



Opinions on Judging Percherons

Collaborating With One Hundred of the Leading Judges and Breeders in the United States and Canada

By Ellis McFarland

(This copy was submitted to these authorities and includes their suggestions and criticisms for its improvement.)

This booklet has been written with no thought of telling expert judges how to go about their work. Each has his own system. Nor has the writer any intention of posing as an expert judge of Percherons. His opinions on selecting and judging are merely the result of twenty-two years of observation during extensive travels over the United States and Canada attending shows and expositions and visiting breeding farms.

It is doubtful if anyone would know how to judge Percherons after reading all the books written on the subject. It takes years of study and practice to become a good professional judge, but these suggestions are offered to the beginner and to the student who want to know more about judging and who have very little idea how to begin. These viewpoints as they appear here have been read, revised, and corrected by practically all of the one hundred judges, breeders, grooms, and agricultural college teachers whose names appear later.

Another excellent booklet on judging is Wayne Dinsmore's "Judging Horses and Mules," published by the Horse and Mule Association of America, 407 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill. This booklet costs six cents a copy.

Follow Definite System

Successful judges are those who train themselves to follow a definite system of looking over a horse; they go through this same system with every animal which comes before them. Of first consideration is the animal in general as viewed from the side—the general size, body proportions, height and length of leg, balance between bone and body, general style, and carriage of head and neck. These points should all be viewed from the side to get

in mind a general picture of the animal.

This critical study from a distance is quite important. One of the serious difficulties teachers of judging have is to get students to stand back and look. It is always well to keep in mind that the essentials of a draft horse are scale, muscling, substance, endurance, and durability as well as action.

The judge next steps forward and approaches the horse from the front. He examines the head, noting carefully whether both eyes are good and, if it is necessary to determine the horse's age, opens the mouth, using both hands. It is wise for judges to inspect the mouth of every horse they judge, particularly at county fairs. Students should get the habit of examining the mouth if only with the finger tips. This helps determine whether the horses are in their proper classes, and shows up deformities of the mouth, such as parrot mouths, undershot jaws, and abnormal teeth.

Begin at Head

Good judges pay a great deal of attention to the head. It is always one of the important things about a good Percheron. It should be a medium-sized, lean head, fairly broad between the eyes, with an alert, pointed ear of medium size, showing plenty of quality indicated by the thinness of skin and lustrous coat. The eye should be large and prominent and show plenty of spirit. The jaw should be clean-cut and never unduly heavy, either in a stallion or a mare. The stallion should have a bolder, more masculine appearance than the mare with more of the "stud horse" quality head. A feminine head on a stallion is usually a sign of an unprepotent sire. A coarse head on a mare often suggests an

(Continued on page 5)

tors should not be too ready to criticize the judging until they have examined the animal closely.

Sometimes, as the final step before making the awards, it is a good plan, when there are a number of horses in a class, to walk them in a circle after they have been judged individually.

It is a good habit in making placings, for judges to arrange the animals according to their rank, from left to right, as he stands behind them.

Make Two Groups

The first thing that a judge should do after he has looked over each horse carefully is to group the heavy-boned, thick-made, deep-bodied, short-backed, low-set, up-headed, good-moving horses at the head of the ring preparatory to picking the top prize winners out of this group. He should sort out the tall, light-boned, long-backed, shallow-bodied Percherons and group them at the foot of the ring. These tall, shallow-bodied Percherons are penalized severely these days by the best Percheron judges.

The final shifting for the award should not take long when the good, deep-bodied horses have been grouped together.

Give Good Impression

It is a serious mistake for a judge to stand in one position for fifteen or twenty minutes or more, looking at two or three horses, trying to make up his mind as to how to place them. If it must take that long, a judge should at least walk around the horses three or four times and move the animals again to compare their action. Spectators lose confidence in a judge who stands in one position too long, or who continues to walk around and around the animals as some do when they have trouble making decisions. Long delays give the impression that a judge does not know what he is looking for, and sometimes that is true. A judge can wear himself out by doing an undue amount of walking, especially on a hot day, with the result that toward the end of the day his mind does not function accurately. This is the reason a judge needs to watch his physical condition carefully if he is judging a big show. If he allows himself to become physically exhausted by noontime, his placings for the rest of the day will not be very satisfactory. A good night's rest should precede the day of judging, his digestive system should be in good working order, and during the hot weather especially he should be careful not to walk too much while in the ring. He should make an effort to get some rest if possible at noontime and to eat a moderate amount of food.

Inspect the Feet

Before tying a grand championship, if the decision is at all close, it is usually a good practice to inspect the front feet of the two top horses by lifting them to see how they are shod, and to note the condition of

the frog of the foot. If the animal has a narrow contracted heel, very little frog, and some evidence of thrush, such an animal is not equipped with the kind of foot to carry him about his work in the most satisfactory manner.

Thrush is a disease due to carelessness. Failure to clean the horse's feet regularly is likely to permit thrush to start. It is a disease of the foot characterized by a softening of the tissues in the cleft of the frog or in the junction between the frog and the bars. It has a very pungent, acrid odor and causes lameness.

Then too, in a large show where competition is strong, it is always wise to move the animals again before tying the championships.

Worst Faults

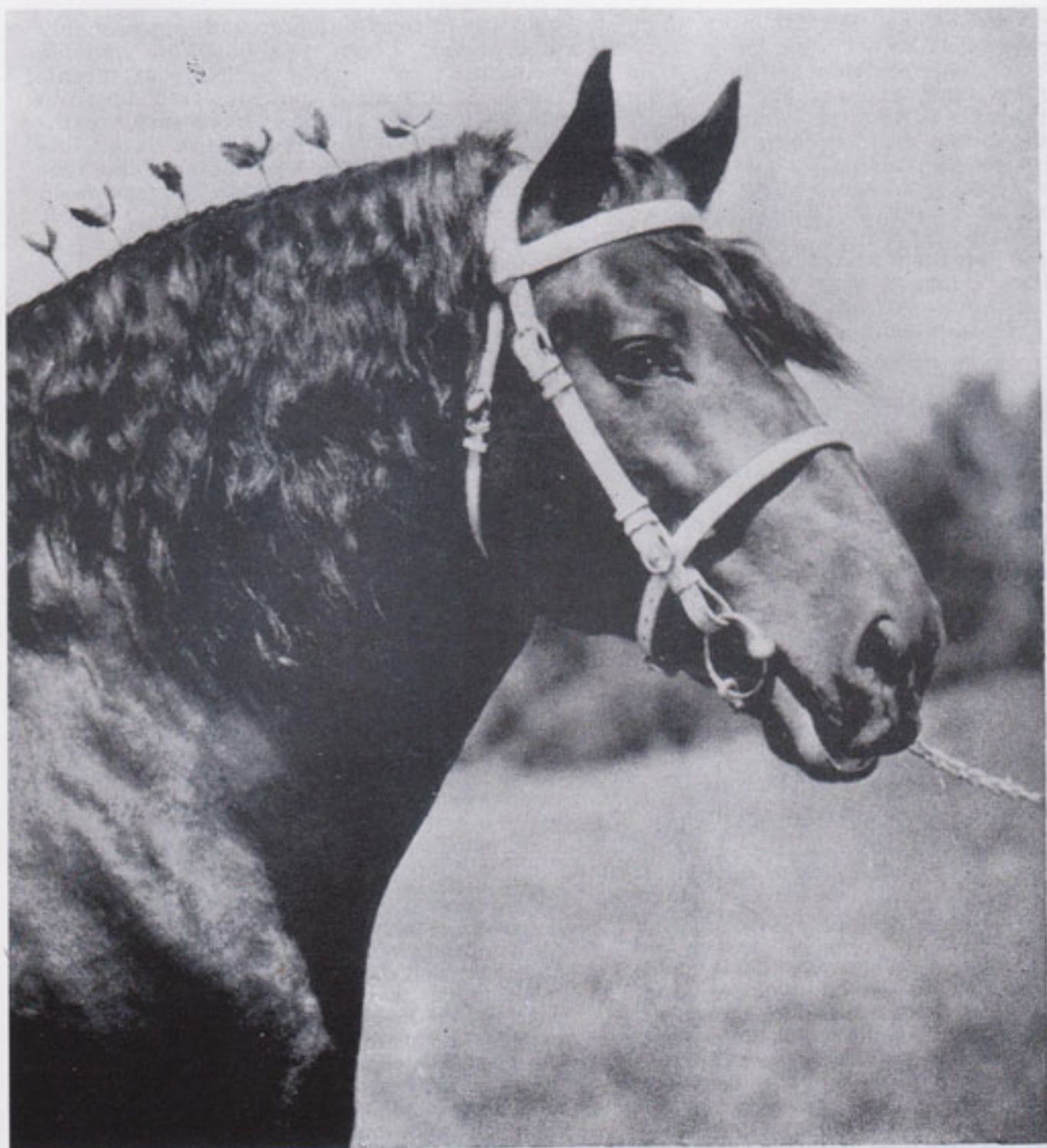
The worst faults in a draft horse that a judge should see at a glance are crooked hocks, long legs, a long back, a short back rib, a bad gait at the walk, poor, crooked feet, rough shoulders, and faulty wind.

Lesser faults are too light bone, short, upright pasterns, over on the knees, prominent shoulders, slope of shoulder too upright, too masculine a head in a mare or too feminine a head in a stallion, a short head, a head carried too low, a small eye, ears that are coarse or that hang outward, a dish face, an overly heavy jaw, a thick throatlatch, an overly heavy neck, a sagging back, short, droopy croup, legs that stand too wide apart or too close together, hocks too straight, a poor gait at the trot, and a nervous disposition.

Explain Decisions

The last question in the judge's mind before he indicates how he wants the ribbons tied should be, "Have I shown the exhibitors and other horsemen who watched my work that I have a decided preference for the low-down, thick-made, short-backed, strongly-muscled, heavy-boned, up-headed, good-going Percheron with plenty of quality?" If horses of that type are scarce at a show and if a judge has the opportunity, he should explain his placings to the ringside spectators and tell them about the kind of horse he likes. If he does not have several excellent specimens at the show to illustrate the ideal type Percheron, such an explanation is all the more necessary. Many judges are lax in making oral explanations. If judges would defend their decisions they would improve their reputations as successful judges. Such explanations would also be most beneficial to exhibitors and other interested horsemen who have an opportunity to watch the judging closely.

Sometimes in shows it is not always possible to explain decisions. In large shows there is usually not time enough between classes for a judge to give an explanation of his placings, but if asked for reasons, it should be obligatory on the part of the judge to give them.



A Good Type Percheron Head

Of all the breeds of draft horses, the Percheron has the neatest and the most animated looking head. This picture is not perfect, but it is one of the best available. It is the head of Treviso, grand champion at the 1921 Ohio State Fair and one of the last living sons of the famous old stallion, Dragon.

This picture shows an abundance of neck, but not too much. An over-developed crest is objectionable because of its tendency to "fall" or bend toward the off side thus detracting from the appearance of the horse. This head closely resembles the typical Percheron head because it is comparatively long and the features are clean cut, but to

be absolutely ideal, it could be a bit bolder. However, the upright position of the ear, the bright, open eye and the wide, open, distended nostril, give the impression that this horse has a kind disposition but at the same time is alert to all that is going on about him, a quality which is most characteristic of the breed. The neat throatlatch, the nicely turned neck, and the comparatively smooth made jaws of this horse make him particularly pleasing through that portion where his head joins his neck.

The long lean head and well defined features make up what is termed a "breedy looking" head.

irregular breeder, an unsatisfactory dam, and a producer of rather plain colts.

One noted judge and breeder says, "The conformation and expressiveness of the Percheron head cannot be duplicated by any of the other draft breeds. Strongly prepotent breeding animals almost invariably give evidence in their heads of their excellence as breeders. These qualities are not easily defined on paper, but an experienced breeder knows how to rate them. They indicate, also, the animation and life of the animal, as well as the disposition. Animals that are inclined to be thick and meaty about the head and unduly heavy in throat and jaw usually lack something of the expressiveness of a good breeding animal. Large, prominent eyes are also a most important indication. Animals with a dull expression and listless temperament are not likely to be impressive breeders. The vital strength of an animal is reflected in the eye."

With further reference to eyes, it should be noted here that sometimes if a horse has a bad eye, the owner allows the foretop to grow heavy and then combs it to the side of the poor eye. Thus it is wise to look under big, heavy foretops for blind, small, or dull eyes, and to ascertain that both are sound.

Notice Alertness

While still standing at the front of the animal, a judge watches how it carries its head. As a breed, the Percheron is given credit for being high headed. Most of them hold their heads up easily. Their disposition is such that they lift their heads to see all that is going on about them. The movement of head and ears when a stranger approaches usually indicates whether a Percheron has a good disposition. If the disposition is not satisfactory, one ordinarily learns this while still standing near the front of the animal. A quiet, gentle horse usually holds his head and ears in one position with very little movement.

Slope of Shoulder

It takes a shoulder which slopes at about a forty-five degree angle to enable a horse to lift his head naturally. If the shoulder is too upright, the judge can be sure that the horse normally carries his head low. Such a horse may be scared into keeping his head up while the judge is looking, but this high headed position is only temporary. If the slope of the shoulder indicates a low headed horse, there are several other features which go with this type. A horse of the low headed type is not as intelligent nor as smart looking as the one which holds his head up without effort. A short, meaty neck and a thick throatlatch, neither of which good judges like in a Percheron, usually go with a low head and an upright shoulder. Such conformation is not typical of the best individuals of the breed. On the other hand, sometimes a horse with an extremely high head may have a distrustful disposition. A nicely curved crest

and a neat throatlatch go with a reasonably high head. Percherons have an enviable reputation for having a clean cut throatlatch. It ordinarily indicates freedom from throat troubles. It allows more easy breathing. A horse with a neat, clean throat line can stand a lot more heat than can one that is coarse and rather fleshy between head and shoulder.

Look for Unsoundness

Before stepping back along the side of the animal, the judge should glance back between the hind legs, first at the inside of one and then the inside of the other. If there is a bone spavin on the inside of either hind leg, it is easily seen from this position. If a bony enlargement at the lower inside edge of the hock seems the same size on both legs, it may mean that the animal has a large, strongly-formed hock and that no unsoundness is present. If one enlargement looks bigger than the other, then the judge can be sure that the larger one indicates a bone spavin on that leg, although he might also have two spavins. The extent to which the hocks are filled also shows up from this position of observation near the shoulder of the animal. Filled hocks may mean that the animal has been overfed or that it has a defective set of the hind leg. Crooked hocks are more likely to fill than those that are correctly set under the animal. On the other hand, a hock which is too straight will also fill more readily than a hock correctly set; puffs show up strongly on too-straight hocks. Our best judges object very seriously to filled hocks. Competent draft horse judges rarely object to splints on the inside of the front cannon bone unless the splint is very close to the knee. To the inexperienced, it should be explained that splints are not a serious defect in a draft horse.

It would be well for every beginner and inexperienced horseman to go either to a thoroughly competent veterinarian or to a skilled horseman and learn precisely what the unsoundnesses in Percherons are, and by an examination of live animals, learn how to detect them.

Watch for Sidebones

While still near the front of the horse, the judge runs his hand down along the outside of the leg so as to feel the inside as well as the outside lateral cartilages on the hoof heads where sidebones sometimes occur, because judges who do a careful job of judging take the time to feel for unsoundnesses as well as look for them.

There is no subject in judging quite as controversial as that of sidebones. When some horses are penalized in the show ring under one judge because of them, and others under another judge are not, it makes it difficult for the average breeder to come to a decision regarding them; therefore, judges should come to a mutual agreement that horses with sidebones should be penalized.

(Continued on page 7)

Feeling for Sidebones

Before attempting to handle a horse for sidebones, one should speak to him quietly and pat him gently on the shoulder or breast. It is wise to bend over from the hips so as to be in a position to move rather quickly in case the horse should jump. The judge who half squats to feel for sidebones is using a dangerous technique unless the horse is very gentle. Such a position prevents moving away from the animal quickly in case the horse becomes frightened and jumps or strikes. With one's face toward the rear of the horse, run the hand nearest the horse gently down the leg until it reaches the hoof head. Then and there do the feeling with the fingers extended horizontally and held closely together. If a horse suddenly jerks his foot up, it slides under the extended fingers and pushes them gently to one side. Many judges use the thumb for feeling for sidebones, but the method just suggested is one that has been used for years by experienced horsemen who declare they have seen many persons hurt when hunting for sidebones with the thumb.

It is a mistake to feel lightly over the pastern joint for sidebones. There is only one spot for them: namely, on the hoofheads of the front feet, more often on the outside of the foot, but sometimes on the inside. It is possible to put the fingers right to the spot if one is on the near side of the horse, facing the rear quarters of the animal. One should press the spot firmly. Sometimes sidebones are long in forming. The thickened cartilage is flexible at first and can be moved about slightly. Sidebones are not so objectionable at this stage. It is when they harden and the bony formation appears that the animal may go lame.

Sometimes it is necessary to grasp the cartilage firmly between the thumb and forefinger and move it from side to side to determine whether the cartilage has started to ossify, and to accurately ascertain by the thickness of the cartilage at the hoofhead, whether it will become ossified in the near future. Often the cartilage is soft on top but is becoming quite firm at the bottom. On the other hand, a large prominent cartilage, which at a distance appears to be a large sidebone, may be quite loose and will never develop into a sidebone. The proper detection in such cases is very important to a Percheron breeder.

Tendency Transmitted

Judges do not like sidebones because the tendency is so often transmitted to the offspring. Sidebones, however, are rarely found on animals under three years of age, and judges merely waste time feeling the hoofheads of foals and yearlings.

A sidebone associated with a short, upright pastern is much more objectionable than one associated with a fairly long, sloping one. The latter rarely develops

sidebones except as a result of injuries. It should also be kept in mind that sidebones associated with narrow, pinched hoofheads are much more likely to cause lameness than when associated with a wide, open hoofhead.

Since a stallion or mare with sidebones is so likely to produce colts that will have the same unsoundness when they mature, our best judges do not allow a Percheron with sidebones to go to the top at a prominent show. Such men prefer to give the coveted ribbons to animals which are absolutely sound even though they may not be quite as good in other respects.

One should look at the horse from a position in front of the animal to see if he stands squarely on his front legs. If he does not stand correctly, sidebones and ringbones are likely to come if they are not already there. Knees should be wide, deep, flat and well-defined. A post-shaped front leg is not desirable.

Slope of Pasterns

From his position in front of the horse, the judge next moves to the side of the animal. He notices whether the pasterns are short and upright. A pastern that is fairly long and slopes at about a forty-five degree angle is one that usually stays sound longest because it has more spring to the stride. It must also be remembered that a draft horse with sufficient slope to his pasterns usually has good control of his feet even though the pasterns may be lacking a little in length. The squarely set legs relieve undue strain which is present in any other untrue position.

If one spoke the truth and used the correct terms, some rough-pasterned Percherons really have sidebones. Smoothness of pasterns is as important as good length and slope.

Amount of Bone

From the same side view a judge forms an opinion as to how much bone the horse has. The importance of bone cannot be emphasized too strongly; Percherons should have plenty of it, and it is a point of cardinal importance in stallions. There has never yet been a successful record made in breeding Percherons from light-boned stallions. Percherons rarely lack in quality, but sometimes they lack in quantity of bone below the knee joint. The cannon bone should be comparatively short in length, but should appear broad as a result of the knee and fetlock joints being wide from front to rear and the tendons well set back. When the cannon bone section is long and narrow it follows that the animal is ordinarily too tall and usually has a long back and a slim body. A leg does not break because of being light-boned, but good judges and discriminate breeders object to a too-small cannon bone section in a Percheron because the defects which usually go with it are overly long legs, overly long back, and shortness of back rib. A judge can form some idea of a Percheron

by observing the size of bone below the knee in front. Lack of it is rather a serious defect in a Percheron.

The Percheron is a quality horse in general, and type should always be emphasized, but a judge does sometimes find, especially at local shows, coarse, meaty-legged animals. Good judges and good breeders will insist, however, on quality in underpinning along with plenty of bone.

Estimate Height

Before the judge steps away eight or ten feet to get a side view of the horse, he should estimate its height. To do that he should know the height of a horse which would come up to his chin, and the height of a horse which would come up to his nose, or his eyes. By this manner of measuring he learns the approximate height of a horse. If the animal is eighteen hands, he is too tall. Mares between sixteen and seventeen hands are preferred by most judges; higher than that is too tall. One well known judge believes that even seventeen hands is too tall for a mare. Surely she should not be any taller than that. Stallions should be 16½ to 17:1 hands.

The judge can also determine the height of a horse as he steps back from the animal. Good judges prefer the low-set kind, but not to an extreme.

Short Back Important

From a viewpoint of from eight to ten feet back at right angles to the near side (left) of the horse, one determines whether the animal has a short back or a long one. The short back is very much to be preferred and should be straight as well. However, it is very much better to have it sag a little than to have it too long. The long back is often found in a horse which is long-legged and not deep enough in his back rib, but of course that is not always the case.

A long-backed, short-ribbed horse is a hard keeper, and is much more expensive to fatten for sale than a short-backed, deep-middled, low-set Percheron.

On the other hand it is hard to get the desirable combination of a short, straight back and a long neck. One very good judge says he does not object to a little extra length in the back of a brood mare provided the back is straight, broad, and strong.

Sideview Checkup

From the same sideview position on the left, the judge determines whether the animal is deep enough in his back rib for a good Percheron. He also sizes up how heavy the bone is in front, how attractive the animal is from the withers forward, how close it is to the ground, how short and straight the back, and how deep the body. A Percheron should be as deep from the top of his withers to the base of his chest line as he is from this point to the

ground. There is great criticism if the leg is much longer than the depth of the chest. If the judge has a favorable opinion on all these points, he has begun to think well of the horse.

Fairly Straight Croup

From the position eight to ten feet from the side of the horse, the judge then takes a step along the side of the animal toward the rear. From here he studies the croup and hind quarters. The croup should be long and fairly level. Percherons are often too short in the croup with a drop which is too abrupt. This gives them a chopped-off appearance. A long, comparatively straight top line to the croup enables an animal to have a large, well-muscled hip which always looks well even in a thin horse. A horse with an intensely sloping croup looks bad when thin but often improves in appearance when fattened.

This does not mean, however, that there should be absolutely no slope to the croup. It seems to be a Percheron trait that some of them have an extra cushion of muscle across the hips which makes the croup appear less level than it is, a condition well illustrated in the picture of Calypso. This muscling provides more pulling power than is found in a horse without it. Thus a horse with a gently sloping croup may often have good action, can start a load quickly and hold it back well because the slope comes from the heavy muscling over the hips.

On the other hand it is also sometimes true that an extremely level croup goes with light thighs, but, all in all, the more level croup gives a more attractive top line, and a large, well-shaped hip means a stronger muscled hind quarter.

Notice Set of Hocks

The judge next glances at the set of the horse's hocks. From the standpoint of both power and action, it is important that the points of the hocks be turned in a little and that a horse stand with his hocks fairly close together. Hocks too wide apart indicate both lack of pulling power and faulty action. Breeders of at least one other draft breed have over-stressed this matter, however. In breeding horses for close hock action, they have in some instances well-nigh bred away their thighs. The hocks should be so placed that if a plumb line is dropped from the point of the buttock it would touch the point of the hock, fall parallel to the cannon bone all the way down and touch the point of the fetlock. It is still a well set hind leg even if the plumb line is one-half inch behind the cannon bone at the point where the line passes the rear protuberance of the fetlock, although the plumb line should fall quite close to the cannon bone all the way down. If the set of the foot and the hock is such that this plumb line does not fall reasonably close and parallel all the way down the back of the cannon bone, then the judge

knows the hock is too crooked, too straight, or of curby formation.

A crooked hock means that the weight it carries will likely cause an unsoundness (a curb) to form on the rear and lower part of the hock joint where the greatest strain comes. When a horse pulls in harness, the hock joint gets more strain than any other joint. A crooked hock in a stallion is likely to become unsound because of the extra weight thrown on it during the serving of mares.

Transmitted to Colts

Since crooked hocks are transmitted to the offspring, our best breeders and judges feel there is no one thing which is deserving of more attention than emphasis on the importance of the right set of the hock for a Percheron. A crooked hock is not only unsightly, but it is also weak. It is likely to go unsound at the least provocation. Percherons with crooked hocks do not sell readily. Skilled breeders will not buy them because colts from such animals are likely to have the same defect. Breeders who have animals with crooked hocks should sell them for work horses for whatever they can get, instead of allowing them to be used in producing registered Percherons. In fact, there is no fault in a draft horse so likely to be transmitted to offspring as this defect of crooked hocks. This fault is just as serious, and some claim even more so, than the undesirable quality of a draft horse being too tall, too long-backed, or too slim-middled. All of these defects are objectionable to our best breeders and judges. Certainly crooked hocks are the first on the list of undesirable points in the build of a heavy draft horse.

When a hock is too straight—that is, when the gaskin is set back from stifle to hock in too nearly a straight line instead of extending at a proper angle—it is likely to cause trouble because it does not have the necessary spring and give. There should be a little angle to the hock in order to give spring to the hind quarter as the animal walks or trots.

Puffs show up very strongly on hocks which are too straight. Horses with very straight hind legs are also subject to stifle trouble and should be watched for that fault. It is seldom, however, that you find a Percheron with hocks which are too straight so that more attention should be paid to breeding hocks which taper nicely into the bone. The most desirable hock is one which tapers smoothly into a wide, flat cannon. In some cases Percherons are too rough at the base of the hocks and on the outside.

To Examine Hocks

It is sometimes necessary to feel the hocks to determine how much they are filled and whether there is a bone spavin on the inside. It is very necessary to know how to feel the hocks of a horse so as to avoid injury. One should stand fairly close to the side of the animal and face in the same direction as the horse. The left

hock may be examined with the right hand. On the other side, one should take the same position and examine the right hock with the left hand. If the horse tries to kick, he must draw his leg forward, and in this position the judge pushes himself away as the horse's leg comes forward.

To feel the back of the hock it is quite convenient to face in the opposite direction from that in which the horse faces. At times the hair gets a bit long and rough over the spot on the rear lower part of the hock joint where a curb appears. This makes it necessary for one to run the hand down over the spot in order to be sure there is no swelling nor bony enlargement present to indicate possible lameness. An animal with a curb or bone spavin should be placed at the foot of the class, because if he is not already lame, he will probably develop lameness.

Rear Pasterns

If a horse has upright rear pasterns, lameness is much more likely to develop than in a fairly long, sloping pastern. The long, sloping pastern not only makes for soundness, but it also indicates better action. The judge should be careful to note this. When short and straight, the hind pastern is more likely to become unsound than one with more length and with a forty-five degree angle slope. Some good judges feel that a pastern which slopes at a forty-five degree angle behind is not quite straight enough. Animals which have been fitted for show and stallions which are used for breeding purposes are especially apt to develop lameness because of too upright hind pasterns. A horse in such a condition is described as "up" in his hind pasterns, and he often "knuckles."

"Cocked ankles" is another term used in describing a condition which is the result of pasterns which are too short and too straight. Young horses which are being fitted do not become cock-ankled nearly as quickly when they have the proper length and slope to their pasterns.

Set of Legs

As the judge steps around to inspect the horse directly from the rear, he notes the placing of the hind legs, which should be set directly beneath him. If they are not, there is good reason to believe that a horse will not stay sound as long, nor be as useful as one with legs set correctly under him. Legs should not be wide apart under each corner. The points of the hocks should come reasonably close together both at the walk and at the trot, as well as when standing, so as to allow free motion of the stifle joints. A horse that moves wide behind hits his belly with his stifle joints, especially when he trots, and that interference between leg and abdomen does not help his breathing. If an animal has this poor rear action, it interferes with his walking. Thus a judge likes to see a horse keep his hocks together at both the walk and the trot. Hocks carried wide apart bring more strain on hock joints.

It is well also to note, while in this position, the slope of the hoof wall and the spacing of the heels, both of the front and the hind feet.

Importance of Feet

The old adage, "No foot, no horse," is a statement that Percheron judges should keep in mind constantly. As a breed, the Percheron has the best foot of any of the draft horses. The Percheron hoof has the long wearing texture of the mule's foot, a quality not found in any other breed of heavy horses.

It takes a large, round foot to please the most critical Percheron judges. A narrow heel in a Percheron is considered most objectionable. A stallion with this deficiency may sire many narrow-heeled colts. A mare may also transmit this narrow-heeled defect to her progeny. The lack of size in the foot seems to go with lameness, sidebones, and ringbones. The hoofhead should be big and round.

The foot should be moderately deep at the heel with a good frog to serve as a cushion. A shallow frog usually goes with a narrow heel. When the frog dries up, the heel seems to contract as a result. In judging Percherons, it is a good plan to pick up each front foot to see the condition of the frog. If thrush is present, the judge knows that the animal needs attention. Such a horse is not equipped with the best possible foot; the thrush may result in serious damage.

Our best judges object to a foot with too little vertical depth—a flat foot. Such a foot does not seem to be built strong inwardly. It usually has a shallow frog, it cracks and breaks easily; it will not stand the wear like a deeper foot, nor will it hold a shoe as well.

If a Percheron has feet which turn out or in, such an animal will not stay sound as long as a horse which carries all four feet in a true line directly underneath the body without any swinging out of line, too far to the outside or inside. A horse that toes out is likely to interfere, and a pigeon-toed horse frequently develops sidebones on the outside corners. If he has to wear sharp calked shoes at work, he often steps on himself, resulting in serious harm. There is unnecessary strain thrown on the crooked foot or one which stands out of line. Unsoundness is sure to come sooner or later. Hence a judge should penalize an animal that does not stand squarely on its legs, whether it is a show horse or a work horse. This defect in a Percheron is a serious one. The front as well as the hind feet should be sufficiently far apart to keep the right from striking against the left, or vice versa, either at the walk or the trot.

Extra Heavy Muscling

While standing behind the horse, the judge forms an opinion as to whether the animal carries enough width and thickness through the hind quarters. He notes also the animal's muscling in his lower thighs.

Percherons are noted for extra heavy muscling below the hips. Because some Percherons are deficient in this respect, judges should always be on the alert for horses which are cat-hammed. No one likes scant muscling through the animal's thighs. It is an indication of a lack of ruggedness and power.

Speak to the Animal

As the judge walks around to the off side, he should look for the same things as he noted on the near side. He may want to approach the animal and feel the covering of the ribs to estimate the amount of fat on the horse. The judge may also wish to measure length of back and distance from last rib to point of hip, and depth of back rib. A judge or anyone else should speak to a horse gently when approaching from the off side and should watch the animal's ears to see if he welcomes the approach. If a horse is thoroughly gentle, such precaution is unnecessary. However, this is a good habit to form as a protection when approaching an animal which is not well broken, is nervous, or is easily frightened from lack of experience away from home.

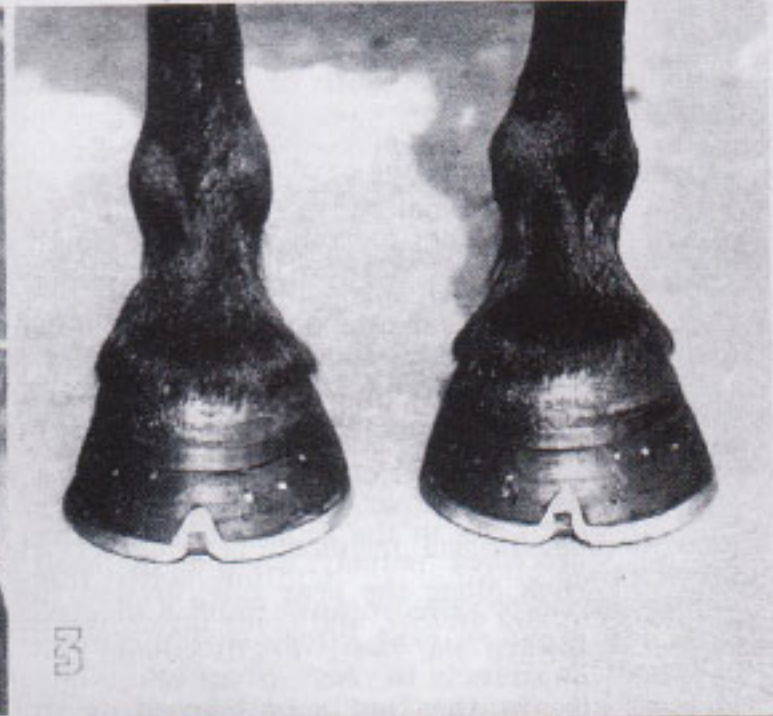
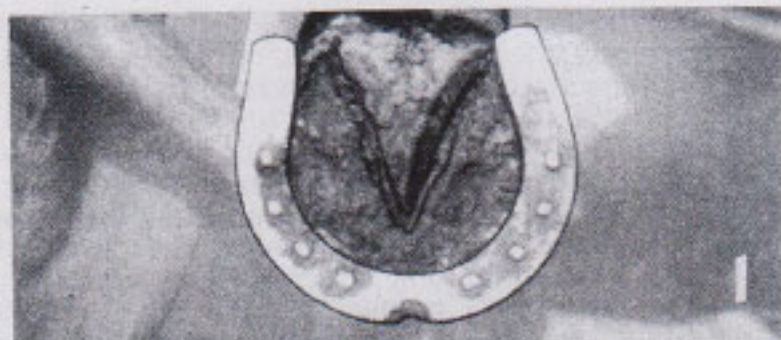
Showmen sometimes comb the mane backward in order to cover up a low back. Therefore, it is always a good practice when coming up to the animal on the off side to lift up the back part of the mane if there is a question as to a low back.

Depth of Chest

One should step forward, around in front of the animal again, to note the horse's thickness and depth through the chest. Constitution is necessary both in mares and in stallions. One should have made mental memoranda of these qualities when he first inspected the animal in front, but there is no harm in repeating this observation. A judge should also look for uneven shoulders, sweeny, or scars resulting from fistula or sore shoulders. A narrow chest in a Percheron is as serious a defect as a hollow chest in a human being. Judges should show a decided preference for wide, deep-chested Percherons. They have greater lung and heart capacity; they are usually less susceptible to disease; their recovery from illness is usually more certain. Hollowness back of the forelegs, as seen in some horses, indicates a lack of chest capacity.

On the other hand, judges should not prefer either stallions or mares with shoulders standing out prominently from their bodies, for this conformation is usually transmitted to the offspring. Delivery of prominent shouldered colts at the parturition period is difficult, and the death loss for both dam and colt is much greater because of these overly prominent shoulders in foals. Stallions as well as mares should be wide chested, but the shoulders should be built in smoothly with the rest of the body and should not stand out or forward at the corners.

(Continued on page 12)



Good Type Feet

These illustrations of feet were taken on September 2, 1936, at the Ohio State Fair at Columbus. They show the shapely and well balanced feet of the mare Kambriole 213294 (199389), grand champion at the Ohio State Fair in 1935. The shoeing was done by one of the most skillful shoers in this country.

The best wearing foot usually shows a tough, dense, dark, glistening effect in the outer surface of the hoof wall. This is illustrated in picture 3 shown at the upper right. The grey colored, scaly hoof surface of coarse texture does not usually indicate good wearing qualities.

Illustration 1 at the upper left shows the bottom of the forefoot. It should be noted that this front foot is large and round. A small hoof, narrow at the heel, is likely to develop lameness with little provocation, and it probably means that the inner parts of the hoof do not have sufficient room to perform their normal functions properly. Hoofs contract from disease such as founder, or dryness caused by animals standing on plank floors with little or no opportunity of contact with moist earth. Narrow heeled horses must be kept shod if worked all the time.

Notice the large, V-shaped, well developed frog which indicates a healthy foot and freedom from lameness. It will keep this mare going at hard work particularly on rough footing. The ideal foot is comparatively big and round, deep and wide at the heel with a well developed frog with some spring in it which acts as a cushion at the walk and trot. The frog is the cushion on which the weight of the horse should rest. Frogs should be thick with a spongy texture, not shriveled with a horny texture. A dried up frog is usually associated with a narrow heel.

Illustration 2 shows the bottom of the hind foot and illustrates the contrast in size of the front and back feet. Here again notice the broad heel.

Illustrations 4 and 5 present the rear and front feet of a Percheron shown from the side. Notice the excellent set of pasterns with good slope and good length. The short, straight up-and-down pastern is usually found on an animal which develops lameness easily. Pasterns with the length and slope shown above give a certain amount of spring to every step. They seldom develop lameness. Notice the depth of the foot at the heel.

Conformation of the shoulders which makes for a strong, smooth collarbed is important. In showing judging, not enough attention is given to this feature.

Judges should discourage the exhibiting of too fat breeding stock. Breeders should be shown how certain failure accompanies the policy of having breeding stock too highly fitted for extended periods.

Regardless of how many horses a judge has to look at, he should always go over each one in the same manner as has been described: namely, begin at the head, work back along the near side, around the rear of the animal, and come up on the off side toward the head, finally giving the front quarters a second careful check-up. There is always a lot to be learned by studying a horse's front.

Watch Horse in Action

After the judge has walked slowly around the horse and studied it in detail, he is ready to see it in action. Action is probably more essential in a Percheron than in any other draft breed, yet the prudent judge will guard against over-emphasis in this respect. The walk is the important gait. The animal should walk straight away from the judge, one hundred to one hundred fifty feet, and then return in a straight line. Some judges say that half that distance is far enough. One thus determines how straight the animal walks and whether its legs have the undesirable motions at the walk such as swinging the feet outwardly, or inwardly, or crosswise, or with a rope-walking effect as the animal steps away from or returns toward the judge. The judge should watch the movement of the animal's head and hips to see whether there is any trace of lameness as the animal goes away or comes toward him, both at the walk and the trot. If lame, the animal should be sent to the barn. It is usually best to speak quietly to the owner or leader and have him agree to this.

In order to have satisfactory action either at the walk or trot, it is most necessary for a horse to have legs moving perfectly true in a straight line. The same procedure is followed in trotting the animal. Some Percherons walk with excellent precision, but are not as satisfactory at the trot, and vice versa. Some are faulty in action, both at the walk and trot. Action in others is so beautiful that the judge is delighted with every step the animal takes. Extremely high action is not necessary in a draft horse. He should carry his legs squarely under him without movement of any kind that is out of line with true action, either going forward or coming back. Many exhibitors overdo the matter of using a whip in an attempt to improve action. They make their horses trot faster or step higher because of excitement. Judges should insist that exhibitors keep their whips still. It would then be possible to determine the true action of the horse at the walk and the trot because undue excitement causes it to move unnaturally.

The judge should notice the horse's action from the side as well. This gives him

the chance to study length and height of stride, and also the set of the hind legs. There are some grooms who can stand a horse with crooked hind legs so that he looks fairly well, so, for this reason, judges should insist more than they do upon seeing horses stand on the level.

When horses are moved and when they are turned the first time, one should be particular to look for string-halt and any signs of crampiness. If a horse is backed a few steps, "stringy" and "stifled" horses are easily discovered. It is a good idea also to notice the bottom of the feet while the horse is at the walk, noting how the frog grows and its size. At this same time the width of the heels can be noted to advantage.

Lame Horses

In judging a large show, a judge can save time by moving each horse before looking the individual over carefully and thus can send the lame animals to the barn without wasting any more time on them.

Wind Important

Attention should be paid to unsoundness of the wind. Grunters and roarers may be caught if they are bad enough. Some horses, not too good in the wind, get by in the showing. It is just as important for a show horse to have good wind as it is for a work horse. There is no more serious defect in a draft horse than unsoundness of wind. Some stallions have a tendency to sire colts which are windy. If a judge is suspicious that an animal is off in his wind, the horse should be moved again at a good fast trot, turned quickly, and brought back to the judge at a lively pace.

Stallion Should Show Both Testicles

A judge should always look carefully to see that a stallion shows both testicles, and that they are normal in size.

Place Them End to End

After each horse in the class has been moved at the walk and trot, the judge should have the horses stood end to end with heads facing in the same direction in order to compare all animals from the side view. Judging of Percherons can never be done satisfactorily unless the judge stands the animals in this manner. Such a method not only helps the judge do a better job, but it also helps the spectators follow the judge's work with a greater degree of intelligence. When the horses stand side by side and close together, the judge cannot compare them properly, and those who look on cannot tell how good a job the judge is doing. Almost everyone at the ringside likes to place the horses in his own mind. If those about the ring agree for the most part with the man who is tying the ribbons, the Percheron show is more valuable from an educational standpoint. If it is easier for the spectators to approve of the way the ribbons are tied, they think the work is well done. Specta-