



General rules for young horse and foal assessments

Judges

- Judges have to have a national or an international FEIF breeding judge license
- Judges have to be especially educated for young horse and foal evaluations

Preconditions regarding participation

- Foals, at least 21 days old
- Young horses from 1-4 years old

Shoing of the horses

- Shoing allowed age 3, 8mm or less on all 4 feet only

Bridle

- Halter with a lead rope or lead rope with a chain.
- From the age of 3 years it is possible to use a bridle with a bit.

Tracks

- Dressage arena, indoor arena
- Approximately 20 x 40 m (max) with solid not too deep ground without stones, if an arena is bigger than 20 x 40 it has to be divided, not less than 15 x 30
- Stable fence (easy to see for the horses, no electric fence) or permanent fence

Persons driving the horses around

- 2-3 persons (experienced horse people)

Procedure foal assessment

- First the foals are running free with their mother
- Secondly (if owner agrees to it) the foal should run free without the mother
- at the end the mother is brought to the foal again and conformation is judged
- for the linear description the foals have to be shown alone (not some foals together!)

Procedure young horse assessment

- First running free alone without another horse similar to the foal assessment
- Secondly conformation and correctness is judged

Possibility to show the horse additionally (gaits) by hand but not necessary, depending on age and training

All young horse and foal evaluations have to be approved by the national breeding leader. Variations of location and fulfilment of all rules can be approved by the breeding leader from case to case.

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Guidelines for the description of foals and young horses

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Conformation:

1. Development: from little to much

describes the physical development in consideration of Height, Width and Depth of the horse, the muscle structure and the tightness of the tendons. Under remarks it's possible to make comments about the feeding- and grooming conditions of the horse. This should not have any consequences for different categories but describe the condition at the event.

The ideal [5] is much developed, taking a certain harmony of the overall impression into consideration!

Extremely long legs but a narrow chest and little muscle development cannot be described as much developed.

Attention: Horses, which are too small for their age because of the length of their legs, however comply in all other aspects of conformation, should not be described as less than [3]. (otherwise there is a double negative impact achieved, both in length of legs and development!)

2. Head:

Expression: from coarse to fine

describes the general impression of the head in its entirety.

The consistency is presented from coarse [1], extreme Profile changes, small eyes, faulty ear position to fine [5], relatively straight profile, open eyes and good ear positioning. The expression is more and more taken into consideration (same as in the ridden horses) ranging from lethargic, not interested to awake and interested listening.

Attention: Foals often have an arched forehead (convex). This phenomenon usually disappears completely with growth. A foal's ears appear long in most cases. The ears are not growing as much as the rest of the head during the development to adulthood. There should be little attention on this fact.

3. Neck:

3.1. Length: from short to long

describes only the length of the neck starting at the middle point of a straight line between the lowest connection point (about the height of the shoulder joint) and the upper connection (in front of the withers) to the middle point of a straight line between the throat latch and the poll.

Attention: There is not enough scientific proof yet, how much the length of the neck in a foal is changing in relation to the overall proportions during its development.

It is clear however, that foals with a very long neck impress with the same later on in life.



3.2. Position: from low to high

describes the lowest point of attachment to the trunk. Ideal [5] is an attachment which lies above the horizontal cross-section of the trunk.

Does the neck attach right at the cross-section line of the trunk, it is a medium position [3]. Is the attachment underneath the cross-section line it needs to be described in category [1] and [2].

The position of the neck does not change during the development of a foal to a ridden horse! BUT: During growth spurts it often appears as an optical illusion. Is a foal or young horse higher in the hind quarters, the whole horse appears lower in the front quarters, it mostly raises less and the attachment of the neck appears to be deeper as well.

3.3 Texture: from thick to thin

describes the texture of the entire neck from thick to thin.

The structure right in front of the throat latch has to be taken into consideration. (thick or thin at the throat)

A medium thick neck, which does not get thinner at the throat cannot be described as [3] any more. A clearly convex lower neck line cannot be described as average but has to be [1] or [2] depending on its severity.

Attention: Depending on feeding and coat condition of the foal, the neck often appears thicker than it really is (foals tend to have fat necks). The overall feeding condition needs to be taken into consideration, as well as a thick hair growth in the area of the throat latch (little thinning at the throat)

3.4. Neck Top Line: von concave [1] to convex [5]

describes only the upper line of the neck, which ideally has a pronounced convex bend, naturally carried and raised.

Attention: very thin, under-muscled foals and young horses almost always have a concave upper neck line, since there is little neck muscles there. In these cases the description is always under average [1] and [2] but has to be looked at in the big picture. (Show readiness of the horse might be questionable)

Yearlings often have a little developed neck top line [1] to [3] since during that age the growth of bone length is much more dominant than the growth of width and development of muscle. This is one of the reasons why yearlings are extremely hard to judge!

4. Shoulder: from steep to sloping

describes the position and definition of the scapula.

The shoulder should be as sloped as possible, well separated from the neck with an open angle to the upper arm. Undesirable would be a shoulder, that is steep with a small angle between shoulder blade and upper arm, sitting too flatly/narrow on the body.

Attention: in an overweight foal it is hard to see the texture of the shoulder. Look for the angle of the shoulder to the upper arm and an open, freely movable elbow, which is mostly combined with a shoulder that is well separated from the neck.

Attention: the slope of the shoulder does not change during the physical development of the horse. It can appear steeper, than it is while a young horse is higher in the hind quarters during its growth phases. (compare position of the neck)



5. Back:

5.1 Line of the back: from stiff to swayback

describes the line of the back, starting at the end of the withers to the end of the loins (highest point of the croup). The Ideal is in the middle [3], since the whole line should neither be too straight nor too much upward bent at the loin [1], and neither in its entirety too soft (swayback) nor in the transition to the loin hanging [5].

Attention: During its physical development, a foal has the softest back. Yearlings on the other hand have the straightest (stiffest) line of back and after about 2 years of age, the adult and final line of back is visible. The line of back consists of the spinal curve and its surrounding muscling, as well as the structure of abdominal muscles. That means, a malnourished under-muscles young horse usually has a more stiff line of back (especially at the loins), since the back- and abdominal muscles loose their strength (hanging belly). AGAIN: The judges have to take the overall appearance into consideration!

5.2. Length of back: from short to long

describes only the length of the back (middle hand/quarters), which cannot be too short or too long in comparison with the front quarters, the hind quarters and the entirety of the trunk. Ideal is [3].

Attention: very young foals (under 6 weeks) seem often to be very short, especially when they have very long legs. – Pay attention to the overall proportions!

5.3. Slope of croup: from steep to flat

describes the positioning of the pelvis, from the point of the hip toward the seat bone/point of the buttock. It is neither supposed to be a horizontal line (like in Arab horses [5]) nor a steep, more vertical line (like in some pacers [1]) The ideal is in the middle [3] and should be a long slope. Is a croup too steep [1] and [2], an open angle of the thigh and the calf (stifle angle) has to be taken into consideration. An open angle at the stifle can cause several stifle issues! (Lt. Angabe: Ronald J. Riegel, Susan E. Hakola: Anatomie + Klinik des Pferdes, Marzbelle)

5.4. Length of croup: from short to long

describes the same line as in 5.3., it should be as long as possible [5]. Croups, that are too short [1] have less of a leverage effect. The ideal is at [5]. In the foal, just like in the ridden horse, the entirety of all three parts: front, middle and hind quarters have to be looked at, to describe the correct length of each part.

6. Proportions:

6.1. Trunk form: from flat ribbed to cylindrical

describes the line of the ribcage from flat ribbed (which implies often a narrow back and a narrow chest [1] and [2]) to cylindrical, which lets the line of back and the lower line of the abdomen appear parallel, when seen from the side.

Attention: Well fed foals (and ridden horses) appear more cylindrical. (Note the depth of the chest!)

6.2. Trunk impression: from heavy build to light build

describes the impression of the trunk in its entirety from heavy built [1] (in combination with deep chest and/or drop form of the trunk cross-section) to elegant [5]



The ideal is an elegant horse, which has a broad enough back and broad enough chest with good muscling. Heavy build foals tend to have a deep chest, which results in a forward shifted centre of gravity.

Attention: A MOMENTARY higher/taller hind end of a foal, which happens during growth spurts, has nothing to do with a heavy front end!

6.3. Leg length: from short to long

describes the length of the legs, from the elbow to the sole. The legs should be as long as possible [5].

Attention: Does a foal look like an adult horse, because its depth of the trunk is proportionate in relation to the length of its legs, it will have short legs later on. Reason: The length of a foal's legs is 95% - 98% complete in its development at birth. The depth of the trunk can grow more than twice its size from birth to adulthood.

7. Leg conformation: from small to big

describes the joints and tendons in their entire impression. The form of the joints should be defined and even, well separated from the cannon bone. The cannon bones should appear big and the tendons should be well visible [5]. In older young horses it is possible to palpate the tendons for a description, if the horse is tame enough. The angles of the joints should be as correct as possible, if seen from the side.

Attention: Very young foals (3 to 12 weeks) can have a light forward bend in their carpal joint or too soft pasterns or other irregularities. In most cases these occurrences disappear completely. That means that the description of such young foals with slight irregularities should not be lower than [3]. Categories [1] and [2] describe small, little defined joints, thin cannon bones and too long pasterns.

Careful! The pasterns of foals seem mostly a bit too long. Faults (seen from the side) at an age of 16 weeks or older should be described as [1] and [2].

8. Leg stance:

8.1. Front legs: from toe out to toe in

describes the outward turn of the pastern of the front legs in combination with a straight, vertical front of the cannon bone. Is the outward turn extreme or only occurring on one leg category [1] or [2] are used. [3] describes the straight, correct stance, [4] and [5] describe the inward turn of the front pastern. Generally speaking the inward turn of the front pastern is seen as a bigger flaw in our breed, than outward turns, since with „toe in“ stance horses are often paddling (either out of the shoulder or from the carpal joint downward)

8.2. Hind legs: from toe out to toe in

Generally speaking the same rules apply as in 8.1. [3] describes the ideal. In the hind end it is less of a problem to have a horse be „toe out“ or slightly cow-hocked. With a „toe in“ leg stance, often the hocks tip to the outside, which is often described as „turning in the hock“ in the ridden horse.

Attention: General rules for leg stance: In deeper footing, foals will turn more in the joints, than in firmer footing. It is easy to see changes in the straight line of the legs, when the foal walks beside its mother, looking at it straight from the front and the back.

Older horses can be led in walk and trot in hand, untamed young horses can be viewed running free.



9. Hoof angle: from steep to flat

describes the angle of the hoof on a level surface, it should be neither too steep [1] and [2] nor to flat [4] and [5]. The ideal is at category [3]. Low and forward sloping heels belong to the flat angle, too high almost vertical heels belong to the steep angle.

Attention: please make sure the footage is not too deep! If you still have trouble seeing the angle, it is advisable to find a firmer footage or to carefully pick up the hoof, for checking the heels.

10. Mane and tail: from little to much

describes the thickness and length of mane, forelock and a thick tail [5]. There is little scientific research about the mane and tail in foals! It seems to be consistent, that a thicker, longer and early hanging mane is heavier. A lot of forelock in addition to that can lead to the conclusion, that there will be much mane and tail on this specific foal, when it is at the age to be ridden. It is easier to determine a description in a horse, which is one year or older.

Character:

1. cooperation: from uncooperative to cooperative

describes the ability of the foal to react according to the situation, to be attentive toward humans and to understand quickly what is asked of it [4] and [5]. It should not ignore the human (e.g. running over someone or just standing at the door, not reacting), it should not fight (in the halter) or even kick/bite [1] and [2]

Attention: one time kicking at the whip of the handler cannot be described under [3].

Generally speaking it is much easier to describe cooperation in a young horse (foal still with the mother), when the mother is removed from the track.

2. Courage: from fearful to courageous

describes the way, a young horse deals with an unknown and stressful situation. It is supposed to be interested, curious and open for new things, while relaxed and courageous toward all impressions (should not show too much flight instinct) The ideal describes a foal, which is using the whole arena courageously, when free running, already at a young age (without its mother). It is self confident and relaxed in front of the judges while the conformation is described [5]. The foal should not run away in panic or hide behind its mother at all times.

[1] and [2] describes a foal, which is not able to move forward without the protection of its mother and which always stays behind the mother while free running with her. Overreaction like panic is a form of fear (too much flight instinct) and is additionally described in the reactions. This trait is neither accepted nor wanted in the character of our Icelandic horses.

Attention: Untamed foals appear more fearful. It is important to see if the foal shows some independence. Very young foals (3-6 weeks) have more difficulty, which is self explanatory. (at that young age it is not mandatory to separate the foals from their mothers to let them run free!) The behaviour cannot be described under [3], that would be too harsh. Are exactly those young foals courageous and independent (use of the whole arena) it needs to be seen as excellent [5].



3. Expression: from little to much

describes the expression of the foal. It is a combination of the neck carriage, the ability to carry itself (natural collection) and especially its personality (courage, cheerfulness, joy of running) and what impression these traits cause in the observer. [1] and [2] describe foals, which have no energy, are fearful or dull and cannot impress with their overall performance.

Attention: Very stressed foals can produce tense steps, which gives them much expression at first sight. These cannot be described as [4] or [5].

4. Reactions: from slow to too fast/panic

describes the time of reaction from slow or hardly any reaction of the foal to the efforts of drivers, judges or other helping personnel [1] to over reacting due to panic [5]. Untamed foals can also react in an expected manner, so they should not be excluded because of their upbringing.

The ideal reaction pattern is in the middle [3], as both extremes are not reflecting the valuable character of our breed. Under all circumstances it is very important to pay attention to a very accurate, flexible and skilful handling of foals by all involved people! (No forceful or too slow driving of foals, no screaming or uncontrolled, forceful whip engagement)

5. Joy of running: from lazy to eager

describes the natural joy of moving and running forward without fear. The foal is supposed to run forward with joy and courage, when asked shortly by the handlers [5] without having to be pushed on constantly. [1] and [2] are used for foals, which refuse to run forward or have to be encouraged to run at all times.

Attention: It is important to give the foal a minute after separating it from its mother. It needs to find its orientation and adapt to the new situation. Some need more time than others but start performing fine then. Running away in panic is not described with joy of running – neither in a foal, nor in a ridden horse.

Gaits:

1. Neck carriage: from low to high

describes the carriage of the neck out of the withers (not in front of the withers). The carriage is supposed to be high [5] but not backwards tending in combination with a downward bend back and short stepping hind quarters. The top line of the neck should be convex while the poll is loosely carried. Faults [1] and [2] describe little to no raise of the neck or backward bend carriage with a downward bend back.

2. head carriage: from stiff to supple

describes the way of the head carriage. Already in foals it is possible to see limber, loose polls, which ideally have the appearance as if the horse would present itself correctly on the bit, when ridden [5]. Forward stretched, carried too high, stiff in the poll is not desirable, since they occur often in combination with non elastic movements, stiff back or on the forehand with too little engagement of the hind quarters.



3. Length of stride: from short to long

describes the length of steps in both the front and hind legs in combination with a harmonious flow of movement. Big and wide steps are one major criteria in the judgement of gaits, since among others they are responsible for speed capacity in every gait.

4. Height of movement: from low to high

describes the natural height of the movement, especially in the front legs. The movement should be as high as possible (at least as high as the point of the shoulder) in natural harmony with the movement of the hind legs.

Attention: Especially in the width and height of the steps it is very important to see foals without their mothers, since the separation gets them more agitated, which often lets them engage their hind quarters more, which is a similar reaction as collecting a ridden horse. Often you see then, for the first time, what kind of potential for movement this foal has. The best performance have those foals, that perform in a relaxed way besides their mothers as well as by themselves and show a natural high and wide range of motion [5].

5. Speed capacity: from little to much

describes the natural ability of the foal to show speed in all gaits and to hold the speed in one or more gaits to high speed without losing beat, carriage or suppleness. Desirable are short or longer sequences, especially in Tölt and Trot without changing into canter. In canter the foal should be able to get very fast without changing into cross canter or „tribulate/vixla“.

Attention: The drivers/handlers have to be careful, since too hectic, abrupt driving of the horse can cause cross canter. (similar to the ridden horse)

6. Balance: from little to much

describes the natural ability of the horse to carry itself in all gaits with good neck carriage, far under the body reaching hind legs, lightly raised shoulder and a centre of gravitation which is in the horses' middle or slightly to the back (lowered croup) Hanging on the forehand, short steps of the hind quarters or even upward or backwards stretched hind legs are undesirable.

Little balance [1] and [2], could be seen e.g. in hanging on the forehand, no continuous use of one gait, no continuous beat or the speed in one gait, rough transitions or heavy movements. For a lot of balance [4] and [5], the horse has a good centre of gravitation, active hind quarters, a good, natural neck carriage, effortless flowing transitions, it can maintain one gait over a longer distance (long side) and seems to be light footed in its movement.

7. Walk:

7.1. Beat: from little to much

describes the beat, even in the movement in a four beat with enough suppleness and well under the body stepping hind quarters [5]. Shifting to a more lateral or diagonal movement, unevenness or short stepping should be described in [1] and [2].



8. Tölt:

8.1. Beat: from little to much

describes an even four beat with correct foot fall and phases. Clear or constant shifts toward pace, trot or canter have to be described as [1] and [2]. Short flaws often happen during free running and should not automatically be interpreted as very negative especially not in the transitions. For a [5] there should be hardly any change in the beat.

8.2. Suppleness: from little to much

describes the suppleness in the movement through the body, stepping under the body with the hind quarters with much flowing energy. Stiff (shifting to pace) or extremely tense steps are described as [1] and [2]. Much rolling can only get to [3]. „Leg movers“ can reach [4], if the little swinging back has no impact on the engagement of the hind quarters and the neck carriage with impressive Movements.

8.3. Natural tölt ability: from little to much

describes the talent to show tölt from birth on. It should be secure, clear beat in possibly different speeds – the horse prefers this gait (pleasure and sport Tölter depending on movement)

Tölt can be seen from little (not shown – often 4 Gaiters) [1] to much, shown in different speeds with always clear beat, good balance, with enough self carriage (at least average) [4] and [5].

Attention: foals often show tölt only in small parts or transitions between gaits. Therefore attention needs to be paid on the frequency and speed of tölt steps. Preferred are short sequences of tölt in high speed [4].

Attention: Young horses often show less Tölt than foals and seem to shift toward trotting more and more the older they get. It is very important to look at the Tölt in the transitions and there should always be the possibility to show those horses in Tölt in hand.

9. Trot:

9.1. Beat: from little to much

describes an even two beat with enough suspension. Extreme four beat or constant rolling or uneven steps should be described as [1] and [2]. Secure two beat with hardly any suspension but very good speed and extension can go up to [4]. Category [5] should at least show suspension in its beginnings.

9.2. Suppleness: from little to much

describes the suppleness in consideration of the flow in the Movement and a swinging back, with good carrying and pushing hind quarters. Tense steps without speed with high tail carriage are described with [1] and [2]. A little tension with good speed and little tail engagement can reach [3]. In category [5] the typical “showing off“ cannot occur any more.

The foals might need a little time to get rid of any show or impression behaviour, which is necessary to get as close as possible in describing the real ability of these horses.



10. Pace ability: from little to much

describes the acceleration, beat, tension and speed in pace, as well as a beginning of stretching forward. Especially the acceleration and short sequences of pace have to be carefully looked at, since foals seldom show longer phases of real pace. [2] and [3] describes a short sequence (**excelleration**), a bit too much four beat or not enough speed. [4] and [5] describe a longer phase (ca. 25m) with correct beat, speed and stretching with clearly visible pushing power.

Comment regarding the calculatory system: A [1] is automatically added and will be calculated, even if no cross has been placed in this category, if it is clearly understood (through describing the other gaits) that the foal is five gaited.

11. Canter:**11.1. Beat: from little to much**

describes a consistent three beat in the gait. Is the croup visibly jumping higher than the front quarters, even though the beat is correct, it cannot be described as a [5]. This does not represent the correct canter of an Icelandic horse. Is the canter too four-beated or lateral, it is described with [1] or [2]. In category [4] a slight occurrence of "running in the hind end" is acceptable, if there is a clear upward- and forward stretching motion visible in the trunk with good speed capacity (carrying- and pushing force)

11.2. Suppleness: from little to much

describes the suppleness in canter with well suspended hind quarters, much pushing- and carrying power. Too much tension (clear lateral phases) too much weight on the forehand or too little suspension/ much running in the front and back are described as [1] and [2]. Category [4] and [5] describe a supple upward jump with good to excellent stretching of the trunk and speed capacity.

General comments to the gaits:

Having well educated, sensitive and sensible drivers is a necessity for a successful foal and young horse event. They should prevent to cause panic in the young horses, be able to vary the speed of the gaits as well as stopping and turning the horses around, e.g. when a foal is constantly cantering. A good driver will not stop a foal, when it is in the process of speeding up! See Working Guidelines.

Important: For the sake of a natural collection (to create pressure, that imitates the ridden horse as well as possible) it is necessary to see foals, which are still nursing at least for a small amount of time separated from their mothers. (compare description for height of movement)

