



Assessment of your new horse

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Buying a new horse is an exciting new venture, and a big part of that process is determining the health and soundness of the horse to ensure that it can perform the role you hope for. Your veterinarian will conduct a pre-purchase exam to advise you about the horse's soundness and well-being, which will assist in your decision-making process.

From a body worker's perspective, an important consideration when choosing a new horse is the horse's posture. The horse's posture affects the way it stands and moves, which affects the loading of not only the legs, but also the spine and every joint in the body. The long-term soundness of your horse can be maximized with a balanced and symmetrical posture, and shortened with an imbalanced or one-sided posture that continually loads one leg over another.

One of the most common scenarios is when one hind leg and the opposite foreleg are utilized more than the other diagonal pair. In this scenario we see the torque created by this off-loading running through the horse's back and spine.

Imagine in your own body something simple like bringing your one ear closer to your shoulder. If you stand and feel how this small change affects your body from the inside, you will feel what the rest of your body has to do to compensate for this shift in posture. Now imagine running a race with your neck to the side and how your body would feel after that! You might not be lame, but you would be sore.

Now imagine your horse balancing a rider and doing all the work we are asking of him all while working with a postural asymmetry.

In my daily practice I would say that all horses have an asymmetry to some degree, but with the rider and trainer aware of the situation and with a diligent program we can work toward balance that will strengthen the body to maintain long-term soundness.