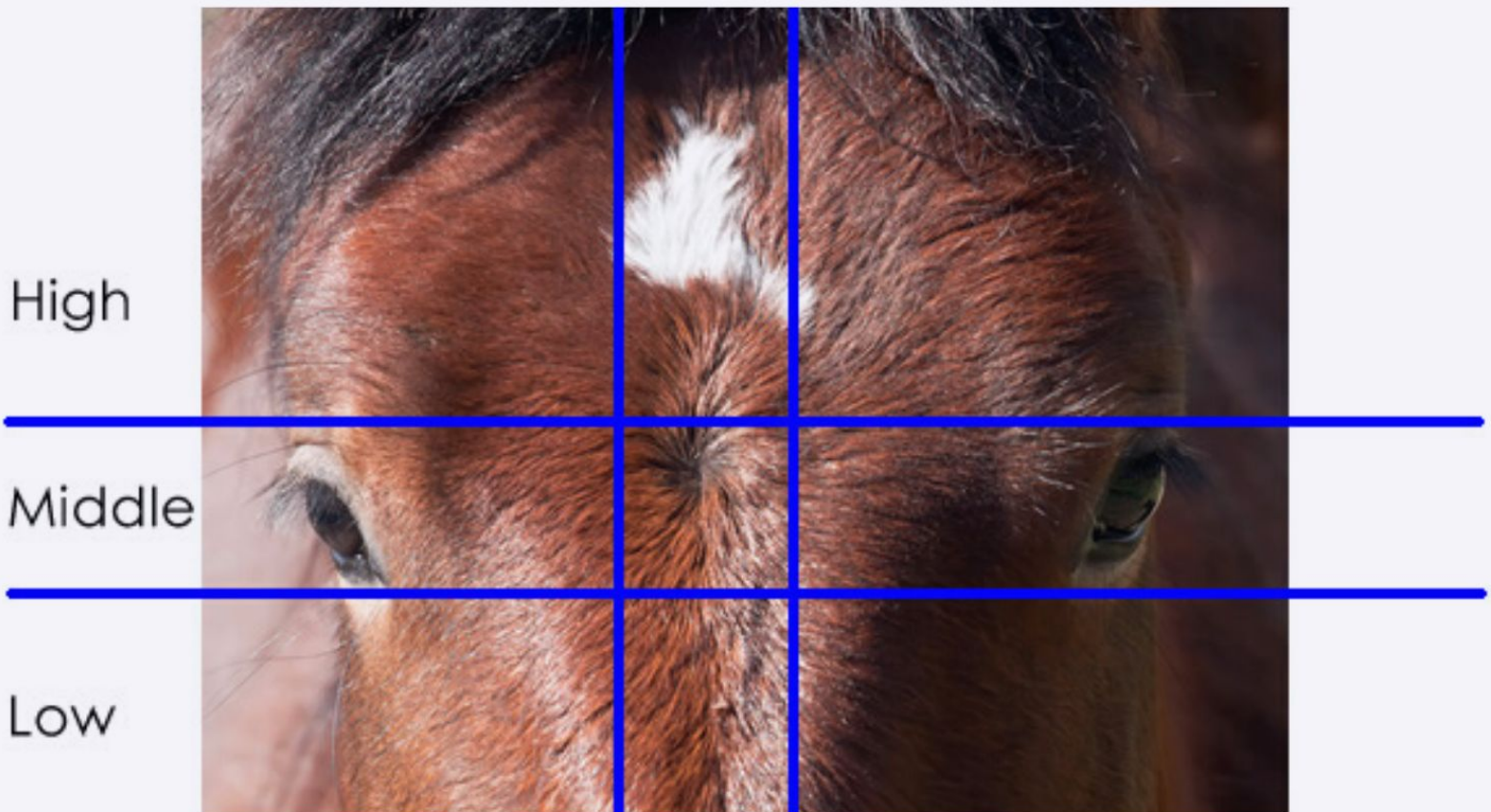


# Understanding Horse Whorls



**NOCHE MILLER**

1st Edition

Understanding Horse Whorls

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## Introduction

From old wives tales to modern science horse whorls have always been a matter of interest.

Throughout time people have noticed unique and unusual characteristics in animals and made note of them when they come across that trait again and noticed similarities between animals who shared them. Over time and with careful observation these have evolved into a lore all their own.

*Then science caught up and people were able to explain the why behind the superstition.*

When the fetus is developing in the womb, the skin and the brain develop at the same time in the same fetal cell layer. **If extra activity is taking place in one certain area it is thought that it can leave a mark in the skin above that area forming a whorl.** The same is true of the entire body and whorls can show up anywhere letting us have a special peek into the inner workings of the horse.

Looking at horses whorls is still more art than science. They can be interpreted different ways by different people.

There is no good or bad whorl. A horse with any whorl can work out great with one person and be a terrible match for another. Some whorls will aid one sport and work against good performance at another.

Knowing the meanings of whorls can give us an extra advantage when looking at horses that we don't have any other way to know about, like when rescuing a horse with an unknown background or looking at a young untrained horse.

## Facial Whorls

Whorls on a horse's forehead are the most common and basic.

A single center whorl, directly between the eyes, neither higher than eye level or below eye level is normal; it doesn't mean very much on its own.





A single whorl above eye level, but still in the center, will usually mean a horse who is an extrovert, interested in what is going on around them, curious, with a very active mind. Usually these horses are energetic and a bit on the hot side.

Sometimes though, it is only their mind that is always working in overdrive. Smart and sensitive, a horse with a high whorl often works best with a confident rider who will take the horse's intelligence into account and not ride roughshod over him.



A single low whorl, below eye level shows an introvert.

Most, if not all, mules have a very low whorl. They are thinkers, quiet and hesitant to make any rash moves. They want to look at a problem from all angles before making up their minds. Very smart but not being obvious about showing you what they are planning, a low whorl needs someone who will be patient with them and give them the time they need without mistaking them for lazy or stupid.



When a whorl is placed to the right or left it shows a dominance of one side of the brain over another. It isn't true that the sides of the brain don't work together. A horse can transfer learning from one side of the body to another, but that doesn't mean there aren't differences in how each side of the brain work.

The theory that we have a dominant brain side has been, if not disproven, found to not be exactly correct. That doesn't mean that horses can't be sided like we are right or left handed. When one side of a horse is dominant it can lead to some personality traits.

Like a right handed person is said to be left brained, a horse with a whorl on the right side of his forehead will be left brained and vice versa. That means it's easiest to refer to whorls by the whether they are on our right or left so it matches up with the brain side.

A horse with a whorl to our left will most likely be left brain, calm, confident, not worried about things.



A horse with a whorl to our right will probably be right brain, more worried, less secure, more reactive.



The farther to either side a whorl is the more pronounced the trait. A whorl just slightly off center will barely show the right or left brain. A whorl nearly off the side of the head will have strongly pronounced traits.

The direction the hair swirls inside of a whorl is also supposed to tell us about sidedness. A whorl that has a counter clockwise swirl is generally left sided and a clockwise swirl is usually right sided. By sided we mean a preference for one lead over the other or to turn a certain direction when they spook.



More than one whorl means the horse will show more than one of the personality traits.

Often these can be opposite traits, a horse with a high whorl and a low whorl will be an energetic extrovert sometimes and a calm easy going introvert others. The difference can be a bit shocking leading to the saying that they have double personalities.



A horse with two whorls side by side are both left and right brain.



The farther apart they are, once again, the more noticeable the difference. Double whorls that are tightly together won't show as big of a difference of personalities.



## Body Whorls

Whorls on different body parts can tell us about what is going on inside the horse too.

A whorl on one side that isn't matched on the other side shows a horse that isn't even from side to side, no matter what part of the body the whorl is on. There will often be a strong preference for the side with the whorl as far as leads and curving their body, and difficulty bending away from the whorl.

A whorl on the crest of the neck will show where a horse will tend to want to bend through the neck.



When the whorls are directly behind the ears they will bend evenly throughout the neck.



If whorls on the chest aren't even it can mean a preference for one leg over the other. This can affect leads, making a horse want to take one lead over the other.



## Head Shape

A horse's whorls can tell us lots about their personality but when we combine looking at whorls with looking at the shape of a horse's head we learn even more.

A convex profile, one that curves outwards, a Roman nose for example, shows a tough horse who is not overly sensitive.

A dished nose, shows a horse who is sensitive and reactive.

A straight profile is like a center whorl; basic and normal. Usually it means steady and easy going but depends on what the whorls are.





A horse who is curious and interested in what is going on around him will have a well defined upper lip. The muscles will be well developed from all the time spent exploring with his nose.



A horse who isn't as interested and doesn't want to interact with everything will have a flat upper lip. The muscles have not developed by use.

Whorls can give us great insight to what we can expect from a horse. When we combine that with looking at the shape of the head we can learn even more.

While there is no such thing as a 'bad' whorl there are some whorl types and placements that are better suited to one discipline than another. Different people will get along better with certain whorl types too. Often people will find that they end up with many horses with the same whorl types without realizing or meaning to.

## About Noche

Noche grew up riding horses. That love of riding naturally turned to training as she grew older.

After graduating Noche moved out west and spent some time working on ranches. She started taking in young horses to train. Having heard about whorl theory long ago she paid attention to the whorls on horses who came in for training. The ones who were easy to start, as well as the tough ones.

She added her own notes to the backs of books about whorls and continued her studies.

No longer training horses for the public she now concentrates on her small herd of problem horses, still focussing on whorls and how they affect the horses movement and temperaments. The internet has allowed her to reach far more horses virtually than she was ever able to in person and her studies aren't slowing at all.

Join Noche on Facebook in the [Horse Whorl Forum](#)

