



What is Collection?

Mild, Moderate or Full

by

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Collection is a term used to describe different forms of a horse's frame in the different divisions of our breed. Collection is when a horse is "light" and in proper "balance".

First let me explain "lightness" which is one of the qualities that is being judged while a horse competes in no matter the category. This term is used in three ways, which are similar as well as complementary:

1. **Lightness to the hand** is the horse's obedience to the slightest rein aids. Soft in the mouth, not pulling, but submissive.
2. **Lightness of the horse** is his obedience to the slights of aids. (Legs, rider's seat...). This can be further defined as "the bringing into play by the rider, and the use by the horse, of only the energy necessary to do the intended movement."
3. **Lightness of the forehead** is the quality that permits the shoulders to move freely and the hindquarters to lower as required. (Balance)

All masters agree that lightness or collection originates in the relaxation of the mouth. It is said that horses are not ready for proper work until they begin to taste the bit. For true lightness increases impulsion. This will make a horse calmer and no longer resistant.

The rules make clear that full collection cannot be accomplished by every horse - that it depends on the horse's conformation, temperament, and energy level (brio). The frame described for this movement is full of elegance, neck is raised, evenly curved, with the head approaching the vertical. Contact is light, permitting the horse to perform without stiffness or resistance.

Combining lots of impulsion with a strong hold becomes even stronger to maintain and control, but it ends up producing a horse that is not completely balanced. To make matters worse, this increased holding pressure becomes uncomfortable and even painful for the horse. From this we get horses that are heavy in the hand and dead to the leg, two attributes that feed off each other. Too much aid kills the aid.

This will result in horses becoming so stiff and compressed that they go behind the vertical and their gaits become pacey. (On the lateral). In any riding that is constrained, changes in frame and transitions become difficult.

A properly trained horse should look:

-Submission without tension (hollowed out backs or base of necks bulging) and without resistance whatsoever (pinned ears, tail swishing).

-In all work, even at the halt, the horse must be on the bit. A horse is said to be on the bit when his neck is more or less maintained at an elegant level and is round. The horse accepts the bridle/bosal with a light soft contact and submissiveness throughout.

-The horse's head must remain steady and in place and, as a general rule, must be slightly in front of the vertical. The poll, supple, must be the highest point of the neck, with the horse offering no resistance whatsoever to the rider.

This is what we can all dream about achieving. No matter what degree (mild, moderate or full) of collection, the directives above should be observed. Sadly, a horse that fits this description is rarely seen these days.

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