## PHOTO MARK-UPS EXPLAINED

How to mark-up photos to assess your horse's posture and locate problem areas.

As a CESMT & Osteopathic Student, I use photos to assess a horse's posture. Their posture can give us clues as to what is going on in the horse's body that is either causing pain, behavior problems, poor performance, or all of the above. The following is my six step process for assessing posture with photos.

Step 1:

The most important part of this process is getting quality photos- if your photo angles and lighting suck, you won't be able to make fair evaluations. It is critical that your photos are taken straight on with as few shadows and glare as possible.
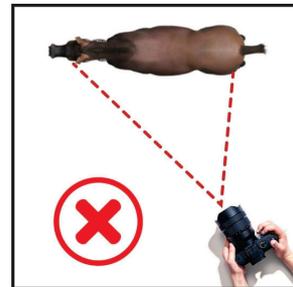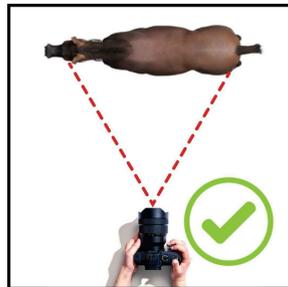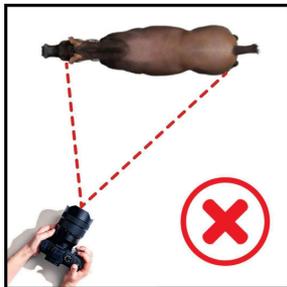
There are 6 photos that we can use to assess posture- head on, straight on from behind, from the above the wither back, from above tail forward, and both sides.

I don't need professional photos, just do your best with lighting, footing, and level ground.

More Examples:

give your horse freedom with their head

Step 2:

Choose an app or software to use to mark up these photos. I use Paint 3D on my PC and I know that Apple has a photo editor that works well. I have also used Canva and Markup Hero (both online). This can be done with mobile apps, but I have found it slower and less accurate when trying to use my finger on the screen as opposed to a mouse or stylus.

Step 3:

The four conformation photos (front, back, and sides) are a great place to start and will provide the most information if you are new to this skill. The 2 back photos from above are slightly different so I will address those separately.

On the conformation photos, add lines that help to show approximately where the legs should be with optimal conformation. Then add a line from the croup forward through the neck.

Step 4:

Now it's time to mark up the back photos. Let's start with the butt closest to the camera- Here you want to add a line across the hips and then 2 more lines that start at the hips and end at the tail head- you end up with a triangle. You can also add a line from withers to tail to assess the straightness of the spine.

The photo closest to the withers is another great photo to use to assess the straightness of the spine as well as the hips and pelvis. This time, create a triangle with the base at the hips and the top point at the withers. Pay close attention to the flanks- are they symmetrical?

Step 5:

Go back through all the pictures and circle any areas of the body that have lines,

dents, or anything else that doesn't look smooth and natural on the horse.

Step 6:
Now you can take all of this information and apply it to identify where the horse is compensating and experiencing pain so that you can fix the problem.

Keep in Mind:
Being able to see the problems and being able to fix the problem are two very different things. And- eyeballing like this is a skill set that takes practice! If you are looking for examples of mark ups and what can truly be learned from them, jump into the [Hope for the Hopeless Horse](#)Facebook group and post your pictures there. Want to get the most out of this experience? Mark up your horse's photos first and then post the unmarked photos in the group. After Margaret marks those up, you will be able to compare your mark-ups to hers to see what your eyes have missed- AND you will be given an opportunity to chat with Margaret to go over your mark-ups and best next steps for your horse.

Want the next step in identifying the root cause of your horse's problem? Check out the the mark-ups that have already been done inside the Hope for the Hopeless Horse group 👉 [Horse Triage](#) -you'll need to join the group to see it 😉