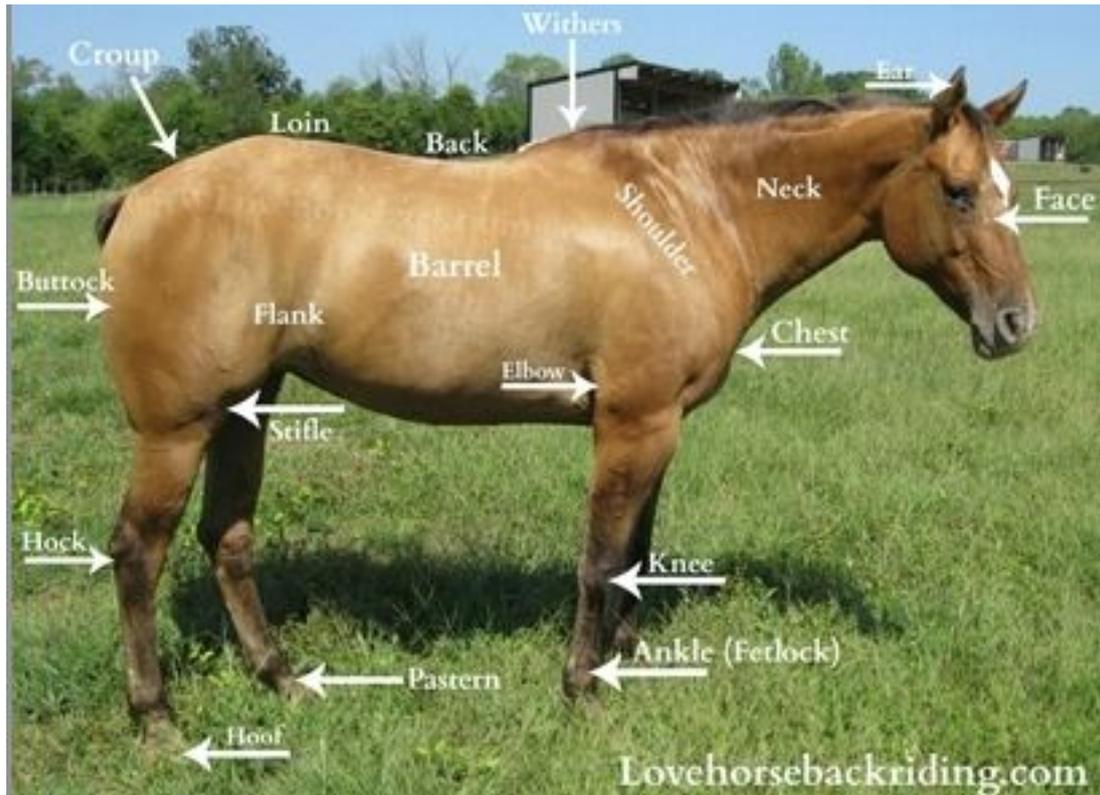


Basic Horse Body Parts



Face - The face and head are the most sensitive 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

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

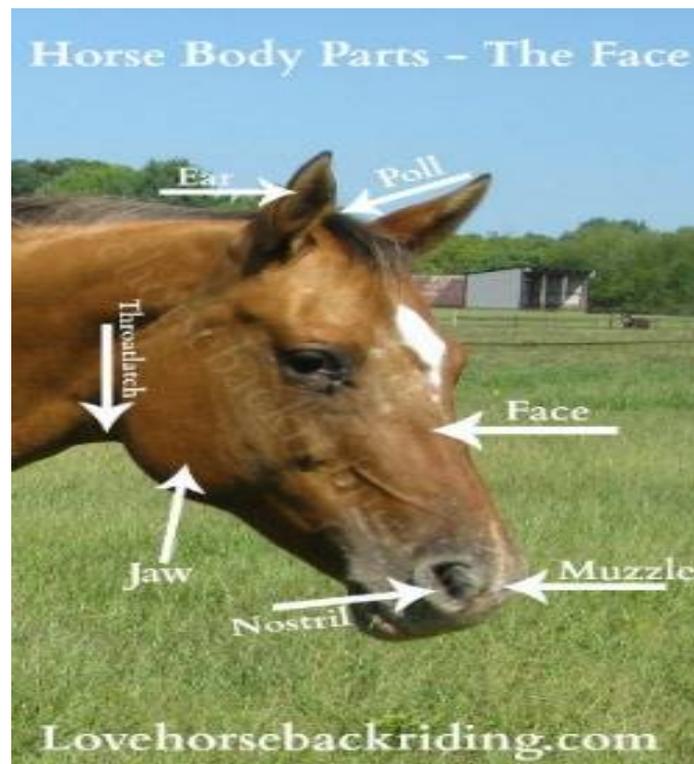
Stifle- This rear leg joint is comparable to our knees in structure

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. Always handle the ears gently.

Horses have excellent hearing. They can also become "ear shy" from improper handling while haltering, clipping, and bridling.

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. Go to [this page](#) to see

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 in order 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.

Horse vision is monocular. They have eyes set on the side of their head and mostly see two of each image.



Why do you need to know this?

Because they have blind spots in front of their nose as well as near their tail.

Horses have two places where they can't see you.

The two images they see separately come together right in front of their nose. As they get closer to an object, the image then disappears, creating a “blind spot” where they can't see you.

Seeing this way helps them locate danger because they have **great peripheral (side) vision** compared to humans. They can spot the lion that might want to attack them more easily. This helps them survive in the wild.

Because horse vision lacks depth perception like we have, they can't tell that a mud puddle is not an infinitely deep hole. Equines also process images in each eye separately. That is why they can sometimes spook at something you already showed them on one side when it is presented to them in the other eye.

He may be more used to having people handle him from the left side, as this is the traditional side they are trained and handled from.

He may react differently if you are on his right and he sees you out of his right eye or vice versa and it is something to be aware of.

Horses also lose vision at the rear near their tail where their peripheral vision ends.

That means in *these areas* he is most likely **not going to see** you if you **appear suddenly**. While most of the time they don't intentionally bite or kick to hurt someone, they can react when startled.

The most common example of this is if he is napping (horses sleep standing up) and then all of a sudden you show up right in back or front of him.

He may wake up quickly and not be able to see you in his field of vision. Because of his instinct **you could have just found yourself on the receiving end of a horse kick, bite or strike.**

To stay safe, approach the horse at about a 45 degree angle to the shoulder and speak to him saying his name if possible before you get close.

If he's dozing your talking should wake him up. Approaching like this at the shoulder is best because you will be out of range of his