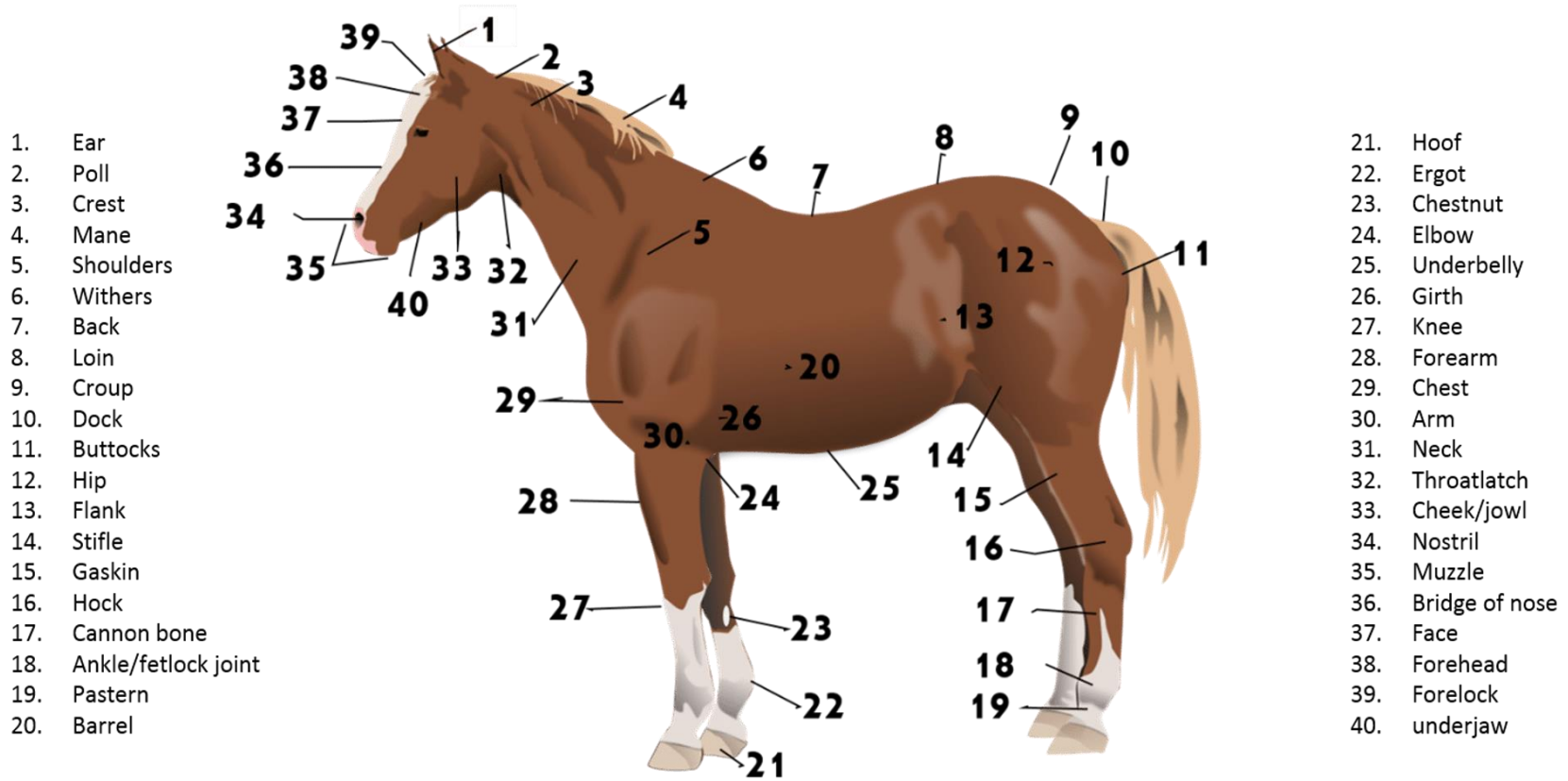


ANATOMY OF THE HORSE



Description

Face - The face and head are the most sensitive of horse body parts. When you first start with horses be aware that some horses can startle quickly or may not like their face touched. More explanation on the details of the face can be found below.

Neck- Joins the head to the trunk. He should be able to bend his neck equally well to either side. Often though just like us, they have an easier time bending to one side. They are also able to flex the neck and "arch" it.

Chest- The chest is the front of the horse and houses the powerful pectoral muscles

Shoulder- Where the shoulder blade is found and is connected to one of the front leg bones. Horses don't have a collar bone like humans do. That means their shoulders are attached to the body only by connective tissue, not through any bony connection.

Elbow- The elbow is a joint found near the top of the front leg on the toward the back side of the leg

Knee- The knee is a joint on the *front* leg joining what we would consider the upper and lower part of the leg. Most everything found below the knees is tendons, not muscles. An injury below the knee will generally heal slower because of this.

Ankle- The ankle is also known as the *fetlock* joint. It is the next joint down from the knee on the front legs and the hocks on the back legs.

Pastern- This is a joint between the hoof and the ankle on both the front and back legs

Hoof- The hoof is below the pastern on all four legs. The hoof is arguably one of the most important horse body parts. In structure it is somewhat comparable to our fingernails. Proper hoof care and shoeing can mean the difference between a sound and unsound (lame) horse.

Withers- The withers are an important part of the horse and are the tallest point of the back. Horses are measured using the withers as a guiding point.

Back- The top part of the body from the withers back towards the croup. The strong back is where you are seated to ride. There are many muscles found there. The saddle sits on the back near the withers.

Loin, Croup, and Buttocks- These areas on the back of the horse comprise the "powerhouse."

Barrel- The barrel is the big round area of the horse's body below the back where the ribs are located. Some horses are referred to as *wide* or *wide barreled* because the circumference of the ribs and muscle on both sides of the barrel is very large. This can make saddle fitting a challenge.

Flank- Found on both sides of the body where the hind legs join into the body. The flanks can be very sensitive body parts and horses can be reactive when touched there.

Stifle- This rear leg joint is comparable to our knees in structure. Some horses get a "locking stifle." That is a condition where the joint "catches" temporarily.

Hock- The hocks are found on each rear leg and when seen they look to jut towards the back of the horse. The hock is prone to injury with overuse from riding as well as from trauma such as receiving a kick from his pasture buddy

Parts of the Head and Face

Ears - The ears are found at the top of the head and can rotate around to hear sounds in different directions. Horses have excellent hearing. They can also become "ear shy" from improper handling while haltering, clipping, and bridling. Always handle the ears gently.

Poll- The poll is the area right between and behind the ears. It is considered the highest point of the horse body parts, as the ears are not counted. When they flex at the poll in response to the bit it is considered a good thing.

Eyes- Horses see differently than we do. See lesson on vision to see how their vision effects handling and riding

Nostril and Nose - The nose is the part where a horse smells and breathes. A colored or consistent discharge from the nose can signal infection.

Muzzle - The muzzle is the front part of the nose and includes the nostrils Horses can "curl up" the top lip to get a better smell of something. They often do this "flehman" when they think something tastes or smells funny or different.

Jaw- The jaw or cheekbone has a circular appearance

Throatlatch- The skinnier area of the neck right behind the cheekbone Most bridles have a skinny strap that is called a "throatlatch" that fastens in this area. The horse's windpipe passes through the throat latch area.