

Facial Expressions



Ears rotated back behind vertical or flat (both or one only) ≥5s; repeatedly lay flat.



Eye lids closed or half closed for 2-5 s.



Sclera (white of eye) exposed.



Intense stare for 5s.



Mouth opening ± shutting repeatedly with separation of teeth, for ≥10 s.



Tongue exposed, protruding or hanging out and/or moving in and out.



Bit pulled through the mouth on one side (left or right).

Posture and Head Movement



Repeated changes of head position (up/down).



Head tilted or tilting repeatedly.



Head in front of vertical (>30°) for ≥10s.



Head behind vertical for ≥10s.



Head position changes regularly, tossed or twisted from side to side, corrected constantly.

Tail Posture and Movement



Tail clamped tightly to middle or held to one side.



Tail swishing large movements: repeatedly up and down/ side to side/ circular; during transitions.

24 BEHAVIORS indicating PAIN in the RIDDEN HORSE

Straightness of Body



Hindlimbs do not follow tracks of forelimbs but deviated to left or right; on 3 tracks in trot or canter.



Canter repeated leg changes: repeated strike off wrong leg; change of leg in front and / or behind; disunited.



Spontaneous changes of gait (e.g., breaks from canter to trot or trot to canter).



Stumbles or trips/catches toe repeatedly.

Speed of Gait



A rushed gait (frequency of trot steps > 40/15s); irregular rhythm in trot or canter; repeated changes of speed in trot or canter.



Gait too slow (frequency of trot steps <35/15s); passage-like trot.

Willingness to Go Forward



Reluctance to move forward (has to be kicked ± verbal encouragement), stops spontaneously.

Obedience to Aids



Sudden change of direction, against rider direction; spooking.

Bucking and Rearing



Rearing (both forelimbs off the ground).



Bucking or kicking backwards (one or both hindlimbs).



Research Credit:
Sue Dyson FRCVS
Full study available from sue.dyson@aol.com

Full course 'How to Recognize the 24 behaviors indicating Pain in the Ridden Horse'.available at: www.equitopiacycenter.com

Some behaviors must be timed and/or monitored for frequency, such that static photographs cannot be used on their own to assess lameness. The images on this poster are intended to supplement, not replace, the material contained in the course: 'How to Recognize the 24 behaviors indicating Pain in the Ridden Horse'.