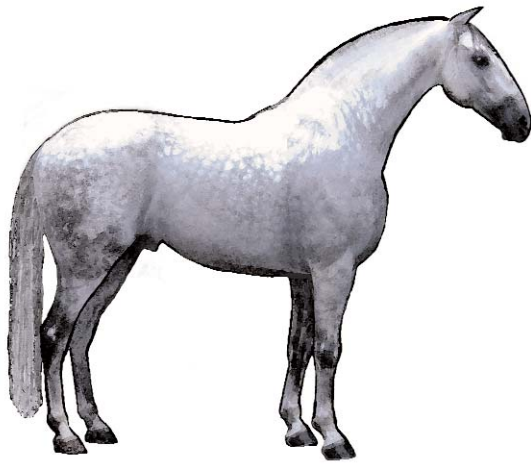


# The True to Type Purebred Spanish Horse



The 2007 Grading of the UK's Purebred Spanish Horses has been completed for another year and so it seems like a good opportunity to review the criteria by which they are judged.

The Official Breed Standard is as follows:

## General Characteristics:

Well proportioned, middle-sized and with a subconvex to straight profile; balanced conformation and a marked overall harmony; a horse of great beauty and with a noticeable difference between the sexes.

Movement brilliant, energetic, cadenced and elastic, with noticeable elevation and extension, and a pronounced ability for collection.

Temperament is spirited, noble, docile and equable, and with a great capacity to learn.

## Morphological Characteristics:

**1. HEAD:** Proportions are medium length, slender, with a front nasal-bone profile subconvex to straight. Ears medium sized, very mobile, well set-on and parallel. Forehead slightly wide and discreetly convex. Eyes lively, triangular and very expressive, with arched eye-orbits which do not rise above the profile, A relatively large face and moderately narrow (more in mares), subconvex or straight, and lean. The nose/muzzle curves softly from the face and narrows at the tip. Nostrils are long and not protruding. The cheeks are generous, lean and defined by a long, gentle arch.

**2. NECK:** Medium size and length, lightly arched and muscular (less in mares). Well connected to the head and the trunk. Mane abundant and silky.

**3. TRUNK:** Proportioned and robust. Withers are discreetly broad and pronounced, and smoothly prolonged into the dorsal line. Back substantial, muscular and almost straight. Loins short and wide, muscular and somewhat arched, well connected to the back and to the croup. Croup of medium length and width, rounded and slightly sloping. The tail is rooted low down and is well set in between the ischial prominences, abundantly full, long, and the hair is often wavy. Chest of good width and depth. Ribcage is large, arched and deep. Flanks extended and belly correct.

**4. THORACIC or FRONT LIMBS:** Large shoulders, muscular, sloping and elastic. Strong upper arms with good inclination, forearms powerful and of medium length. Knees well developed and clean. Cannon bones of proportionate length with big, well-defined tendons. Extremities are lean ('dry') and defined, with clean fetlocks. Pasterns are of good conformation, inclination and direction, and are of a proportionate length. Hooves compact, well developed and of balanced dimensions.

**5. PELVIC or POSTERIOR LIMBS:** Thighs muscular, buttocks slightly rounded and muscular, and second thighs long. Hocks are strong, large and neat/clean. The regions situated under the hock joint should have the identical characteristics to those described for the front limbs.

The following fleshing out of the basic standard is taken from the lecture notes provided by Mercedes Gonzales Cort during her conformation clinics, with added extra details as and when I remembered it!

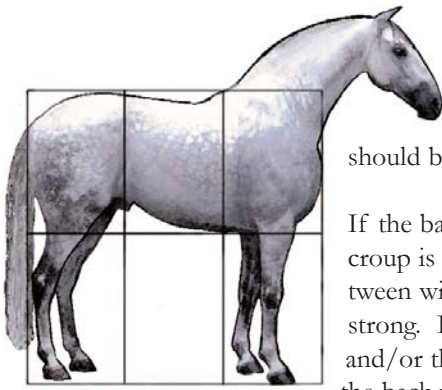
## CONFORMATION OF THE PUREBRED SPANISH HORSE

The best examples of the Spanish Horse should be scoring 70-80 points in morphology contests.

The Spanish Horse constitutes a beautiful and perfectly harmonic model, independent of his age and his development grade. The first impression you get when looking at a true type Spanish Horse is a very distinctive silhouette of an animal that has overall rounded lines, high in front, with a powerful neck and abundant mane and tail. In motion he is proud and high stepping, arrogant and supple.

His body should fit perfectly into a square, which means that his height is equal to his length. The official minimum heights are: males 152cm and females 150cm. For Qualified and Elite Reproducers the males should be 155cm and females 153cm.

The measurement from the point of the shoulder to the point of the buttock should divide into three even parts.



The measurements of the shoulder, the back and the croup should be equal.

If the back is sloping and the croup is long, the back in-between will be consistent and strong. If the croup is short and/or the shoulder vertical, the back will be proportionately too long, although the horse can still comply with the overall square.

A vertical shoulder will usually give a lower standing neck. A good neck will also often mean a good shoulder.

The length of the legs should be proportionate to the size of the body on top.

### The Skeleton

The structure of the skeleton correlates well between the skull and the rest of the body. Horses with flatter croups and high set tails will probably show straight profiles. Horses with very sloping or divided croups will have other signs of cold blood, like the shorter neck, heavy head and thick muzzle.

It is also interesting to compare the skeletal structure of the Spanish horse with the Arab, which is so fundamentally different. Roul Baron defined the types Ortoide for the Arab and Cirtoide for the PRE and suggests that the cranial profile that identifies a skull that correlates to a particular skeleton construction.

The Arab horse has a concave profile and a horizontal croup. Sloping shoulder and vertical arm. The forelegs are set forward under the body, following the line of the front of the chest. The angles of the hind leg is 120° and the foreleg 100°. The croup is flat and the tail set high and detached. The pelvis is horizontal and there is a prominent point of buttock and an open stifle joint.

The Spanish horse has a subconvex profile, rounded croup and low set tail. The angles of the legs are narrower (100° for the hind legs and 80° for the front legs). The forelegs are set further back, under the body. The scapular and the humerus both slope backwards. The cannons are long and the pelvis is oblique, with a closed angle between the femur and tibia. The buttock is round.

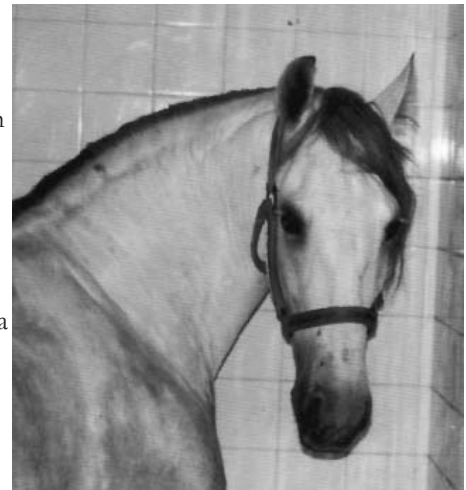
## Section by Section

### The Head

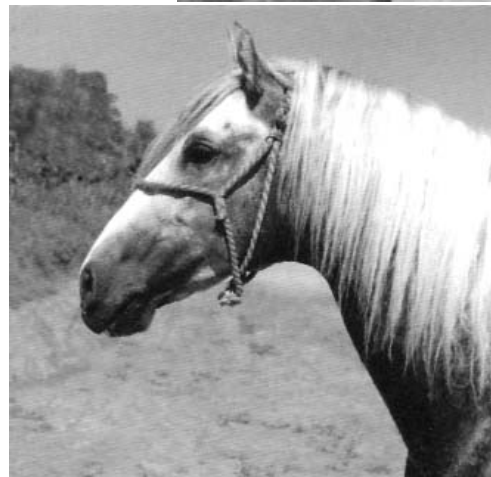
The shape of the skull of the Spanish horse gives him a very distinctive profile. This known as subconvex and means that it should be slightly convex from the poll to the muzzle and also slightly convex over the forehead, i.e. from eye to eye. The ideal head is long and straight with a well defined nasal bone and an ample and deep forehead, narrowing towards the muzzle. It should be smooth and lean. The line between the chin and the cheek should be straight. The forehead should be slightly rounded both vertically and horizontally. Mares faces are feminine with a shallower curve to the jaw. The distance between the jawbones under the head should not be too wide. You should not be able to fit your fist in there.

The faulty head may exhibit shortness, a concave profile, a broad and flat nasal bone. It may be too large or too

small, heavy and fleshy. Also, a fault would be tooth bumps or a downward curve on the jaw between the chin and the cheek and a flat forehead.



*Good heads*



### The Ears

Ideal ears are of medium size, fine, firm and pointing forwards. The outer edge should be a perfect curve. The ears should be very mobile with the tips rounded. Mares ears are larger than stallion ears. The faulty head would exhibit sharp or turned in points, ear tips pointing upwards, or short, round, hairy or narrow ears.



*Good ears*

### The Eye

The ideal eye is large, black, triangular in shape and showing no white. It should be alert, prominent but not bulging out. The eye socket should well set into the head and not be visible when the horse is seen in full profile. Incorrect eyes would be round, piggy, sunken, showing white, dull or protruding.

### The Muzzle

This should be long and narrow with a indentation in the upper lip which is slightly longer than the lower lip. Nostrils narrow, like inverted commas. The chin should be a triangular shape. The faulty head would have a short mouth, coarse lips, round nostril and a flat or rounded chin.

### The Neck

The ideal neck is long and arched. It should be flexible, uplifted, broader at the base and narrower towards the head. It should come straight out from the withers but should be well defined from the shoulder. There should be a marked jugular groove with lean muscles on the underside. Stallions should have a crest. Mares have a finer neck. Faults would be a narrow or over long neck or one that is too short or thick at the throat. Also a straight top line or an excessive or fallen crest is incorrect. As is a neck that is thick underneath or inverted - a ewe neck.

### The Mane

The correct mane shows plenty of hair which is fine, silky, long and dense. Faults would include hair that is short, broken, frizzy or coarse.

### The Withers

The ideal is a raised wither, springing well up from the shoulders and rounded. Faults would be a wither that is too high or sharp, narrow, thick, flat or set forward.

### The Shoulders

The shoulders should be long, sloping and well defined. With powerful muscles and a pronounced and high shoulder joint. A faulty shoulder is vertical or flat. It may lack, or have too much muscle and it may have a straight humerus.

This poor horse has all the faults!



Concave profile  
Round eye  
Big square jaw bone  
Tooth bumps  
Flat chin  
Rounded upper lip  
Thick neck  
Excessive crest and a thick throat.

### The Body

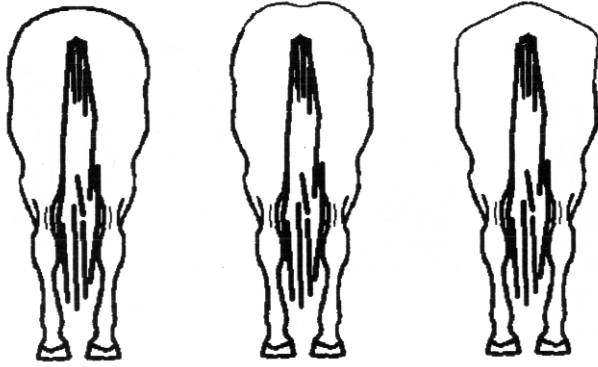
This should have a generous breast and well sprung ribs. The flanks should be broad and full. The horse should be deep at the girth with a medium length, straight and supple back. The Loins should be broad and strong. Faults would be an exaggerated width of breast, a cylindrical rib cage, a sunken or prominent breast. A tucked in, 'herring gutted' or 'cow' belly, a roach back, a sway back, a long or weak back. Divided or poor loins.

### The Croup

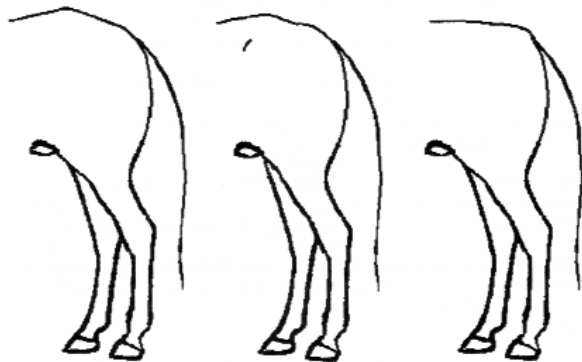
The croup should be of medium length, showing + or - 30° from horizontal. There should be a rounded, unbroken top line and round haunches. Faults include a goose rump, a flat or horizontal rump or one that is double or angular. An irregular top line, sharp haunches and a protruding point of croup are also faults.



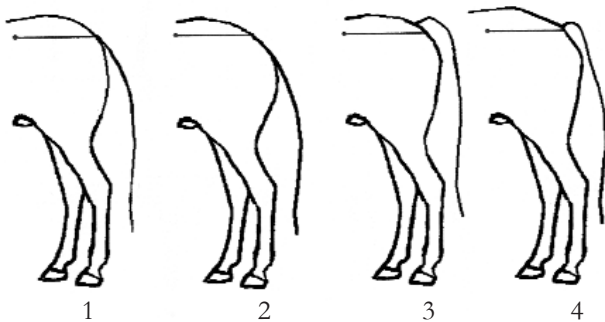
*Left; Tucked in gut or herring gutted with flat sunken ribs and tucked up flanks. Right Cow bellied*



Left: the round rump, typical of the Spanish Horse. Middle: a double or divided, goose rump and Right: an angular rump with sharp haunches often called a Mule rump.



Left: Protruding point of croup. Middle: Irregular to line. Right: Horizontal, flat and plump around the tail.



1. A good round rump with the tail following the line of the croup.  
 2. Tail set too low, croup too sloping. Goose rumped.  
 3. Tail set too high and held away from the buttocks.  
 4. Tail almost in the right place, but not following the line of the rump with the top bulging out.

### The Tail

The tail should be close to the body, low and well set on, which follows the line of the rump. The dock should be thick and straight with plenty of hair of fine silky strands which is long and dense. The tails should come away from the horse when it is moving, but not up. The correct tail set is a little lower than a straight line from point of hip to point of hip. Faults include a tail which is high set, twisted, sparse or short of hair, coarse or frizzy. A tail held high in motion or which bulges out at the top is incorrect.

### The Forelegs

#### The Arm

This should have a high point of shoulder and be well defined and lean. The line of the arm should slope backwards. Faults would be a vertical arm, forward sloping and thick.

#### The Elbow

The elbow should stand out from the body and be prominent. A fault would be for a tied-in elbow.

#### The Knee

Must be broad, hard and lean. A Faulty knee is one that is narrow, skimpy or puffed.

#### The Cannon

This must be slender, moderately long with solid, clean tendons. Faults are a narrow cannon, a short cannon and one which is light on bone. Also cannons which deviate from the vertical line or are tied-in.

#### The Fetlock

This must be proportionate to the knee. Clean and with sparse feathers. Faults include a swollen or club fetlock and abundant feather especially if they run up the back of the cannon.

#### The Pastern.

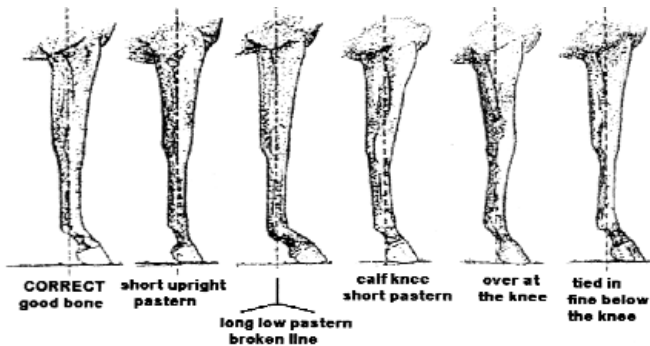
The pastern should be of medium length with a slope similar to the shoulder + or - 50°. Faults are pasterns which are too long, too short, too upright, too sloping or over flexible.

#### The Hoof

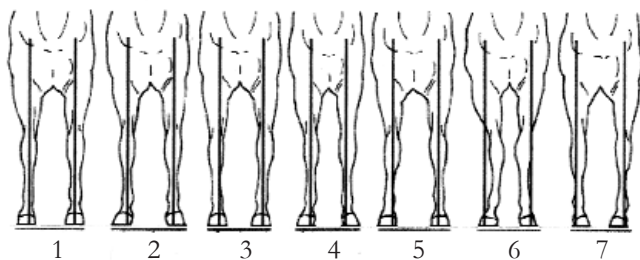
This must have a smooth coronet, even all round, with fine short hair. The hoof must grow wider towards the base. The height of the hoof should be in a proportion of 3:4 or 3:5 with the length of the sole. The forefeet are rounder than the hinds which are more oval. The correct proportion between the height of the toe and the heel is around 3:1 for the forefeet and 2:1 for the hind feet. Faults would be thick skin on the coronet,



long hairs and an uneven outline. Hoof ridges or scales. Also a spread out or flat foot, a boxy foot or dropped heels. Faults with farriery would be to shorten the heels too much, treating the Spanish Horse like a English Thoroughbred is totally inappropriate and will lead to lameness.



The short upright pastern above is often associated with small hooves. This and the long lower pastern with a broken line are bad faults. The worst fault is, however, over at the knee. Tied-in fine below the knee is a common fault on the PRE with roughly 60% of horses exhibiting it.



1. Ideal, 2 Splay-footed with a wide chest, 3. bow-kneed, 4, splay-footed with a narrow chest, 5. Bench-kneed, 6. Knock-kneed and 7. Pigeon-toed with a wide chest.

### The Hindlegs

#### The Angles

These must be closed and aligned. Faults are straight legs, open angles and not aligned.

#### The Thighs

The ideal thighs are long, broad and well muscled inside and outside. There should be a strong stifle, good buttocks and a closed angle. Faults would include narrow thighs and a pronounced groove in the buttock.

#### The Gaskin

Must be proportionate with the foreleg with a well defined hamstring. Faulty gaskins would be too long, broken legged or weak.

### The Hock

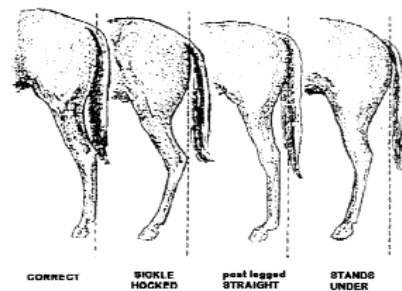
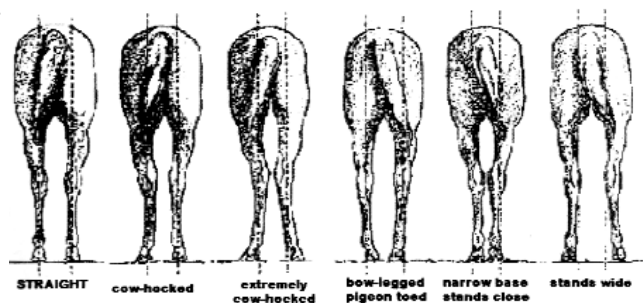
This must be generous and springy. A faulty hock is weak or lacking in flexion.

### The Cannon

This is longer than the fore-cannon and should be solid. Faults would be weak or short cannon, or not aligned.

### The Fetlock

This must be proportionate with the hock, clean with sparse feather, just enough to cover the ergot. Faults would be a swollen or club fetlock, excessive feathers especially those which spread to the sides or up the back of the cannon.



Notes for the above section:

The totally straight legged horse is very hard to find, the greater percentage of PRE's are slightly cow-hocked. The best check is that whatever position the cannon is standing in, a straight line up the cannon must aim at the point of the buttock.

Very difficult to see, but necessary requirement, is that the hock must move forward before it moves upwards when the horse is in motion.

It is very difficult to get a high score with the legs, however, when showing try to have the horse standing square on all four, not the one hind leg back as is often seen.

The hooves should hit the ground parallel, not toe first and not heel first. In particular, a flick of the toe in extension is NOT correct for this breed.

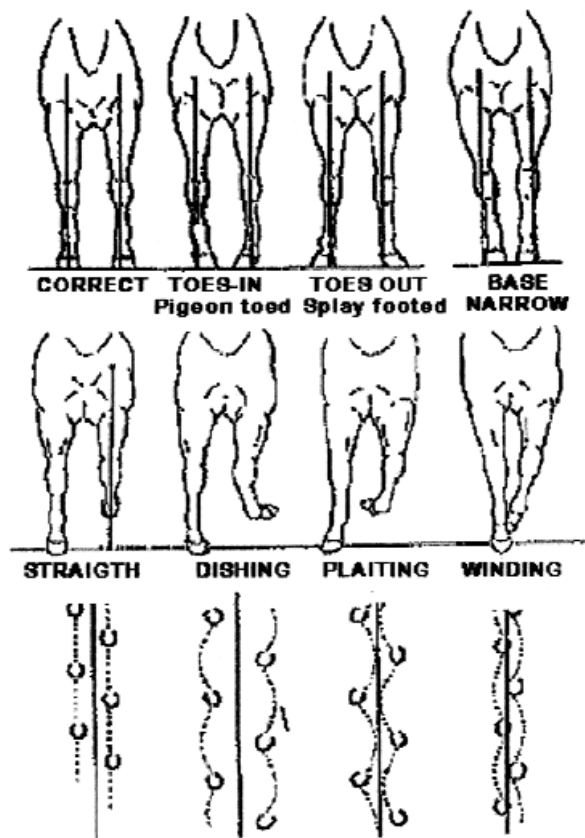
Proportionally a longer cannon is preferred. This makes the arm relatively shorter and produces the higher knee action. The Arab horse, by comparison, has a lower knee which produces a more 'daisy cutter' action.

### The Pastern

The ideal is a pastern of medium length sloping slightly more than the front pastern. Faults are a long or short, or upright or too sloping pastern or one that is over flexible.

### The Hoof

This is not as round as the fore hoof, more of an oval shape. Faults are thick skin on the coronet, long hairs and an uneven outline. Hoof ridges, too spread out, pointed, flat or boxy and dropped heels.



*During part of its history the PRE was bred to encourage the dishing action. This was preferred for the Feria as it created a dramatic look. However, this action was not encouraged in the working horses and nowadays it is also disliked by the competition world. A little dishing is acceptable, many other breeds also show a little of this action. However, the dishing must originate in the fetlock. If it starts at the knee this is a serious fault. A dishing horse must also place its hoof flat on the ground, not the inside of the hoof first.*

### Movement

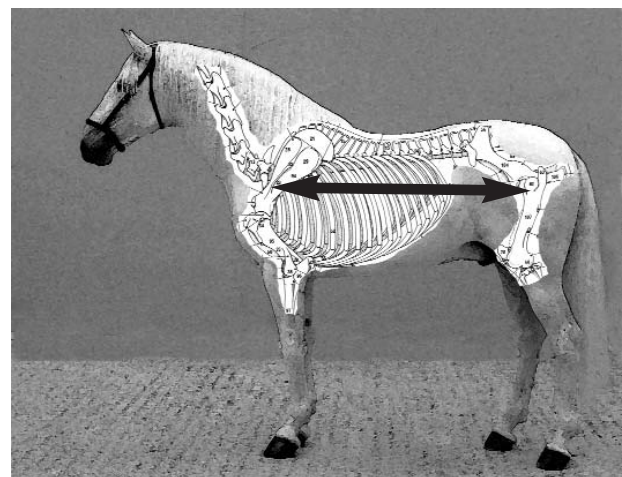
The breed standard calls for a high stepping, cadenced and agile movement, with the ability to put the weight onto the haunches, flex the hocks and lower the hind quarters. This makes the PRE very suitable for collected movements.

In collected trot and canter the forearm should be lifted up to the horizontal making an angle of knee and cannot of 90°.

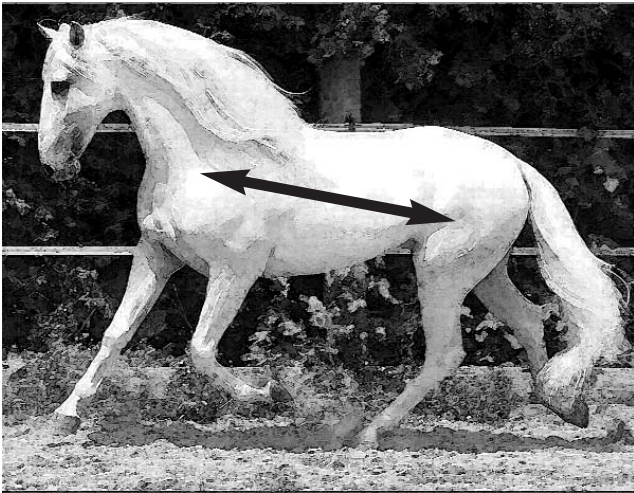
Hooves should come down to the ground parallel, in order words the whole of the sole strikes the ground when the foreleg is in the vertical position.

Faults include a low or straight knee action. A nippy or rushing gait. A horse that is downhill, with weight on the forehead or a low head carriage is also a fault. As is the forearm not reaching or going above the horizontal. The hoof touching the elbow or the knee not bending to 90°, or overbending.

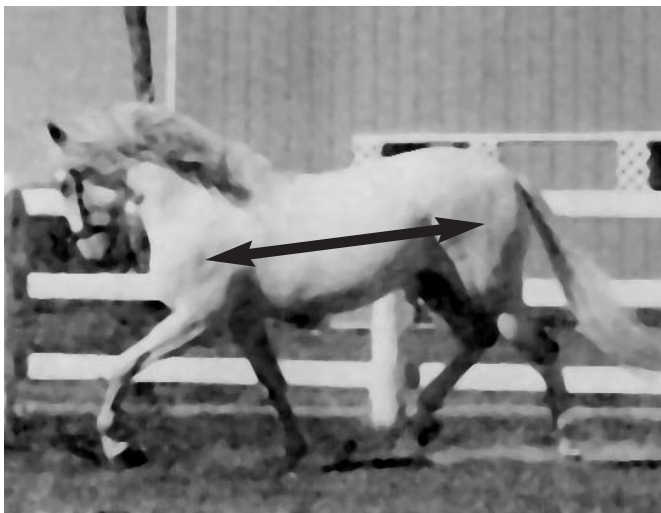
It is also a fault for the heels to touch the ground first and in extended paces the toe of the extended foreleg must NOT flick.



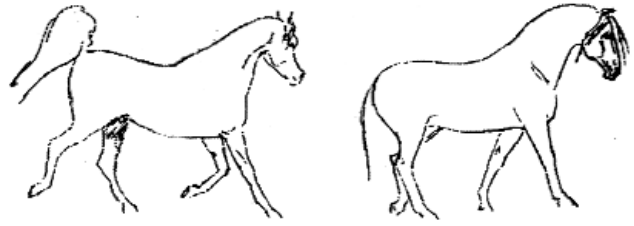
*The level horse*



*Horse with natural uphill balance for collection*



*Horse with downhill conformation*



*The Arabian horse strikes the ground with his heel before the foreleg reaches the vertical position.*

*The Spanish horse strikes the ground with the whole of the sole when the foreleg is in the vertical position.*

### Colours and markings

The purebred Spanish horse, like all horses, has two usual base coat colours - bay and black. However, within the breed the greying gene which acts on this base coat is very predominant. A large number of these grey horses are homozygous for the greying gene, meaning that they produce greying horses 100% of the time. However, a small proportion are heterozygous grey, meaning that 50% of their offspring will not turn grey, allowing a wide range of normal or diluting genes to show in the coat. After over thirty years of trying to eliminate all the non-greying colours, except bay and black, a new law was passed to allowing horses of other colours to be entered into the Stud Book

Markings, if present, are small on the head and the legs. Faults would include high socks, big blazes and lack of pigment around the eyes and muzzle.

### Clipping according to classes

Colts and fillies are clipped the same way until they are one year old. This means that the mane and forelock is hogged and the tail hairs removed completely.

Colts, after they become one year old do not ever have their manes and tails cut again.

Fillies at two years old have a hogged mane and the tail clipped except the end part of the dock that should be left to grow and the bottom of the tail cut off straight.

Three year old fillies should be clipped like a brood mare, although the tail will not yet be as long.



*The Arabian horse moves with his feet close to the ground. In a trot and canter he throws the forefoot upward showing the sole of the hoof.*

*The Spanish horse has a higher action, bending the knee and flexing the fetlock and pastern.*

Brood mares must have hogged mane and the top part of the dock of the tail is clipped to the bottom of the vulva. The end of the tail should be cut off straight. The forelock can be trimmed like the mane or left to grow.

Both males and females may have the hairs of the ears and the feathers trimmed if necessary.

Jo Jarrett

*I am very grateful to Mercedes González Cort for allowing me to use the excellent notes from her conformation clinics. Also to Lisa Hurlong and Juan Llamas for several drawings and extra bits of information from their booklet 'The Characteristics of the Spanish Horse and to Srn. Juan Llamas for a the head photographs from his book 'this is the Spanish Horse'*