

Soundness in the horse is of extreme importance, since his efficiency in performance is dependent upon his ability to move.

Any abnormal deviation in the structure or function of a horse constitutes an unsoundness. All unsoundnesses do not have the same degree of severity. Some unsoundnesses can be treated successfully, others can not.

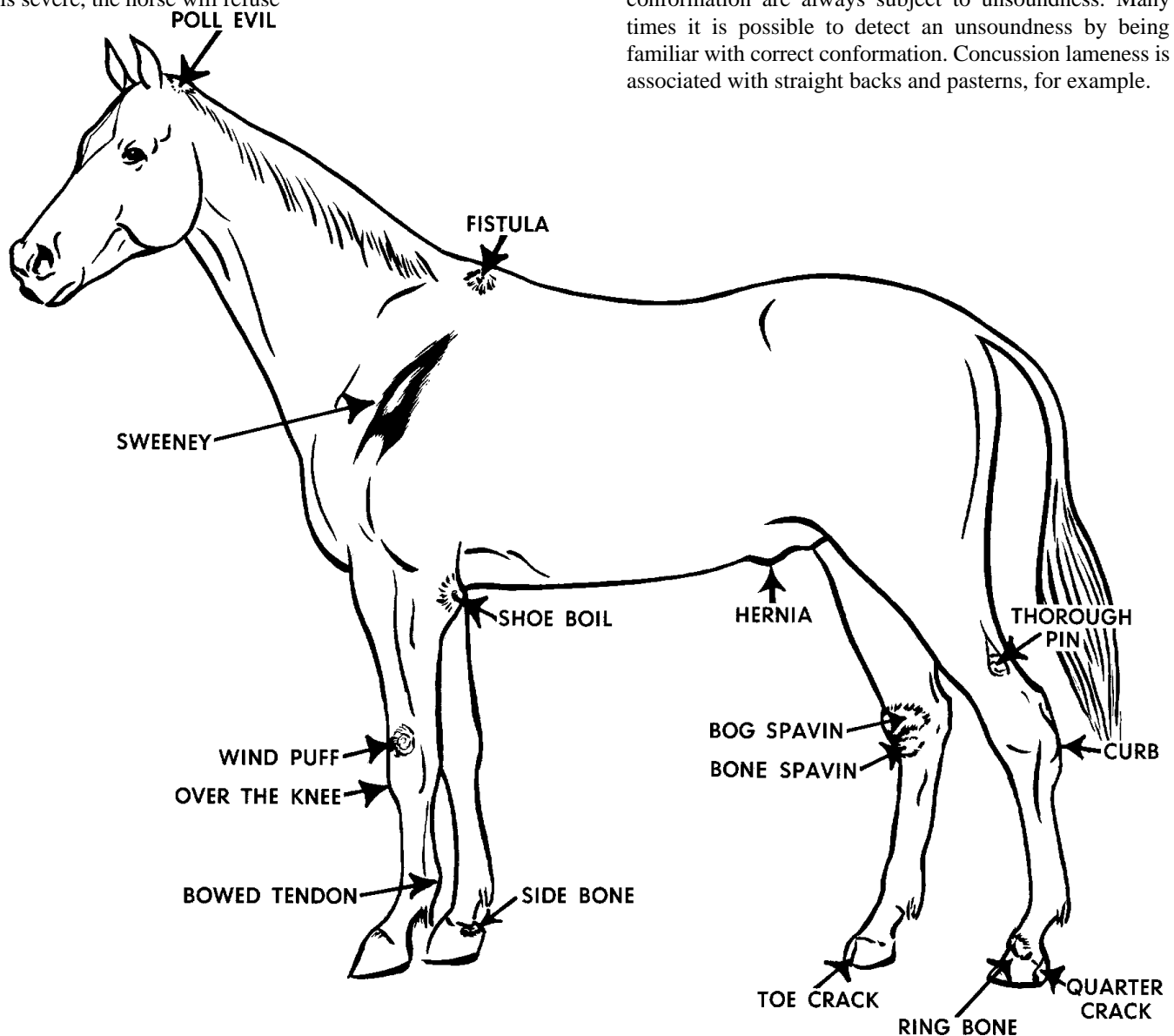
An example of a blemish is an unsightly scar or rope burn. A blemish does not interfere with the service ability of the horse.

Any time a horse is lame, we can suspect an unsoundness. Lameness is any irregularity in gait which results from moving with pain or difficulty. Lameness may be detected while the horse is in a standing position, however, it is most noticeable at the walk or trot. If lameness is severe, the horse will refuse

to put weight on the affected limb, even in the standing position. When moving, the lame horse is forced to carry most of his weight on the sound limbs, hence the "nodding" of the head when the sound limb strikes the ground. When the lameness is on the left fore leg, the head will nod as the right foot is planted on the ground but will jerk up as the left or lame leg touches the ground. Lameness in both front legs is indicated by a stiff, stilted action and short stride. The head is carried higher than usual without nodding.

The exact location of lameness is often difficult to determine. Many common unsoundnesses of the legs may be detected by carefully comparing the opposite leg. Swelling and implantation can be observed by handling the leg.

Most unsoundnesses of the legs and feet are caused by injury, or excess stress and strain. Horses with faulty conformation are always subject to unsoundness. Many times it is possible to detect an unsoundness by being familiar with correct conformation. Concussion lameness is associated with straight backs and pasterns, for example.



## COMMON UNSOUNDNESSES AND BLEMISHES

The following unsoundnesses and blemishes are identified: U-unsoundness, B-blemish.

### Head

- 1) cataract (U) - cloudy or opaque appearance of the eye.
- 2) defective eyes (U) - impaired vision or blindness.
- 3) poll evil (U) - inflamed swelling of poll between ears.
- 4) roman nose - faulty conformation.
- 5) parrot mouth (U) - lower jaw is shorter than upper jaw.
- 6) undershot jaw (U) - upper jaw is shorter than lower jaw.

### Neck

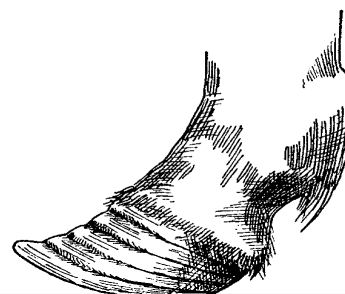
- 1) ewe-neck - faulty conformation.

### Withers and Shoulders

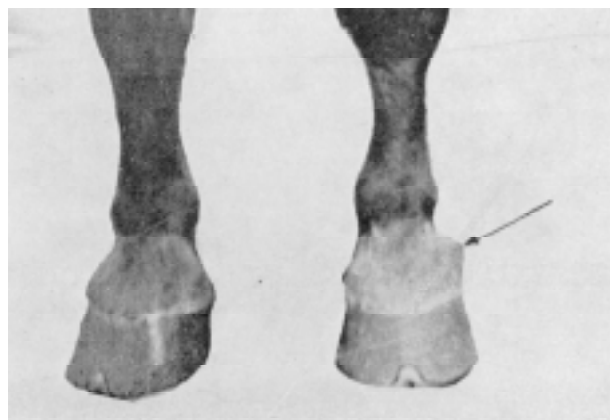
- 1) fistula of withers (U or B) - inflamed swelling of withers.
- 2) sweeny (U) - atrophy or decrease in size of a single muscle or group of muscles, usually found in shoulder or hip.

### Front Legs

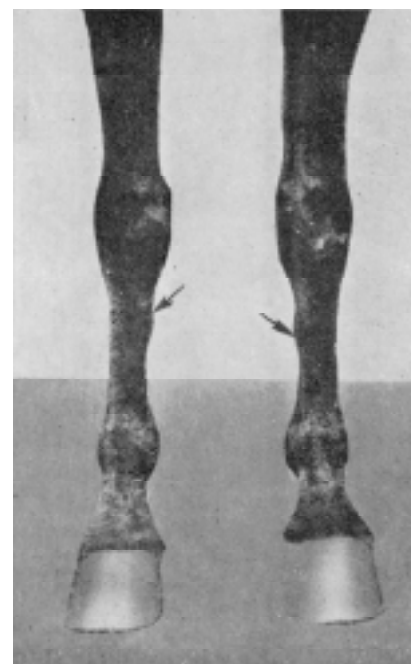
- 1) shoe boil or capped elbow (B) - soft, flabby swelling at the point of elbow.
- 2) knee - sprung or buck knee - over on the knees. Faulty conformation.
- 3) calf-kneed - back at the knees. Faulty conformation.
- 4) splint (B) - capsule enlargement usually found inside upper part of front cannon.
- 5) wind puff (U) - puffy swellings occurring either side of tendons above fetlock or knee.
- 6) bowed tendons (U) - enlarged, stretched flexor tendons behind the cannon bones.
- 7) ringbone (U) - bony growth on either or both sides of pastern.
- 8) sidebone (U) - bony growth above and toward the rear quarter of hoofhead.
- 9) quittor (U) - fistula of the hoofhead.
- 10) quarter or sand crack (B) - vertical split in the wall of the hoof.
- 11) navicular disease (U) - inflammation of small navicular bone usually inside front foot.
- 12) founder (U) - turning up of hoof and rough, deep rings in hoof wall caused by over feeding, severe concussion or disease and abnormal management.
- 13) contracted feet (B) - abnormal contraction of heel.
- 14) thrush (B) - disease of the frog.



**FOUNDERED HOOF**



**A SIDEBONE**



**SPLINTS**



**CONTRACTED TENDONS,  
COCKED ANKLE OR KNUCKLING**



**CAPPED HOCK**

### **Body**

- 1) heaves (U) - difficult breathing, lung damage.
- 2) roaring (U) - difficult breathing due to obstruction usually in larynx.
- 3) rupture (U) - protrusion of internal organs through the wall (hernia) of the body. Umbilical or scrotal areas most common.
- 4) sway back - faulty conformation.
- 5) hipdown (U) - fracture of prominence of hip and falling away.

### **Rear Limbs**

- 1) stifled (U) - displaced patella of stifle joint.
- 2) stringhalt (U) - nervous disorder characterized by excessive jerking of the hind leg.
- 3) thoroughpin (U) - puffy swelling which appears on upper part of hock and in front of the large tendon.
- 4) capped hock (B or U) - enlargement on point of hock. Depends on stage of development.
- 5) bog spavin (U) - meaty, soft swelling occurring on inner front part of hock.
- 6) bone spavin or jack spavin (U) - bony growth usually found on inside lower point of hock.
- 7) curb (U) - hard swelling on back surface of rear cannon about four inches below point of hock.
- 8) cocked ankle (U) - usually in hind feet, horse stands bent forward, due to contracted tendons.
- 9) blood spavin (B) - swelling of vein usually below seat of bog spavin.

### **NOTES**

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