

Observing and training movement

The goal in longeing is to gain and maintain control of the horse's position and movements. The same control you strive for when you are riding or driving the horse. Good longeing has a positive effect on riding and driving.

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Every horse needs an individual approach in longeing. The horse's age, condition, character, experience and build play an important part, as do the footing and the outside temperature. The mental state and the physical condition of the longeur influence the horse. If, for example, the person longeing is stressed or insecure, the horse will pick up on it.

Which aspects play an important part in longeing Friesian horses?

Although these characteristics will change in the near future as a result of the KFPS's current breeding policy, in the present-day Friesian horse the direction of the trunk is somewhat downward and in general the forelegs tend a bit backwards. The back is sometimes dipped and the neck is rather vertical. Most Friesians are very cooperative. They are usually very forward. This combination of build and character often leads to tension in the neck and the back, causing the horse's movements to be driving rather than carrying.

How do I longe a Friesian horse the right way?

Let the horse carry itself and aim at gaining and maintaining relaxation. Especially in the beginning, do not try and regulate its tempo too much when this causes tension in the horse. Make sure the side-reins of other auxiliary reins are long enough to avoid the natural tendency of curling up the neck. Friesians benefit most from low side-reins and forward-downward exercise. Many transitions

lead to stronger hind legs and a more obedient horse. Friesian horses mature late. Take your time to develop the horse's topline and carrying capacity. Do not introduce collection in the gaits until the horse is six or seven years old. Avoid longeing longer than half an hour to keep the horse happy and energetic. Use your imagination to alternate the horse's training on the longe, for example by using poles on the circle.

Many thanks to Lammert Haanstra for spending time with the author and sharing his knowledge and experience with her. The pictures showing an incorrect walk, trot and canter have been staged to show our readers what is desirable and what isn't. Haanstra: "The contact and interaction between the longeur and the horse are vital for successful longeing in your training. Only then can you establish acceptance of the bridle, allowing you to work on the horse muscular system systematically for dressage or driving."



A Friesian horse trotting on the longe, well balanced, carrying itself, with relaxed and fine movements.



Incorrect walk: not active, too casual, poor neck and back position, hindquarters behind the horse's body.

KFPS's Breeding Standard for walk:

Walk is long reaching and distinctively four-beat. Seen from the front and back, the legs are parallel with each other. The hind legs display flexion at the hock and are placed powerfully and far enough beneath the horse's body. The hind legs propel the forelegs, which are extended and display plenty of flexibility at the shoulder.

When longeing the Friesian horse in walk:

- The hind leg propels the foreleg
- Closeness is more important than a long-reaching gait and tempo
- Long-reaching hind legs may be indicative of short-reaching forelegs or a lack of strength, especially in young horses.



Incorrect trot: tension in the back, inactive hindquarters, ewe neck.

KFPS's Breeding Standard for trot:

Trot is distinctively two-beat. The hind legs are placed powerfully and far enough beneath the horse's body and display a great deal of flexion at the hock. The forelegs display knee action and are extended far to the front. Trot is characterised by suppleness and a long moment of suspension. The horse also displays a high level of balance and a rise of the forehand accompanied with a lifting of the neck. When viewed from the back or the front, the legs must be parallel with one another.

When longeing the Friesian horse in trot:

- The hock moves in vertical position at the least
- The carrying phase lasts longer than the driving phase
- The forearm of the foreleg moving forward must be parallel to the long bone of the diagonal hind leg
- When most suspended, the distance between the forelegs equals the distance between the hind legs.



Good walk in a nice, relaxed position and ample space between the hoof prints. The neck could be extended a bit more, bringing the nose on or in front of the vertical.



Good trot: hindquarters beneath the horse's body, the foreleg extends far to the front nicely, neck and back are relaxed. The neck could be extended a bit more, bringing the nose on or in front of the vertical.



Bad canter: hindquarters are not beneath the horse's body, tension in neck and back, not paying attention to the longeur.

KFPS's Breeding Standard for canter:

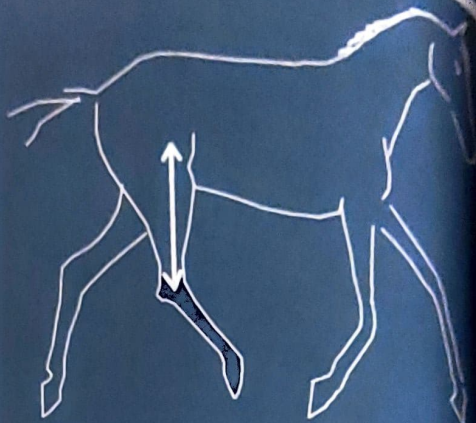
Canter is distinctively three-beat. Canter is extended with long-reaching forelegs with the inside leg providing impulsion. The canter displays buoyancy, a long moment of suspension, and a high degree of suppleness and balance.

When longeing the Friesian horse in canter:

- Pay attention to the forward-downward position. When this is difficult for the horse, go back to walk and trot and use light side reining for more closeness, coordination and agility. Introduce short canter intervals from there
- Have the horse canter using its hind legs sufficiently, avoiding a downward canter with a slow foreleg
- Make sure the horse keeps thinking forward and not just upwards.

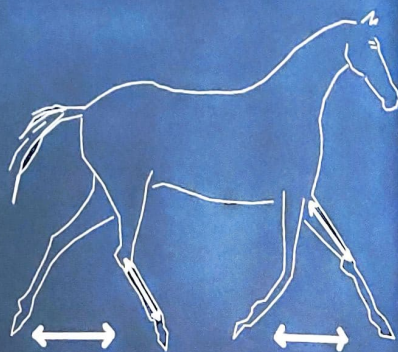
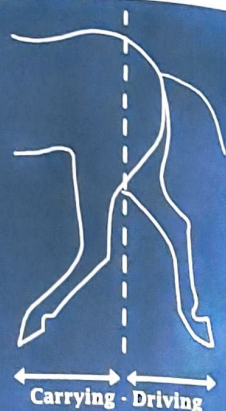


Good canter: carried nicely, jumped from back to front, good neck and back use, long-reaching forelegs. It could be a little less fiery.



Carrying

When the hock of a horse in trot makes a vertical with the ground, the hind quarters are placed beneath the horse's body.



Correct movement

The top illustration shows the difference between a carrying (left) and a driving (right) horse in trot. The bottom illustration shows the forearm of the foreleg moving forward being parallel to the long bone of the diagonal hind leg. When most suspended, the distance between the forelegs equals the distance between the hind legs.

(Source: 'Beoordeling van het Friese paard' by Marja Teekens)