

Front End Conformation

An Analysis by [Lee Ziegler](#)



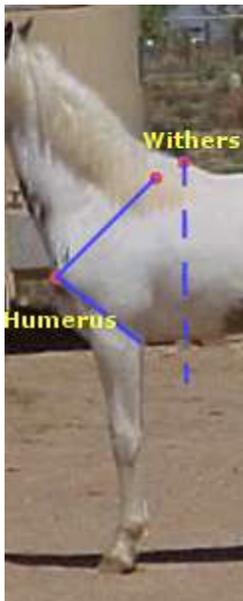
Conformation analysis of baby horses is not easy! They change proportions almost constantly; most have short, upright necks; and their legs seem to grow in sections. However, some things do not change much from babyhood to adult horse.

In an adult horse an upright neck carriage may indicate a preference for one of the more "ventroflexed" gaits, such as the rack or pace. But, in babies, this is the normal way of carrying the head and neck, reflecting the immature body of the foal. It is one of the things that inclines all foals, of any breed, gaited or non-gaited, to show steps of lateral gaits as they grow, but can't be taken as an indication of what the foal will do as he matures.

Thicker, shorter necks often incline an adult horse to a lateral, "ventroflexed" gait, but again, in foals, this sort of neck is normal, and while it may incline them as foals to lateral gaits, it does not necessarily carry over to adulthood. Thick throat latches, in adult horses, indicate a difficulty with flexing at the poll, and again may incline to lateral gaits. In foals, a thick throat latch may just be a momentary result of a growing spurt, and not an indication of mature conformation. While the foal has an upright, short, thick neck with a thick throatlatch, he may indeed show a lot of lateral gait. But he will change with time, and it is a very "iffy" thing to predict his gait and final

conformation from baby proportions.

While the bones themselves will change in proportion, the angulation of their attachment to one another stays pretty much the same from babyhood on. The angulation of the shoulder/humerus is one conformation trait that does not change much. Again, this angulation will not guarantee which gait a horse will perform, but will strongly effect the way he does it. From what is shown here, it is impossible to guess what gait they will do, however the way they move their front legs and shoulders will not change no matter what gait they prefer.



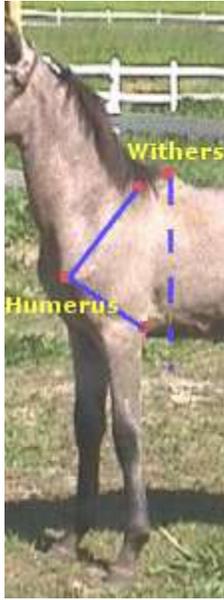
Baby horse #1

Although the slight glitch in the picture makes it a little difficult to see the point of the shoulder, and the top of the shoulder blade, so I am guessing somewhat at the placement of these points, this foal's relatively steep humerus inclines him to slightly high action, while his relatively laid back shoulder gives him the possibility of a long reach.

He would probably fold moderately high, but reach out somewhat as he did so.

Note that the withers are considerably behind a vertical line dropped to the elbow -- this indicates that the scope of his forward reaching step will be somewhat limited. This sort of movement would not be desirable in a Fox Trotter, as it would result in too short a reach in front, and it would also not be desirable in a Paso Fino, as the reach would be too long.

For a show type higher action Tennessee Walker or a Rocky Mountain horse, this sort of angulation would be more ideal.

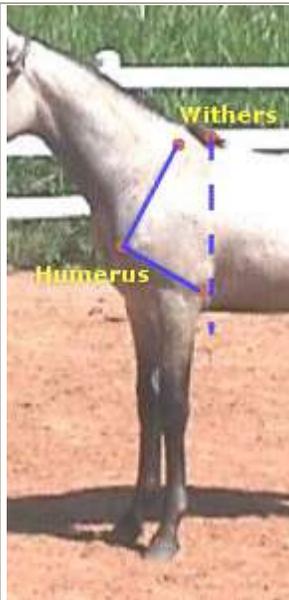


Baby horse #2

This is an interesting shoulder conformation, since the shoulder blade inclines to a long reach, while the somewhat steep humerus inclines to higher, shorter action.

The sum of the two probably will result in a horse that has a moderate length of step motion in front, but also has the ability to show high action. Note again that his withers lie well

behind the point of his elbow. His gait will have a longer step in front than would be ideal for a Paso Fino, for example, but not as much reach as would be expected from an ideal Fox Trotter.



Baby horse #3

This baby's shoulder/humerus are well suited to a short, high step in front. His withers are considerably behind his elbow, inclining him to the highest, shortest step of the three foals pictured. Although he will not have the reach of either of the two other foals pictured, he should have very flashy action in whatever gait he performs.

A short, high step will be the most obvious feature of his gait, and would be desirable if he were a Paso Fino or other breed that is prized for this sort of action. His motion would not be desirable in a Fox Trotter or a Tennessee Walker, but would be sought after in one of the racking breeds.