

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR HORSE IS HAPPY?

By Jochen Schleese, CMS, CSFT, CSE ©2016 Saddlefit 4 Life® All Rights Reserved

A horse is not able to lie, to 'act' like he's feeling comfortable, happy, or relaxed, when he's not. Watch for the feedback your horse gives you and it's easy to see what his state of mind is. We all know the usual signs; the eyes, the ears, the tail.

In nature, the horse – a 'flight' animal – can run full out at a moment's notice.

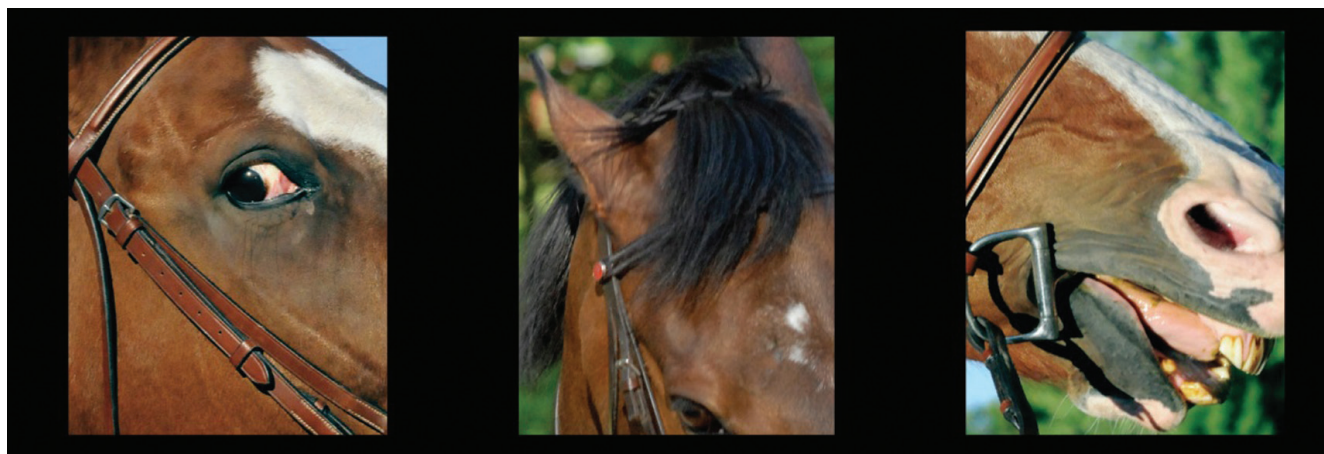
you already know – how do you tell when your horse is happy? If you are truly honest with yourself, you may realize that there is lot of truth in what I am about to share.

While this question may almost range into the field of anthropomorphization (ascribing human characteristics to an animal), your horse's 'happiness' or

supple, and eager to learn.

If he is not – well then you need to dig a little deeper and find out what's going on. Horses are incredibly stoic and really do put up with a lot of things that riders consciously or unconsciously subject them to – but let's hope that you are a rider who prefers that your horse is actually comfortable and pain free.

You know your horse better than anyone – instinctively, you know immediately when something is amiss, even if you can't immediately diagnose where the problem lies or what is causing it. We can put words to what you already know – how do you tell when your horse is happy?



There is no necessity for the thought process "Okay, I'm being chased by a wolf, I'm going to have to run fast in about 3 seconds, so perhaps I should warm up a bit so that I can go full tilt". By that time, the horse would be lunch.

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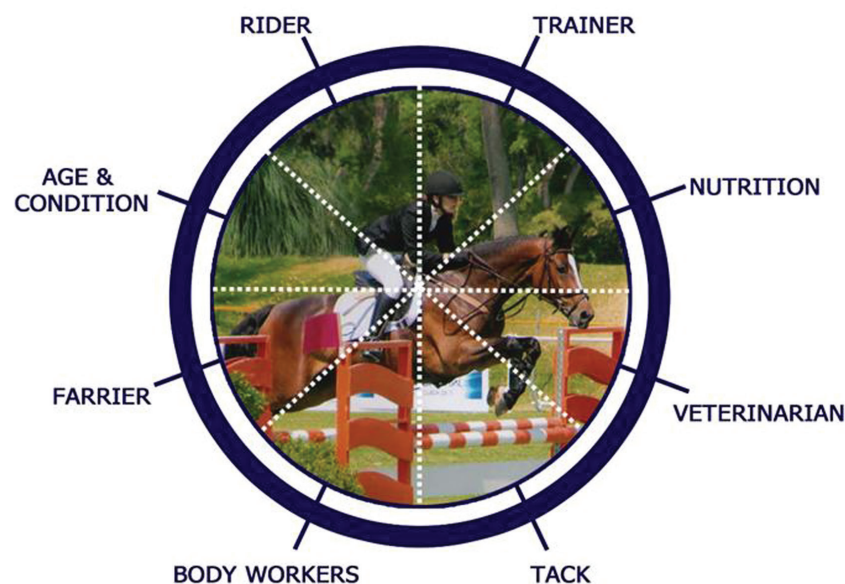
being comfortable is probably of critical interest to you as his owner and rider.

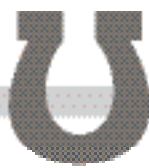
There have been many articles written about various aspects of horse behavior that have been ascribed to human behaviors – stubbornness, resisting work, etc. – that are the result of poorly fitting tack that acts on reflex points which then causes instinctive reactions that may seem like 'being bad'. But the fact remains that it is pretty easy to tell if the horse is willing to work, feeling

This is what has been paradoxical to me on occasion – in a saddle fit evaluation when riders are asked to show their horses under saddle, sometimes they have to warm up (sometimes for 30 minutes or more!) before they feel their horses are ready to perform and before they feel they're ready to show the fitter how they move at all gaits. After seeing around 2000 horses every year for the past 25 years or so we have come to realize that this warm up is to be considered pretty much a 'numbing' up. Only after having been ridden to the point that what's happening on his back doesn't bother him anymore can

the horse actually be asked to work the basic steps. What is wrong with this picture? (This is not really a rhetorical question; please do ask yourself what is going on here if you find yourself guilty of this).

The current trend in riding, as in most other things, seems to be "going back to nature". Riders everywhere are interested in current discussions about whether or not to shoe, whether or not to ride bareback, treeless or with a 'normal' saddle, whether or not to "chemically" supplement your horse's diet. And whether or not it makes sense to deal with symptomatic lameness possibly arising from poor





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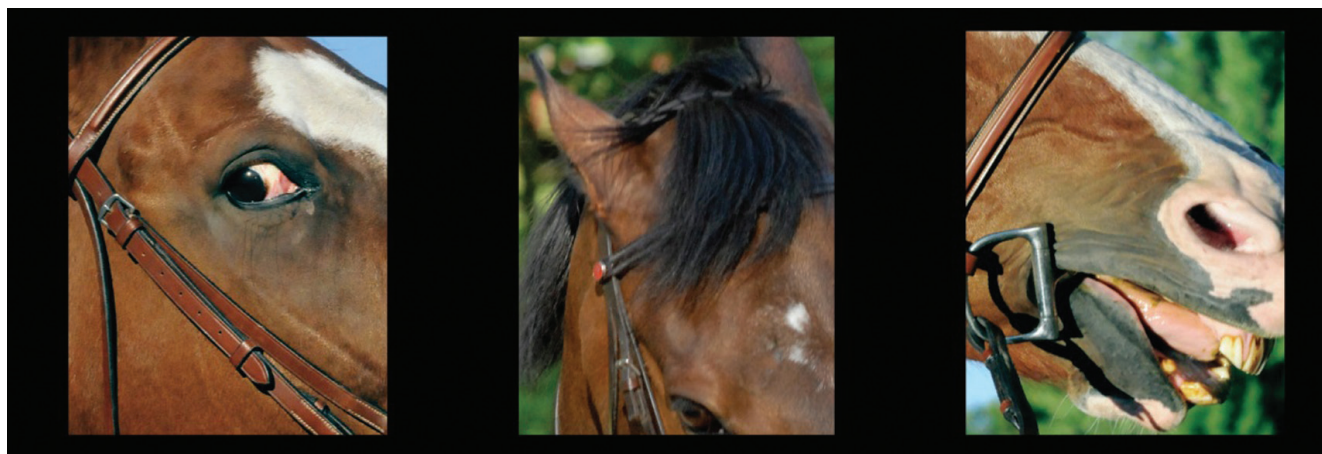
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