MORE ON BALANCE & MOVEMENT

From "Showing And Judging Dogs"
by Hilary Harmer

STATIC BALANCE

Looking at the dog from the front the inclination on which the shoulder blade lies on the rib cage will affect the position of the foreleg to attain static balance when the dog is standing. The static center of gravity of each shoulder blade is roughly the center and in order to have static balance the dog must place his heel or the inner edge of the heel vertically under the center of the shoulder blade.

STATIC BALANCE

Kinetic balance deals with forces in motion. When a dog commences to move, he will move from the position of his static balance and as his speed increases, in order to procure maximum efficiency in movement, the legs, when seen from the front or the rear, must incline inwards towards a longitudinal central line in order to maintain kinetic balance. The faster the dog moves, the more his legs will incline inwards until the speed is reached where he will single-track in order to maintain his balance. It is absolutely imperative that it be understood that the alignment of the bones from the center of the shoulder blade, when viewed from the front, to the center of the foot must be in one straight line, but it is not a vertical line. The same applies to the hindleg when seen from behind. The bone alignment from the hip joint to the foot must also be in a straight line but not a vertical line, except when the dog is standing.

EXPERIMENT OF HUMAN KINETIC BALANCE AS A SIMPLE EXPERIMENT: STAND WITH YOUR LEGS SLIGHTLY APART SO THAT EACH FOOT IS DIRECTLY UNDERNEATH ITS RESPECTIVE HIP JOIN. NOW TRY TO WALK FORWARD KEEPING THE LEGS AT THE SAME DISTANCE APART WITH THE FEET FACING DIRECTLY FORWARD. THIS IS HOW SOME PEOPLE EXPECT THE DOG TO MOVE FOR-WARD. YOU WILL NOTICE IMMEDIATELY THAT IT IS AN UNNATURAL MOVEMENT, BESIDES BEING AN AWKWARD AND UNGAINLY WAY OF WALKING. THERE IS NO EFFICIENCY OR ECONOMY OF MOVEMENT. YOU WILL NOTICE AS YOU MOVE FORWARD THAT THE BODY HAS TO SWAY FROM SIDE TO SIDE IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN ITS BALANCE. IT IS CERTAINLY NOT A NATURAL NOR AN ATTRACTIVE WAY OF WALKING. IT IS EVEN MORE UNGAINLY WHEN RUNNING.

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Next try walking normally then fast and finally break into a run. You will notice immediately that at the fast speed you will be single-tracking too and your legs will be inclining inwards from your hips and will no longer be on a perpendicular plane to the ground, as when you first started to move. Your legs and feet, unless you are flat-footed, will still be in a straight line from hip to foot just as is required in a dog moving, or any other animal for that matter. If, however, you have a weakness at your ankles and your feet turn inwards or outwards, then the straight alignment of your joints from hip to foot will be broken and you will be moving unsoundly. This is the equivalent of the dog moving close. If you happen to be knock-kneed (and most women are), and turn your feet out , then you have a similar double fault like a cow or a dog that is "out at elbow" and has weak, turned-out pasterns. The required straight line from your hip to foot will be broken in two places, at the knees and at the ankle. In the cow-hocked dog the desired straight line, as seen from the rear is also broken twice, once at the stifle, throwing the hocks together, and again at the hocks, throwing the feet outwards.

At the slower speeds the inclination of the dog's legs in-wards is much less in comparison than with the fast speeds. But whatever the speed, the importance is the straight alignment of the bones and joints from shoulder to pad and from hip to pad in order to procure maximum performance with the minimum of effort.

SINGLE-TRACKING

There are unfortunately still too many people who do not perceive the difference between single-tracking and moving close. It is the difference between a sound dog and an unsound one. When a dog is moving fast and single-tracks at speed, his lugs seen from the front are inclined inwards and the bone and joint alignment from the center of the shoulder blade to the center of the pad must be in one straight line. If the forward-moving leg brushes or interferes with the weight-bearing leg, then there is a constructional fault, and the alignment of bone and joints will not be in a straight line. If the alignment is correct and straight, then there will be a fault in timing or a constructional body fault.

MOVING CLOSE

The difference between moving close and single-tracking is that, when viewed from the front or the rear, the column of bones is not in a straight line: it is generally broken by the pasterns which either turn in or out. From the rear it may be the hocks which break the straight line of the bone assembly and this will be seen with cow-hocked dogs. This fault is a great weakness, because the line is broken twice between the hip and the pad.

POUNDING AND PADDING

Pounding and padding are both caused by the same faults, an upright shoulder blade, which is frequently combined with too strong a rear action. Pounding is when the dog takes no action to compensate for the fault. Padding is the evasive action of a hackney gait which the dog employs, in order to lessen the excessive shock to the whole of the front of the dog through the pad.

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