



How to check the hamstrings?

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How does one check the hamstrings?

First, look. Stand behind the horse with the horse standing square and on a firm flat surface. Look at the shape of the horse's hind quarters – look if one side is more filled out than the other, look if one has a different shape or if one is higher or lower. Anything that is not symmetrical is significant. Of course none of us are perfect, but in developing a horse or any athlete, symmetry is what we are trying to produce.

Next, feel. Find the point of buttock – right on the back of the horse's hind quarters – and cup the bone with your hand and squeeze with mild pressure. Then, with investigating fingers, starting at the point of the buttock feel down the muscle from the pelvis down to the hock. Feel for lumps, bumps, dips, valleys, heat, cold, and the biggest thing of all: asymmetry from side to side.

In all likelihood, dear reader, you are not a body worker feeling hundreds of horses each year, so do your best and trust your feeling. If you think you feel something, you do!

Next, enlist a friend to help watch the horse move. Set up track-up lines that mimic trot poles, setting them an equal distance apart. Walk the horse at a marching pace through the lines, noticing where each hind leg lands – same from side to side, or does one land shorter than the other, and do the hind legs have the same flight path?

If it is difficult to see the legs as they move, try using the slow-motion feature on a smartphone camera or download a coaching app that can allow for zooming in and slow-motion.