

# Conformation Quick Tips

## THE DRESSAGE HORSE

From Issue 4, The Performance Horse

### What is conformation?

A horse's conformation defines not only how it is built, but how it moves and performs.

Having a horse with conformation suited to their intended discipline can have a drastic impact on a horse's performance level and overall ability to excel. Functional conformation studies the horse's build from a skeletal perspective, and its impact on performance.

### How does conformation affect the dressage horse?

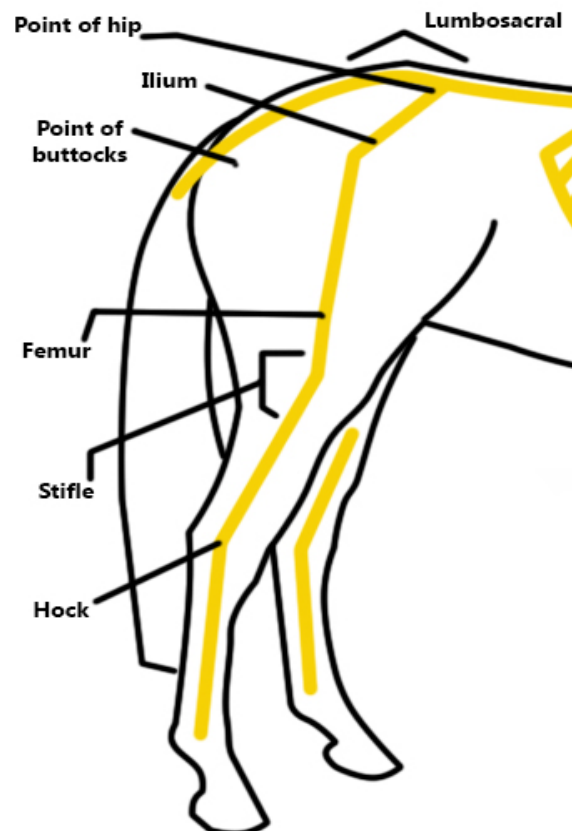
Dressage horses are required to perform intricate and precise movements on the ground, and must be conformationally built so that they can achieve extension in the gaits, while also maintaining power in the hindquarters.

The three main points to consider are the:

- Humerus
- Lumbosacral Joint (LS)
- Shoulder

### Some points to consider:

- Ideally, dressage horses will have a laid back shoulder, allowing for outward extension and freedom movement to extend the foreleg through specific gaits
- A long humerus is desired as it increases the horse's ability to move the elbow away from the torso (to the front or side) - this makes lateral movements more fluid and natural
- The lumbosacral joint (LS) should be directly over the point of hip, this maximizes the power of the leg by optimizing the rotation of the LS region
- Dressage horses typically have a longer femur and shorter stifle when compared to jumpers
- An increase in length of forearm and shorter cannon bones give the dressage horse a more 'uphill' build - this increases height and general soundness
- When viewing the near side of a dressage horse you will often note a '7' shape, formed from the point of hip to point of buttock to stifle through the hock



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