

The Chest

Do you notice in this illustration how the horse's chest is down, and that the hind legs have no chance to come under the horse's body?

Because of a lot of rider faults, especially negative rider tension and draw reins used badly, the horse cannot elevate and balance his chest up in order to move over and under his body. Instead the horse still moves forward, but in a collapsed way. There is too much negative tension here. To keep positive tension requires a constant checklist in the rider's brain. We are a heavy object that the horse wasn't correctly designed to carry in a negative way. Only positive tension is helpful to the horse's anatomy. Our goal as riders is to learn what is positive and what is negative and how to use our bodies to assist the



horse's momentum to balance his chest up so the hind legs have a chance to come under the horse's body and improve his body and movement.

Notice in the second photo, a horse living in the wild. This horse's chest is elevated. He is a wild horse, and therefore has all the freedom in the world. We as riders try to re-create this freedom. The horse must fully know that he has his head and neck for his balance, and that he is free to move his body, and still stay connected to the rider in a free-moving way. The horse must know that he has freedom in order to relax. If the horse spooks, the rider must learn to go with the motion and use the momentum or brilliance to make the horse even stronger in his chest muscles. When he spooks, his chest is elevated way up. Use that. Spooks can be a very positive in the training. As he elevates his chest to spook, push him forward off the inside leg quickly. By sending him forward and out, you are using his brilliance to make him stronger.

Photo Credit: John Hanson



To conclude:

The horse gives us a huge opportunity to learn how to improve not only ourselves, but them as well. Knowledge on how the chest of the horse works, and using the balance of leg, seat/torso, and hand in a balancing way, not a constricting way, is a huge step forward to the horse becoming free and beautiful. It's our goal as riders to learn what our horse needs to be free and move his body in an uphill, chest-up, sort of way.