Low Back
Long Back
Weak Coupling
Hollow Chest

Roach Back
Flat Ribbed
Shallow Body
Lack of Depth

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CROUP

High	Long
Short	Insufficient Muscling
Steep	Low Tail Set

LEGS AND FEET

Capped Elbow	Bone Spavin
Stringhalt	Bog Spavin
Sickle Hocks	Cow Hocks
Coarse Hocks	Capped Hocks
Over at the Knees	Thoroughpin
Curb	Bowed Tendons
Off-set Knees	Calf-kneed
Base Narrow	Base Wide
Bow Legged	Long Cannons
Splints	Coarse Bones
Round Bones	Wind Puffs
Ringbone	Sidebone
Straight Pasterns	Short Pasterns
Dished Feet	Contracted Heels
Tied in Below the Knees	

ADDITIONAL FAULTS

Rough Coat	Poorly Conditioned
Fat	Mane/Tail Rubbed Out

ATTENDING A JUDGING CONTEST

When you are confident with the anatomy, breed type, and imperfections of the Morgan horse, you are ready to try your first judging contest. A judging contest will apply all of your knowledge as you judge each class of four horses.

The contest can have one or many classes, depending on the size of the contest. In-hand classes are strongly emphasized at Morgan Youth judging contests, and they will test your knowledge of the Morgan Horse Judging Standards. If there are several classes to be judged, performance classes may be included as well.

When you first arrive at the judging contest, you must register and learn the day's schedule. When it is time to begin judging a class, arrive at the in-gate promptly. Depending on the contest, you may judge individually or as a team. Points are earned based on how closely your placing matches the placing of the official contest judge. When the class is over, you will be asked to turn in your placing card.

If oral reasons are required in a class, time will be allotted for you to put your notes in order and prepare to present your reasons.

The oral reasons phase of the contest challenges you to defend the placing you gave the class.

When competing at a judging contest, you must remember that you are representing your team, club, or barn, and, in all-breed events, the Morgan breed. You should always be courteous and polite to the officials of the contest as well as the other competitors. Conferring with other contestants is not allowed during the contest, unless permission is given. It is important to dress appropriately, especially when presenting your oral reasons. Do not wear your barn boots and riding clothes or any clothing item which reveals your identity or club affiliation.

As you begin judging in-hand classes, remember how to identify the horses in the class. The four horses are numbered one to four from left to right. There may be times when the horses are out of order, so check and recheck the handler's number as you judge. Each horse will be shown to you from the front, side, and rear. You should stand approximately 25-30 feet away in order to get a good view of the whole class. After the initial viewing, the horses are shown at a walk and trot, so you can evaluate their motion. Finally, a closer inspection is allowed. Use this time to settle any doubts you may have about your placing and look for faults you could not observe from a distance.

The following characteristics should be thought about when looking at each horse in the In-Hand class:

SIDE VIEW

Balance	Muscling
Gender Traits	Hooves
Bone Quality	Attractiveness
Throatlatch	Head & Neck Set
Slope of Shoulder	Depth of Body
Withers	Slope of Pastern
Underline Length	Set of Leg
Coupling	Hindquarters
Set of Tail	Forearm to Cannon Ratio
Gaskin to Cannon Ratio	Croup Length & Slope
Straightness of Leg	Back Length & Strength

FRONT VIEW

Morgan Type	Quality
Gender Traits of Head	Attractiveness
Eye	Face Length
Ear	Face Shape
Set of Leg	Straightness of Leg

REAR VIEW

Muscling	Width
Set of Tail	Straightness of Leg
Set of Leg	

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IN MOTION

Straightness of Motion	Lameness
Smoothness of Motion	Balance of Motion
Body Carriage	Manners

ON CLOSER INSPECTION

Unsoundnesses	Muscling
Gender Traits of Head	Withers
Quality of Legs/Feet/Hooves	

If you are judging a performance class, each of the four entries will wear their identifying numbers. The class will be judged both ways of the ring, at all gaits appropriate to the class. Horses will line up following rail work and may be inspected more closely as you confirm your placings. More information is given about different class types which you might expect to see when judging Morgans in the **Morgan Class Divisions** section found in this guide.

TAKING NOTES

As you are evaluating the class, a set of notes is very helpful, especially if oral reasons will be required later. A small spiral notebook or clipboard which can be easily carried is best.

The purpose of notes is to help you visually remember the class. Write down your first impressions of the class and how you think you might place them. Look for the big points first, such as overall type, gender characteristics, and major flaws. Make sure that you look at the whole animal, not just a class of necks and legs.

Keep your notes brief. You don't have time to write a novel about each horse. Every minute you spend writing is one less minute you are looking at the horses. Your notes should be organized so that they help you prepare for giving oral reasons. Do not read your notes to the judge, but use them as an aid to help you keep each horse in mind. It may be helpful to write the color or some other characteristic which allows you to visualize each horse. Below is a sample set of notes.

PLACING CARDS

Once you have finished inspecting the horses and are confident in your placings, you must fill out a placing card. There are two types of placing cards. On the first, all possible placing combinations are shown on the placing card. Mark an "X" beside the order which fits your placing of the class. Fill in the breed, class name, and your exhibitor number and name. On the second type of card, you simply fill in the horse number corresponding with the first, second, third, and fourth places, along with the class name and your exhibitor number. (See diagrams)

Placing Card

Class Morgan Mares


Placing 1st 3 2nd 1 3rd 2 4th 4

Signature Your Name
Grade

Placing Reasons Total

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REASONS FOR PLACING	ADMIT OR GRANT	FAULTS
3/1 Balance, shorter coupled, stylish front, sharper withers, correct crop, cleaner legs/locks truer stride.	1/3 Athletic	1/ Lack style & quality, long back, short pasture
1/2 Longer neck, more substance, higher heart, more chest muscles, 1/1 correct front legs more slope-pastern, balanced move	2/1 Spring of rib	2/ Sickle hocked, poor move
2/4 Head-smaller ear, sharper withers, shorter back, level crop, flatter bone, joint definition, short cannon	4/2 Moves closer at locks	4/ Mutton withers, coarse underlines, low back.



**Youth Horse
Judging Contest
Placing Card**

Contestant#: your #

Team: Justin Judges

Class#: 3

Class Name: Morgan Mares

Reasons Class: Yes No

Placing Grade: _____

Reason Grade: _____

Check placing:

1-2-3-4	A	
1-2-4-3	B	
1-3-2-4	C	
1-3-4-2	D	
1-4-2-3	E	
1-4-3-2	F	
2-1-3-4	G	
2-1-4-3	H	
2-3-1-4	I	
2-3-4-1	J	
2-4-1-3	K	
2-4-3-1	L	
3-1-2-4	M	X
3-1-4-2	N	
3-2-1-4	O	
3-2-4-1	P	
3-4-1-2	Q	
3-4-2-1	R	
4-1-2-3	S	
4-1-3-2	T	
4-2-1-3	U	
4-2-3-1	V	
4-3-1-2	W	
4-3-2-1	X	

GIVING ORAL REASONS

You may be required to give oral reasons for a particular class. The purpose of this is to explain and defend your placement of horses in the class. The reasons should be interesting, concise, honest, and accurate. They should be presented in a poised and confident manner.

To present a good set of reasons, you must have an in-depth knowledge of terminology, good notes, confidence and organization.

Good terminology results from knowing the parts of the horse and how they effect the use of the horse. Drill yourself on terminology by listing as many descriptions for each body part as possible, and then checking the lists at the end of this guide. Also, have a clear picture of that body part as you say it. Being able to label a part will help you classify horses more quickly, and improve the quality of your reasons.

A good set of reasons relies on being able to describe important things, like correctness of legs, the angle of shoulder, neck set, etc. Next, you must be able to describe these things briefly but

accurately. When your reasons are done, the person listening should be able to do a rough sketch of the horses by the descriptions you have given.

The complete reasons will have five paragraphs. The first is your introduction: "I place the Morgan mares 4-3-2-1." If there was an obvious top horse, an easy bottom horse, or even if the class was consistent, add to your introduction for emphasis "I place the Morgan Mares 4-3-2-1. There was an outstanding mare to start the class, a close middle pair and an obvious bottom."

The next three paragraphs will be composed of the following sentences: **introduction, topic, furthermore, grant and however.**

The **introduction** sentence introduces the first pair of horses. "In my top pair, I placed 2 over 4 in an easy decision because..."

The next sentence, the **topic**, presents the main reasons for your placing of the first pair. "2 was a typier mare of higher quality." If there was a great deal of difference, describe it with the words 'much' or 'especially.' "2 was a much typier mare of especially high quality."

The **furthermore** sentence is devoted to other big differences. "Furthermore, 2 was longer and more sloping in the shoulder,

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shorter and stronger in her back, deeper through the heart girth, longer and more desirable over the croup and stood on straighter, more correct legs.”

While you describe these things, keep an order in mind so that you don't jump from nose to tail to shoulder, but describe them in an orderly fashion.

The **grant** sentence is used to describe strengths of the horse placing lower in a pair. If the quality of the pair is close, you will use more grants than if there was a great difference between them.

Your complete paragraph for the first pair will read: “In my top pair, I placed 2 over 4 in an easy decision because 2 was a much typier mare of especially high quality. Furthermore, 2 was longer and more sloping in the shoulder, shorter and stronger in the back, deeper through the heart girth, longer and more desirable over the croup, and stood on straighter, more correct legs. I grant that 4 had a more attractive head and had more knee and hock action.”

Once you have presented your first pair, use the same system to describe the second and third place pair and the third and fourth-place pair.

When you prepare your presentation of reasons, make sure your reasons are well organized. You will first introduce the class and the way you placed it. This is followed by the comparison of three pairs of animals: the top, middle, and bottom pair. Reasons should not consist of a description of each animal, but examples of why one horse in a pair placed over another. Concentrate on the most important things which caused you to put one horse over another.

It is crucial that you actually observed the characteristics which you include in your reasons. Accuracy is by far the most important part of giving reasons. It is easy for a judge to spot a set of “canned” reasons which may sound good, but in fact do not fit the particular pair of class. Statements like “The hooves were not polished,” or “This horse seemed happy,” are inappropriate because these phrases do not reference specific faults or attributes. Judging terms you should be familiar with are included later in this section.

Conclude your oral reasons by repeating the class name and your placings to the judge.

PRESENTING REASONS

You should be familiar with your placings so you will not need to rely on your notes. Glance at them if you must, but do not recite them word for word. At your first few judging contests you may need to review your notes more often until you become practiced at remembering what you saw.

Before you begin to present your oral reasons, the reasons judge will offer you the placing card you turned in at the conclusion of the class. At this time, you may briefly review your placings and then begin. You should speak in a conversational, relaxed tone which is easy to follow. This will let the judge know that you are confident about your placings. Stand five or six paces from the judge with your hands behind your back, look directly at him or her, and stand still as you speak. The entire set of oral reasons should be delivered within two minutes.

The following is a sample set of oral reasons using the notes on the previous page.:

“I placed this class of Morgan mares 3-1-2-4.

“In the case of my top pair, 3 and 1, I placed 3 over 1 because she is a more balanced, shorter-coupled mare.

“She is more attractive about her front, has more well-defined withers, and is more stylish about the croup. She is cleaner in her knees and hocks, and moves with a freer, truer stride. However, I will grant that 1 is a more athletic mare. I fault 1 because she lacks the style and quality of the top mare, is longer in her back, and shorter in her pasterns.

“Referring to my middle pair, 1 and 2, I placed 1 over 2 because she is longer necked and has more substance. She is deeper in her heart and shows more definition of muscle through her chest. She stands more correct on her front legs as viewed from the side. She has stronger and more sloping pasterns, and is a more balanced mover. I do admit that 2 does have more spring of rib. I fault 2 because she is slightly sickle hocked and lacks the correct motion of the mare I placed above her.

“Regarding my last pair, 2 and 4, I placed 2 over 4 because she has a more ideal head with a smaller, foxier ear. She shows more definition at her withers, is shorter and stronger in her back, and is more nearly level in her croup. She stands on harder, flatter bone and shows more definition of joints. She has shorter cannon bones as well. I admit that 4 goes closer at her hocks and stands on heavier bone, but I fault her because she is mutton-withered, has a coarse underline, and is low in her back.

“For these reasons, I placed this class of Morgan mares 3-1-2-4.

“Thank you.”

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ORAL REASONS TERMS

When oral reasons are given, the terms which are used most must be horsemanship. Slang and flowery wording is not appropriate. Use words which compare horses in the pair you are referring to. Use connective words like “more, lacks,” and words ending with “-er” for comparing horses. When discussing a pair, make statements such as “1 is more stylish than 2,” instead of “1 is a stylish horse.”

The following is a list of terms which are often used in judging. If you use some of these terms in your oral reasons, make sure they are true and accurately represent what you saw in the class. To see how familiar you are with these terms, test yourself by picking a body part and listing the terms that can describe it. Example: Head-feminine, clean cut, chiseled, foxy ears, large eye, roman nosed, long, coarse, etc.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

Ideal

More attractive	More correct
More stylish	Leggy
More quality	Closer coupled
More refined	More substance
More refined, smoother	More definition of muscle
More uniform in body lines	More balance, symmetry
Deeper bodied, more capacious	More athletic, powerful
More feminine/masculine	
More Morgan type, breed character	

Fault

Lacks Morgan type	Less attractive, lacks style
Light muscling	Coarse
Lacks femininity/masculinity	Poorly conditioned
Lacks balance, symmetry	Lacks substance
Plain, lacks quality	Too finely boned
Lacks muscling, light muscling	Shallow bodied

BODY

Ideal

Longer shoulder	Sharper withers
More level topline	Longer underline
Shorter in the back	Stronger back
Straighter topline	Deeper heart girth
More spring to rib	Deeper bodied
Stronger coupled	Shorter coupled
Closer coupled	More defined gaskin
Gaskin lacks muscling	Longer, wider croup
Nicer turn of croup	More level croup
More firmly attached shoulder	Higher tail set
More slope of shoulder	High croup

Heavier muscled thigh
More blending through the withers

Fault

Straight shoulder	Short shoulder
Weaker topline	Long topline
Long back	Weaker back
Low back	Lacks spring of rib
Waspy waisted	Low withers
Mutton withers	Dip in front of withers
Roach back	Shallow bodied
Lacks depth of body	Weaker coupled
Longer coupled	Long loined
Shorter croup	Thigh lacks muscling
Steeper croup	Steep rumped
Overly long croup	Low tail set
Shoulder too loosely attached	

FRONT END

Ideal

More type about the head
More masculine, feminine head
Head lacks masculinity, femininity
Cleaner cut head
More chiseled about the head
Shorter, foxier ear
More ideal set of ears
Brighter eye
More width between eyes
More attractive profile
Firmer muzzle
More refined throttle
Neck attaches higher on shoulder
More athletic neck
Longer necked
More correct neck
More refined head and neck
Coarse about the head and neck
Wider chest
More muscled chest
A more masculine, feminine front
More stylish about the front
Larger eye
More refined muzzle
Larger nostril
More upheaded
Better crested
More stylish neck
Deeper chest

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Fault

Plain headed
Long headed
Ears set too far forward
Dull (or blind) eye
Roman nosed
Coarse muzzle
Coarser, thicker throatlatch
Low headed
Plain necked
Shorter necked
Ewe necked
Hollow chest
Lacks femininity, masculinity

Coarse headed
Lop ears
Pig eyed
Narrow headed
Parrot mouth
Small nostril
Low set neck
Fallen crest
Lacks arch of neck
Narrow chested
Chest lacks muscling
Plain fronted

More balanced
Goes with more collection
More knee, hock flexion

More elastic
More ground covering stride

Fault

Labored mover
Choppy stride
Lacks coordination
Rotates hocks outward
Paddles, wings, or forges
Goes too wide at hocks
Unbalanced mover
Inelastic

Unanimated
Short strided
Shuffles
Lame
Moves stiff
Strung out
Sluggish mover

FEET AND LEGS

Ideal

Stands more correctly
More squarely placed legs
Front legs set more forward
More correct set of hocks
Longer pasterns
More defined joints and tendons

More slopping pasterns
Rounder foot
Clean legs
Shorter cannons
More roomy foot

Fault

Base narrow
Does not stand correctly
Toes out
Off-set knees
Cow hocked
Legs not square
Joints and tendons lack definition
Capped elbow (Shoe boil)
Bone spavin
Coarse hocks
Curb
Splints
Sidebone
Windpuffs
Steeper pasterns
Smaller foot

Toes in (pigeon toed)
Base wide
Over at the knees
Calf kneed
Sickle hocked
Legs set too far back
Bog spavin
Stringhalt
Round bone
Bowed tendons
Ringbone
Longer cannons
Shorter pasterns
Dished foot
Narrow foot

YOU BE THE JUDGE

Now is your chance to practice what you've learned. Take a look at the three Morgan in-hand classes (stallions, mares, and geldings) on the following pages. Study each class, take notes, and make your placings. Practice giving oral reasons for your placement of the classes. Our placing and reasons for each class can be found at the end of this section.

MOTION

Ideal

Truer stride
Brisker walk
More stylish mover
Straight mover
More hock engagement

Bolder stride
Moves truer behind
More animated
Goes closer at hocks
Moves freer, easier

IN-HAND STALLIONS



1



2

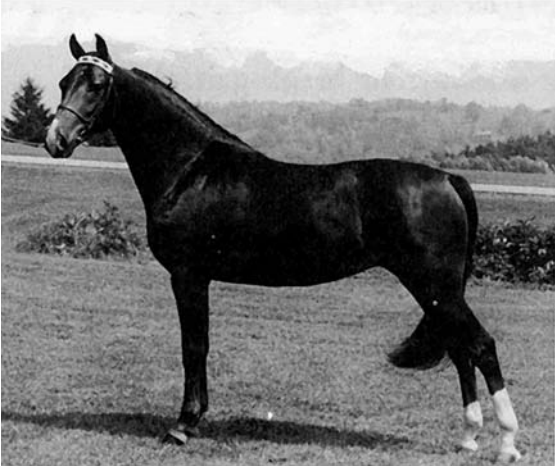


3



4

IN-HAND MARES



1



2



3



4

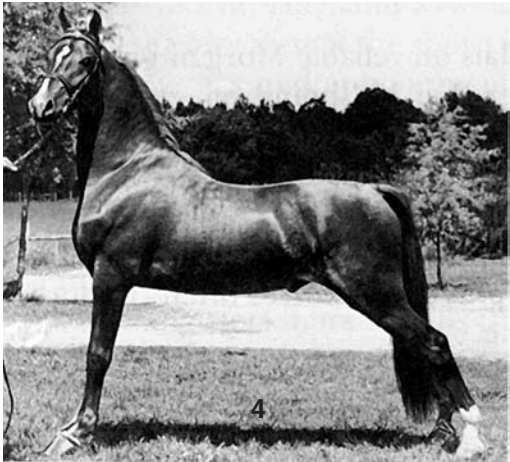
IN-HAND GELDINGS



1



2



4

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IN-HAND PLACINGS AND REASONS

Stallions In-Hand 4-2-1-3

Reasons:

In this class of Morgan stallions, I placed the class 4-2-1-3.

In reference to my top pair, 4 and 2, I placed 4 over 2 because 4 is more masculine and smoother overall. 4 is more symmetrical and displays more type about the head than 2. 4 has a larger, brighter eye, a more attractive profile and has a neck that attaches higher at the shoulder than 2. I do grant that 2 is longer necked and has more slope of shoulder than the horse above him, but I fault 2 for being coarse about the throatlatch and lacking breed character about the head.

Regarding my middle pair, 2 and 1, 2 placed above 1 because 2 exhibits more length of neck, and has a longer forearm and shorter cannon than 1. I do admit that 1 is deeper in the heart-girth than 2, but I fault 1 for lacking overall masculinity and being long headed.

In reference to my bottom pair, 1 and 3, I placed 1 over 3 because 1 has more type and symmetry, is more stylish about the front, and has a better crested neck than 3. I grant that 3 is more chiseled about the head, but I fault 3 for having a ewe neck, a straight shoulder, a dip in front of the withers, and for tying in behind the knees.

It is for these reasons that I placed this class of Morgan stallions 4-2-1-3.

Mares In-Hand 3-4-2-1

Reasons:

I placed this class of Morgan mares 3-4-2-1.

In regards to my top pair, 3 and 4, I placed 3 over 4 because 3 has a more attractive profile and a more chiseled head. 3 has a better set of neck than 4 and a smoother topline. I do grant that 4 is a deeper bodied, more substantial mare with a longer, more sloping shoulder than 3, but I fault 4 for lacking femininity about the head and having a dip in front of her withers.

In reference to my middle pair, 4 and 2, 4 placed over 2 because 4 is longer necked and is shorter in the back, giving her a more superior topline than 2. I will grant that 2 has a better attached shoulder and is closer coupled than 4. However, I fault 2 for being rather plain, having a short neck, as well as being behind at the knee and having straight hocks.

Regarding my bottom pair, 2 and 1, I placed 2 over 1 because 2 shows more breed character, is smoother and more uniform in body lines, and has more definition of muscle. I fault 1 for being less attractive overall. She lacks breed character, is plain headed, mutton withered, and shallow bodied.

It is for these reasons that I placed this class of Morgan mares 3-4-2-1.

Geldings In-Hand 4-3-2-1

Reasons:

In this class of Morgan geldings, I placed the class 4-3-2-1.

In reference to my top pair, 4 and 3, I placed 4 over 3 because 4 possesses a more masculine, chiseled head, and has a more sloping shoulder with a more correctly set neck. 4 is more upheaded than 3, and has a more level croup. I will grant that 3 has a smaller, foxier ear and a shorter cannon than 4, but I fault 3 for being long headed, long backed, and having short pasterns.

Concerning my middle pair, 3 and 2, I placed 3 above 2 because 3 shows more overall symmetry and balance, is cleaner about the throatlatch, and has a smoother topline. I will grant that 2 has a more attractive neck and better laid back shoulder. But I fault 2 for having a coarse, thick throatlatch, being mutton withered and steep rumped which causes him to be less uniform in body lines.

Regarding my bottom pair, 2 and 1; 2 placed over 1 because 2 has a head high in breed character with more width between the eyes. 2 is deeper bodied and shows more overall definition of muscle. The fact that 1 was plain overall, had a coarse, thick throatlatch, was weak coupled, and had a low tail set caused me to place him at the bottom of the class.

It is for these reasons that I placed this class of Morgan geldings 4-3-2-1.

Did your placings agree with these? If not, compare your reasons with the above reasons to see if you saw the same faults and attributes in each horse. You may have seen characteristics that were not mentioned here, but that may be correct nonetheless. There were several good horses in these classes, so if you think they should have placed in a different order, discuss it with a knowledgeable horse person. Remember, if the horses you are judging appear to be equal in their faults and attributes, the one that places higher is the one that you feel comes closest to the Standard of Perfection.

MORGAN CLASS DIVISIONS

IN-HAND CLASSES

The In-Hand division is concerned with Morgan type, conformation, and way of going. You have already read about Morgan characteristics which contribute to being an ideal Morgan as well as faults which detract from the overall attractiveness of the horse.

The horse should move straight and true in motion, without a tendency to break gait or resist the handler. Those individuals who consistently break on the line should be suspect of structural faults and may lack a balanced way of going.

When judging horses in motion, a balanced and correct way of going shall always be more important than the height of action of knees and hocks. The walk should be rapid and flat-footed with a four-beat cadence. The trot should be a two-beat, diagonal gait which is animated, elastic, square, and collected. The rear action should be in balance with the front action.

The Morgan in-hand horse should have a smooth and glossy coat and full, natural mane and tail.

PERFORMANCE CLASSES

As mentioned earlier, Morgan judging can consist of performance classes as well as in-hand classes. It is important to be able to accurately judge Morgan athletes doing what they do best in the show ring, be it pleasure, park, saddle, or harness. Performance classes are judged 60% on performance and 40% on Morgan type, except for championship classes which are 50%-50%. Below are descriptions of some Morgan divisions which you may be asked to judge. More complete information about the specifications of these classes can be found in The Morgan Horse Judging Standards, available through The American Morgan Horse Association.

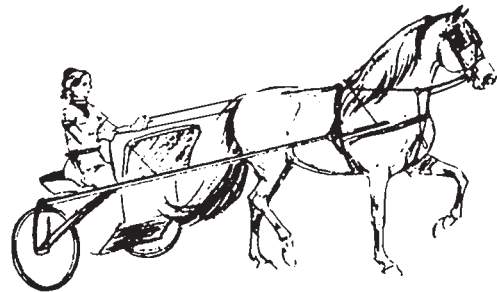
English Pleasure

The English pleasure horse must have an agreeable attitude and a collected, balanced gait. The horse should be light on the bit and appear to be a pleasure to ride. The gaits are the walk, pleasure trot, road trot, and canter.



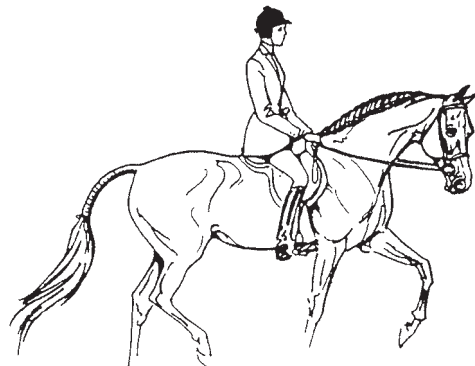
Pleasure Driving

The pleasure driving horse should possess the same qualities as the English pleasure horse. The horse should be relatively high headed and move freely under light contact. The gaits are the walk, pleasure trot, and road trot.



Hunter Pleasure

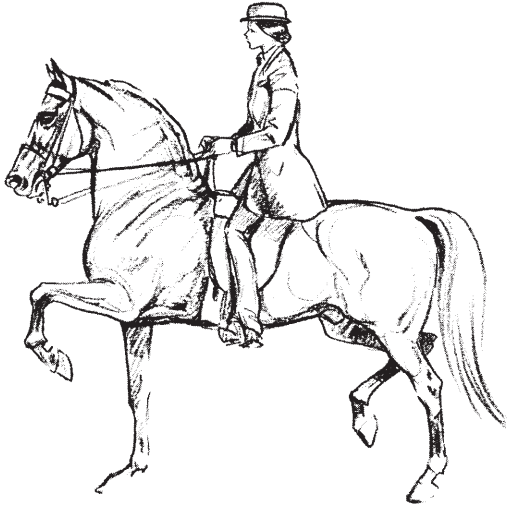
The hunter pleasure horse should be mild mannered and work off a light rein. This horse may hold his head somewhat lower than the English pleasure horse. The gaits must be ground covering, and manners must be impeccable. The gaits are the walk, trot, extended trot, canter, and extended canter.



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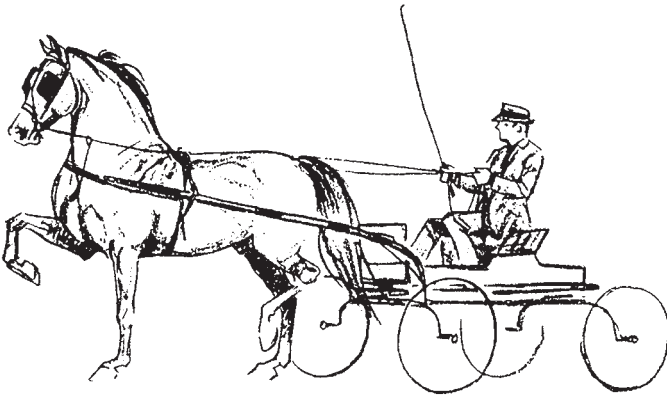
Park Saddle

The Park saddle horse should possess beauty, brilliance, animation, and elegance. Other important attributes are performance, presence, manners and suitability. The order of importance of these qualities depends upon the division (example: ladies, amateur). The gaits are the park walk, park trot, and canter.



Park Harness

The park harness horse should possess those qualities similar to the park saddle horse. Both are high headed, bold and airy moving. The gaits are park walk, part trot, and “show your horse” (except ladies, junior exhibitor, and youth divisions).



Western Pleasure

The western pleasure horse should have substance (especially in the rear quarter) for the work required. The horse must work off a light rein while still maintaining contact. The western pleasure horse must back willingly. The gaits are the walk, jog, and lope, and extension may be asked for at any gait.

There is no question that learning how to judge horses is a time consuming process. If you have confidence in yourself as a judge, others will soon have confidence in your decisions as well. It will take a great deal of hard work to become a knowledgeable and well-respected judge.

Reread this manual. Become familiar with all the unsoundnesses and learn what separates a good horse from an outstanding one. If you don't already have one, order a free copy of The Morgan Horse Judging Standards from The American Morgan Horse Association, 122 Bostwick Road, Shelburne, Vermont 05482. Phone: (802) 985-4944. Judging requires a great deal of practice, organization, and more practice. Go to horse shows. Watch how the judges pin the classes. Try judging the class yourself to see if you agree with the judge.

Although you may not have live horses on which to practice your judging skills, you can use substitutes such as videotapes and photographs from breed journals. You can also practice judging things other than horses. Put any four similar objects together, like sneakers, toothbrushes, or pencils. The point is to make yourself learn to notice details and develop a way of explaining your reasons. It may seem silly at first, but it will help you gain better powers of observation and explanation.

Even if you have never won a blue ribbon showing horses, you can be successful at judging. The skills you learn as a judge will carry over and last throughout your lifetime.

Below are resource materials available to help you continue to improve your judging skills:

The Complete Morgan Horse by Jeanne Mellin Herrick. Available from the AMHA. The Morgan Horse Judging Standards as adopted by the American Morgan Horse Association. Available from the AMHA, no fee. Judging Morgans in the Show Ring. Video available from the American Morgan Horse Association.

ORAL REASONS TERMINOLOGY

Action: movement of the feet and legs; should be straight and true.

Anatomy: science of the structure of the animal body and the relationships of its parts.

Balance: equal action of knees and hocks at the trot.

Bald Face: white face, including all or part of the eyes or nostrils.

Base Narrow: the distance between the feet is less than the distance between the limbs where they originate at the chest. It causes the horse to bear more weight on the outside of the hoof than the inside.

Base Narrow, Toe In: causes excessive strain on the lateral collateral ligaments of the fetlock and pastern. Causes 'padding' motion, and blemishes include windpuffs, lateral ringbone and sidebone.

Base Narrow, Toe Out: horses tend to 'wing' in motion. A 'plaiting' motion may be evident.

Base Wide: the distance between the center of the feet is greater than the distance between the center of the limbs where they originate in the chest. If forces the horse to bear more weight on the inside of the foot than the outside, causing a 'winging' action in motion.

Base Wide, Toe In: unusual conformation, this puts the greatest stress on the inside of the leg.

Base Wide, Toe Out: causes stress on the inside of the leg. Sidebone and ringbone are common results.

Blaze: broad, white marking running from forehead to nose that does not include the eyes or nostrils.

Blindness: a partial or complete loss of vision in the eye(s), which may be characterized by opaqueness of the lens. A blind horse will typically use his ears a great deal to sense his surroundings.

Bog Spavin: a soft, fluid-filled swelling on the upper inside of the hock.

Bone (Jack) Spavin: a bony swelling on the lower inside of the hock at the point where the hock meets the cannon.

Bowed Tendons: overstretched superficial and/or deep flexor tendons (located behind the cannon bone). The front legs are most commonly affected.

Bow Legged: wide at the knees and close at the feet.

Bridoon: snaffle bit on the full bridle.

Brushing: a general term for light striking of the feet against each other or parts of the leg.

Calf-Kneed: knees too far back. Opposite of buck-kneed or knee sprung.

Camped Behind: the entire leg is too far back when viewed from the side. A line dropped from the hip would land at the toe or in front of it, instead of halfway between the toe and heel.

Camped in Front: the entire foreleg is too far forward when viewed from the side.

Canter: three beat gait.

Capacious: large, roomy; spacious

Capped Elbow (Shoe Boil): a swelling at the point of elbow due to trauma

Capped Hock: a soft, fluid-filled swelling on the point of hock due to trauma, which eventually hardens.

Clean Leg: no blemishes on or unsoundnesses of the legs.

Coarse: lacking in quality; plain; thick; etc.

Collected: well up in the bit with the neck flexed, jaw relaxed, and hocks well under.

Condition: state of health, as evidenced by the coat, weight, and general appearance.

Conformation: body shape or form.

Coon Footed: long, low pasterns and shallow heels.

Coupling: the area between the point of hip and the last rib.

Cow Hocked: hock joints pointing inward, toes pointing out. The legs are base narrow from stifle to hock, and base wide from hock to feet. Prone to bone spavin.

Cracks: a split in the hoof wall. Cracks are classified according to their location: Toe Crack, Quarter Crack, Heel Crack.

Crest: top part of the neck.

Cross-cantering: the horse canters on one lead in the front and the other lead behind.

Cross-firing: the toe of the hind foot and the opposite front foot make contact. Generally confined to pacers.

Curb: an inflammation below the point of the hock due to trauma.

Cut Out under the Knees: when viewed from the side, the cannon bone portion of the leg is set back from the forearm.

Deviation: an alteration of a normal state.

Elbow Hitting: the front shoe hits the elbow of the same limb. Usually seen only in horses with weighted shoes.

Endurance: stamina and staying power.

Ewe Necked: a neck with a dip between the poll and the withers. Also known as an upside-down neck.

Extension: a gait that is more ground covering and still maintains cadence.

Fallen Crest: heavy neck that breaks over and falls to one side.

Fistulous Withers: an inflammation in the region of the withers.

Flexed: proper head set, with the poll arched and the nose dropped.

Forging: the toe of the hindfoot hits the bottom of the front foot on the same side.

Gait: particular way of going, either natural or acquired, which is characterized by a distinctive rhythm of the feet and legs.

Gelding: a male horse that has been castrated.

Gender: the sex of an animal.

Get: progeny or offspring.

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Hand: a four inch unit of measurement. One hand equals four inches.

Heaves: difficulty in forcing air out of the lungs, characterized by double flank action (jerking of the flanks) while exhaling.

Hernia: a protrusion of an organ or internal tissue through an abnormal opening in the body cavity wall. A common type of hernia is an umbilical hernia, which is a swelling in the navel area often seen in foals.

Hitching: having a shorter stride in one hind leg than the other.

Impulsion: driving force to move forward.

In-Hand Class: refers to horses shown in halter classes that are judged on breed type, conformation, and motion.

Interfering: the striking of the pastern, fetlock or cannon by the opposite foot when in motion.

Laminitis (Founder): an inflammation of the sensitive laminae of the foot. Rings around the hoof are found in chronic cases. The forefeet are most susceptible, but the hind feet may also be affected.

Long, Sloping Pasterns: a pastern too long for the length of the limb and with normal to subnormal (45-degrees or under) angulation. Prone to tendon injury, sesamoid bone injury and suspensory ligament damage.

Long, Upright Pastern: prone to osselets and navicular disease due to the concussion on the lower joints.

Manners: compliance of the horse to the handler. Unruly horses may be excused from the ring at the judge's discretion.

Mare: a female horse, four years or older.

Mutton Withered: low in the withers with heavy shoulder muscling.

Near-Side: left side of the horse.

Offset Knees: (bench knees): the cannon bone is set to the outside of the forearm when viewed from the front, and does not follow a straight line. Due to weight on the splint bone, the horse is prone to splints.

Off-Side: right side of the horse.

Open Knees: the irregular profile of the carpal joint when viewed from the side. Usually found in young horses. In older horses it is prone to injury. When viewed from the front, the knees will show a depression where the forearm and cannon bones meet.

Osselets: a hard swelling above or below the front of the fetlock joint. The front legs of young horses are most commonly affected.

Overreaching: the hind toe catches the front foot on the same side, usually on the heel. Can pull the shoe off the front foot.

Paddling: throwing the front feet outward as they are picked up.

Parrot Mouth: the lower jaw is shorter than the upper jaw, preventing the upper and lower incisors from meeting properly.

Performance: the manner in which the horse works, as specified by the particular discipline.

Poll Evil: an inflammation of the poll region which may be caused by trauma to the area.

Presence: a flashy "look at me" attitude that draws the observer to a horse.

Pointing: an over exaggerated extension at the trot.

Pounding: a high and very labored stride.

Proportions: comparative relation between parts.

Quittor: chronic, purulent inflammation of the collateral cartilages in the foot, which may be caused by trauma. It is seen most often in the forefeet.

Rat-Tail: short haired, poor quality tail.

Ringbone: a bony enlargement below the fetlock. Ringbone may be characterized as high or low, depending on its position on the pastern. The front legs are most commonly affected.

Roach Back: arched back.

Roman Nose: a horse with a profile that is convex from poll to muzzle.

Scalping: the hind pastern or cannon hits the toe of the front foot.

Seedy Toe: separation of the hoof wall from the sole at the toe, resulting in a hollow cavity under the hoofwall.

Short, Upright Pastern: a short pastern increases the concussion on the fetlock, pastern and navicular bones. It predisposes the horse to osselets, ringbone and navicular disease. Often seen with base-narrow, toe-in conformation, and horses with short legs, straight shoulders and powerful body and leg muscling.

Sickle Hocked: from the side, the horse stands underneath from the hock down due to a closed angle in the hock. Prone to curb.

Sidebone: hardening of the collateral cartilages of the foot. It is found most often in the forefeet.

Sloping Shoulders: shoulders properly angulated and laid back.

Sound: no evidence of lameness, broken wind, or vision loss.

Splints: an abnormal bony enlargement between the splint and cannon bone caused by trauma or faulty conformation. The front legs of young horses are most commonly affected.

Stallion: a male horse four years or older.

Standard of Perfection: the ideal established by a breed association.

Standing Under Behind: the entire limb is too far forward, or sickle hocks are present. A line from the hip to the ground would land at the heel or further back instead of between the heel and toe.

Standing Under in Front: the entire limb below the elbow is behind the perpendicular and too far under the body.

Straight Behind: viewed from behind, there is little angle between the thigh and gaskin, and the hock is straight. Easily injured by heavy work.

Stride: the distance covered by one foot when in motion.

Stringhalt: exaggerated flexing of one or both hocks, most evident when the horse is generally unbalanced.

Substance: strength, muscle development, depth and width of body, and quality of bone.

Symmetry: balance and beauty of form resulting from the arrangement of parts on either side of a dividing line.

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Thoroughpin: a swelling of the tendon sheath near the point of the hock.

Tied-In Knees: viewed from the side, the flexor tendons appear too close to the cannon bone just below the carpus. This conformation inhibits free movement.

Toe-In: toes point toward one another when viewed from the front. Usually accompanied by base-narrow conformation. Horse shows a tendency to 'paddle' with the feet when moving. "Pigeon Toed"

Toe-Out: the toes point away from each other when viewed from the front. "Splay Footed"

Tracking: way of going. Horses should track straight.

Tracking Up: occurs when the horse's hind feet step into or behind the prints of the front feet. Also known as overstride.

Traits: characteristics. Morgans have many traits which distin-

guish them from other breeds.

Trappy: quick, high, but relatively short stride.

Type: conformity for the standard of perfection.

Underconditioned: thin or poorly muscled, and therefore unable to perform at maximum ability.

Underpinning: legs and feet of a horse.

Undershot Jaw: the lower jaw is longer than the upper jaw, preventing the upper and lower incisors from meeting properly.

Vigor: vitality; intensity; energy.

Way of Going: the motion and tracking displayed at a gait.

Wind Puffs (Windgalls): a puffy enlargement just above or at the base of the fetlock joint.

Winding: twisting of the striding leg around the supporting leg, resembling a tight rope walker. Also known as rope walking.

Winging: an exaggerated paddling.

NOTES: