

CONFORMATION 101

What to look for in a jumper



This six-year-old Thoroughbred gelding's lumbosacral (LS) joint is well behind his point of hip, which is going to cause him problems in transferring power created by his back end. The longer the distance from the LS to the hips, the weaker the coupling and the more susceptible to injury. Development of a "hunter's bump" is common in these horses. When you look at all top level horses in any discipline, the one thing they all have in common is a perfectly placed LS right between the hips allowing for optimal power.

His stifle is quite low and well away from his body - below the level of his sheath, which will give him a wonderful length of stride in behind and great jumping scope. Scope is required for show jumpers and eventers, but is not needed in dressage.

The triangle behind is fairly even, which would indicate that this horse would be best suited as a jumper. As discussed in earlier articles, highly successful dressage horses tend to have a shorter ilium and longer femur while jumpers have an

equilateral triangle from stifle to point of buttocks to point of hip. This gelding would have difficulties transferring all of his power over higher jumps without developing a sore back.

He is weak through the loin, partially because of his poor LS placement and partially because of the distance from his last rib to his hindquarters, which is sometimes called "waspy waisted." This, in addition to the poor LS placement, spells weakness.

Up front, the point of shoulder on this gelding is not quite high enough for a super successful jumper. He won't be able to get his knees up and out of the way of a big jump, but he will be able to fold them nicely over a hunter fence. The length of his humerus is proportionately not very long so he will have a shorter stride up front than he does behind. To offset this problem, he will either shorten his stride behind, spend longer in the air with his forehead or a combination of the two. Because he lacks strength in his coupling, elevating the forehead will be more difficult.

This gelding's front legs are set back under himself. You can see that his pillar of support places a lot of pressure right at the front of his knees and fetlocks. Furthermore, there is quite a bit of horse in front of the this line, which means that there is extra weight and so extra work to do when lifting his front end to clear a jump.

The shorter humerus means that he will have some quickness with his front end and the lower point of shoulder means that he will have hunter form over a fence; however, he will not have the long, ground-covering stride for upper level hunter classes. If his point of shoulder were higher and his LS better placed he would have made a much better jumper.

By comparison

By comparison, [Lauren Hough's successful show jumping partner Classiko](#), has a low stifle (below the level of the sheath) and a great equilateral triangle. He has a well-placed LS, though the photograph is deceiving. If you mentally draw a line from the point of hip on this side to the one on the other side position on the other side, you can see that it is very close to perfect.

If you were to look at this horse upside down compared to the other horse, you would see that he has much more strength through his loins.

His length of stride behind matches his length of stride up front due to his longer humerus. His point of shoulder is quite high, which allows him to get his knees up and out of the way for the big jumps.

His pillar of support will not cause as much strain on his joints as seen in the first gelding. He does have a fair amount of horse in front of his pillar of support, but, because he has a higher point of shoulder, a higher neck set, and a strong LS, he can be ridden in a compressed frame, like a coiled spring.

