**Recognize Lameness from Movement**

The horse should be observed at both the walk and the trot from the front, behind, and side.

Medial-to-lateral limb flight and foot strike can be evaluated only from this perspective, although cranial and caudal aspects of the stride and fetlock drop can be evaluated only from the side.

***Fore limb***

Understanding the concept of the head nod is vital to the correct interpretation of equine lameness.Thehead and neck elevate or rise when the lame forelimb isbearing weight or hits the ground and nod down or fallwhen the sound forelimb hits the ground.

***Hind limb***

An important principle in the recognition of hind limb lameness is the concept of the *pelvic hike* or asymmetrical movement of the pelvis. Pelvic hike is the vertical elevation of the pelvis when the lame limb is weight bearing. In other words, the pelvis “hikes” upward when the lame limb hits the ground and moves downward when the sound limb hits the ground.

The clinician must keep in mind that the pelvic hike is the clinical impression of the change in height of the pelvis*,* not the absolute or measured height. It is the shifting of weight or load that occurs as the horse tries to reduce weight bearing (unload) in the lame limb and transfer weight (load) to the sound limb. The ease with which this can be seen depends on the horse’s tail carriage; in a horse with a tail set on high and that is also carried high, this may completely obscure movements of the pelvis.

Horses with bilateral hind limb lameness may have a short, choppy gait that lacks impulsion, but they may have no pelvic hike. Other methods to exacerbate the baseline lameness should be performed, such as circling the horse at a trot in hand or while on a lunge line. Lameness may be accentuated when the lame or lamer limb is on the inside or outside of the circle.

It is important to understand how a horse with unilateral hind limb lameness modifies its gait so that hind limb lameness can mimic forelimb lameness at the *trot.* When the lame hind limb hits the ground, the horse shifts its weight cranially to transfer load away from the lame limb. This causes the head and neck to shift forward and nod down at the same time. The contralateral forelimb bears weight simultaneously with the lame hind limb and the head nod coincides, thus mimicking lameness in the forelimb ipsilateral to the lame hind limb.