

# Morgan Horse Association of Australia Inc.



## MORGAN HORSE JUDGING STANDARDS

### MORGAN BREED CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Morgan is easily recognized by his proud carriage, upright graceful neck, and distinctive head with expressive eyes. Deep bodied and compact, the Morgan has strongly muscled quarters. The intelligence, willingness, zest for life, and good sense of the Morgan is blended with soundness of limb, athleticism, and stamina. In addition, Morgan thriftiness and longevity have made this breed a good bargain for more than 200 years – easy to love and affordable to own.

The Morgan horse is free moving and calm under western tack or elegant and aristocratic when ridden in English style. A tractable temperament allows the Morgan to excel when driving in single or multiple hitches. Companionable and comfortable on a quiet pleasure ride anywhere open skies beckon, working as a sensible partner in a long day of stock work or endurance riding, waiting alert and ready to enter a show ring, or performing in formal riding disciplines, the Morgan is a versatile horse within a versatile breed.

### TYPE AND CONFORMATION

**Type** is the ideal or standard of perfection for the breed. In addition to the physical characteristics that identify the Morgan, a Morgan is distinctive for its stamina and vigor, personality and eagerness and a strong natural way of moving.

**Conformation** is the degree of perfection of the component parts and their relationship to each other. Correct Morgan type and conformation is the same in each section of the Morgan Horse division where conformation is considered. There is only one standard for type and conformation of the Morgan horse.

When judging type and conformation, the maturity of that individual should be consistent with the age of that individual.

1. The head should be expressive with a broad forehead; large, prominent eyes; straight or slightly dished short face; firm, fine lips; large nostrils; and well-rounded jowls. The ears should be short and shapely, set rather wide apart, and carried alertly. Mares may have a slightly longer ear.
2. The throatlatch is slightly deeper than other breeds and should be refined sufficiently to allow proper flexion at the poll and normal respiration.
3. The neck should come out on top of an extremely well-angulated shoulder with depth from top of withers to point of shoulder. It should be relatively fine in relation to sex. It should be slightly arched and should blend with the withers and back. Ideally, the neck should have sufficient length and be set on high enough to allow the individual to set his head in a proper position while still maintaining his entire head and nose above the line of the withers. Judges must be cautious, however, not to reward length of neck over proper placement of the neck, and must keep in mind the balance and symmetry necessary to maintain the “Morgan look” which is predicated upon the way the neck grows out of the back. The top line of the neck should be considerably longer than the bottom line. The stallion should have more crest than the mare or gelding. An animal gelded late in life may resemble the stallion more closely.
4. The withers should be well defined and extend into the back in proportion to the angulation of the shoulder.
5. The body should be compact with a short back, close coupling, broad loins, deep flank, well-sprung ribs, croup long and well muscled, with tail attached high, carried gracefully and straight. A weak, low, or long back is a severe fault. The Morgan horse should not be higher at the rump than at the wither. Judges must penalize unnatural tail carriage. Unnatural tail carriage includes evidence of tail settings and/or breakover, dead tail and wry tail (wry tail is defined as twisted, carried askew, or distorted). Judges have an obligation to see that tails carried vertically with an abrupt breakover are severely penalized.

6. The stifle should be placed well forward and low in the flank area. It is imperative that weak or loose stifles be severely faulted.
7. The legs should be straight and sound with short cannons, flat bone, and an appearance of overall substance with refinement. The forearm should be relatively long in proportion to the cannon. The pasterns should have sufficient length and angulation to provide a light, springy step.
8. The structure of the rear legs is of extreme importance to the selection of a long-lasting equine athlete. Judges must take special care to severely fault individuals displaying weakness in this area. Any sign of poor angulation of the hocks, sickle hocks, or cow hocks must be considered a severe fault. Lack of proper flexion of the stifle and hock is cause for very close examination of the entire structure of the rear legs and should not be tolerated in breeding stock or show ring winners.
9. The feet should be in proportion to the size of the horse, round, open at the heel, with a concave sole and hoof of dense structure.
10. Viewed from the front, the chest should be well developed. The front legs should be perpendicular to the ground and closely attached to the body.
11. Viewed from the side, the top line represents a gentle curve from the poll to the back, giving the impression of the neck sitting on top of the withers rather than in front of them, continuing to a short, straight back and a relatively level croup rounding into a well-muscled thigh. The tail should be attached high and carried well-arched. At maturity, the croup should NOT be higher than the withers. The under line should be long, and the body deep through the heart girth and flanks. The extreme angulation of the shoulder results in the arm being a little more vertical than in other breeds, placing the front legs slightly farther forward on the body. The front legs should be straight and perpendicular to the ground. The rear cannons should be perpendicular to the ground when points of hocks and buttocks are in the same vertical lines.
12. Viewed from the rear, the croup should be well-rounded, thighs and gaskins well muscled. Legs should be straight. The gaskin should be relatively long in relation to the cannon. The Morgan should portray good spring of rib and well-rounded buttocks. Slab-sided individuals should be faulted.
13. The height ranges from 14.1 to 15.2 hands, with some individuals under or over.
14. Horses shall be serviceably sound.
15. Stallions two years old and over must have all the fully developed physical characteristics of a stallion. Mature stallions must be masculine in appearance, and both testicles must be dropped and appear normal. Mares must be feminine in appearance.
16. Coat or eye color has no bearing when judging Morgan horses.
17. Brands, including freeze brands, must not be discriminated against in any class.

Other distinctive attributes of the Morgan horse are his presence and personality. These include:

1. Animation
2. Stamina
3. Vigor
4. Alertness
5. Adaptability
6. Attitude
7. Tractability

#### **IN-HAND CRITERIA**

A Morgan is distinctive for its stamina and vigor, personality and eagerness, and strong natural way of moving. A tractable nature is of paramount importance in the breed and this should be reflected in all judging decisions (in-hand, ridden, harness).

It is imperative that height of action should not take precedence over correct way of going. Emphasis shall be on type and conformation with consideration given to the horse's ability to move correctly on the lead.

1. The walk should be rapid, flat-footed, elastic, with a four-beat cadence and with the accent on flexion in the pastern.
2. The trot should be a two-beat diagonal gait, animated, elastic, square, and collected. The rear action should be in balance with the front.
3. Emphasis should be on the horse's ability to perform as described in 1 and 2 above, regardless of the type of shoeing or training the horse has received.
4. All horses should exhibit good manners in the ring. The way of going and presence are equally as distinctive as the type itself.
5. Stress should be placed on an orderly presentation of the horse. He should stand stationary and move straight and true on the line, without a tendency to break gait or resist the handler.
6. Posing horses must stand squarely on all four feet with the front legs perpendicular to the ground. Rear legs may be placed slightly back. Judge must ask exhibitor to move hind legs up under horse for inspection.
7. Each qualified individual should be worked at a walk and at a trot on the line.



Composite paintings of "Ideal Stallion" (left) and "Ideal Mare" (right) by Jeanne Mellin Herrick

## SOME CONFORMATION FAULTS

### Head:

The typical Morgan head is one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the breed. Any of the below mentioned faults seriously detracts from it and should be penalized accordingly:

1. Coarse or plain head
2. Long and coarse ears
3. Lop ears
4. Ears set too far forward
5. Pig eyes
6. Parrot mouth
7. Coarse muzzle
8. Narrow, long head
9. Roman nose
10. Small nostrils
11. Broken wind – respiratory distress
12. Stallions lacking masculinity
13. Mares lacking femininity

### Neck:

These faults seriously interfere with flexion at the poll and detract from the beauty and efficiency of the horse:

1. Ewe necked
2. Crest fallen
3. Coarse throat latch
4. Short necked
5. Neck bowed on the bottom
6. Lacking arch

### Withers:

Good withers are very important. Deficiency of the withers should be penalized according to its severity:

1. Mutton withers
2. Lowness of withers
3. Dip in front of withers
4. Coarseness on sides of withers

### Shoulders:

One of the distinctive characteristics of the Morgan horse is a deep well-angulated shoulder. Any of these faults seriously detracts from good Morgan type and efficiency and should be penalized:

1. Too short
2. Too straight
3. Poor angulation

**Body:**

The body should be compact with a short back, close coupling, broad loins, deep flank, and well-sprung ribs. These faults should be penalized according to their severity:

1. Low backed
2. Flat ribbed
3. Roach backed
4. Long backed
5. Weak coupling
6. Shallow bodied
7. Hollow chested
8. Lack of depth through the heart girth and flank

**Croup:**

The croup is long and well-muscled, with the tail attached high. A croup higher than the withers is usually associated with a low back. A short croup interferes with the length of stride behind. Insufficient muscling inhibits propulsion. A steep croup and low tail set detract from the overall balance of the individual horse. These faults should be penalized according to their severity:

1. High croup
2. Short croup
3. Insufficient muscling
4. Steep croup
5. Low tail set
6. Overly long croup

**Legs & Feet:**

Each of the below faults, blemishes, and unsoundnesses interferes with the normal function and/or appearance of a horse. The degree of severity should be considered and penalized accordingly by the judge:

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Evidence of severe founder   | 16. Stands base-wide or base-narrow    |
| 2. Bone spavin                  | 17. Sickie hocked (curby conformation) |
| 3. Ring bone                    | 18. Cow hocked                         |
| 4. String halt                  | 19. Coarse hocks                       |
| 5. Off-set knees                | 20. Bog spavin                         |
| 6. Calf knees                   | 21. Curb                               |
| 7. Over at the knees            | 22. Capped hocks                       |
| 8. Bow legs – front or rear     | 23. Shoe boil                          |
| 9. Tied in below the knees      | 24. Thorough-pin                       |
| 10. Long cannons                | 25. Wind puff                          |
| 11. Round bones                 | 26. Dish foot                          |
| 12. Straight pasterns           | 27. Coon footed                        |
| 13. Splay footed or pigeon toed | 28. Club footed                        |
| 14. Contracted heels            | 29. Splint                             |
| 15. Side bone                   |  |

**Mane, Tail & Coat:**

A full, natural mane and tail and a smooth glossy coat enhance the appearance of the animal. Judges shall penalize unnatural tail carriage. Unnatural tail carriage includes evidence of tail settings and/or breakover, dead tail and wry tail (wry tail is defined as twisted, carried askew or distorted). Judges have an obligation to see that tails carried vertically with an abrupt breakover are severely penalized.

1. Rat tail
2. Wry tail
3. Severe breakover of the tail
4. Mane and/or tail rubbed out
5. Rough coat