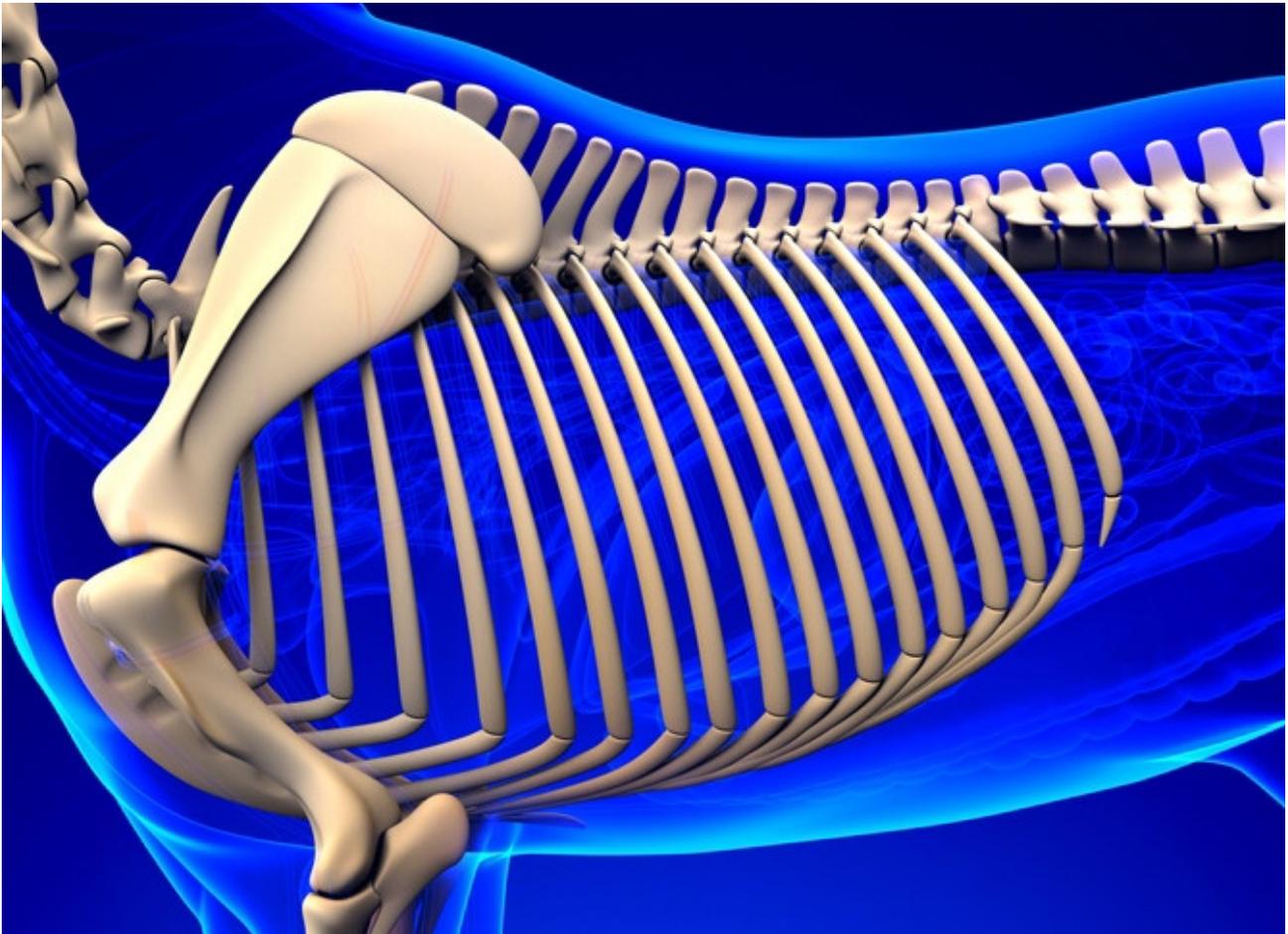


Ribs Upright And In The Middle

When training our horses there is an enormous focus on head/neck positioning, where the hind legs are and whether the horse is uphill. Apart from the back very little is said about the trunk of the horse, the rib cage is our attention in this article.

The anatomy



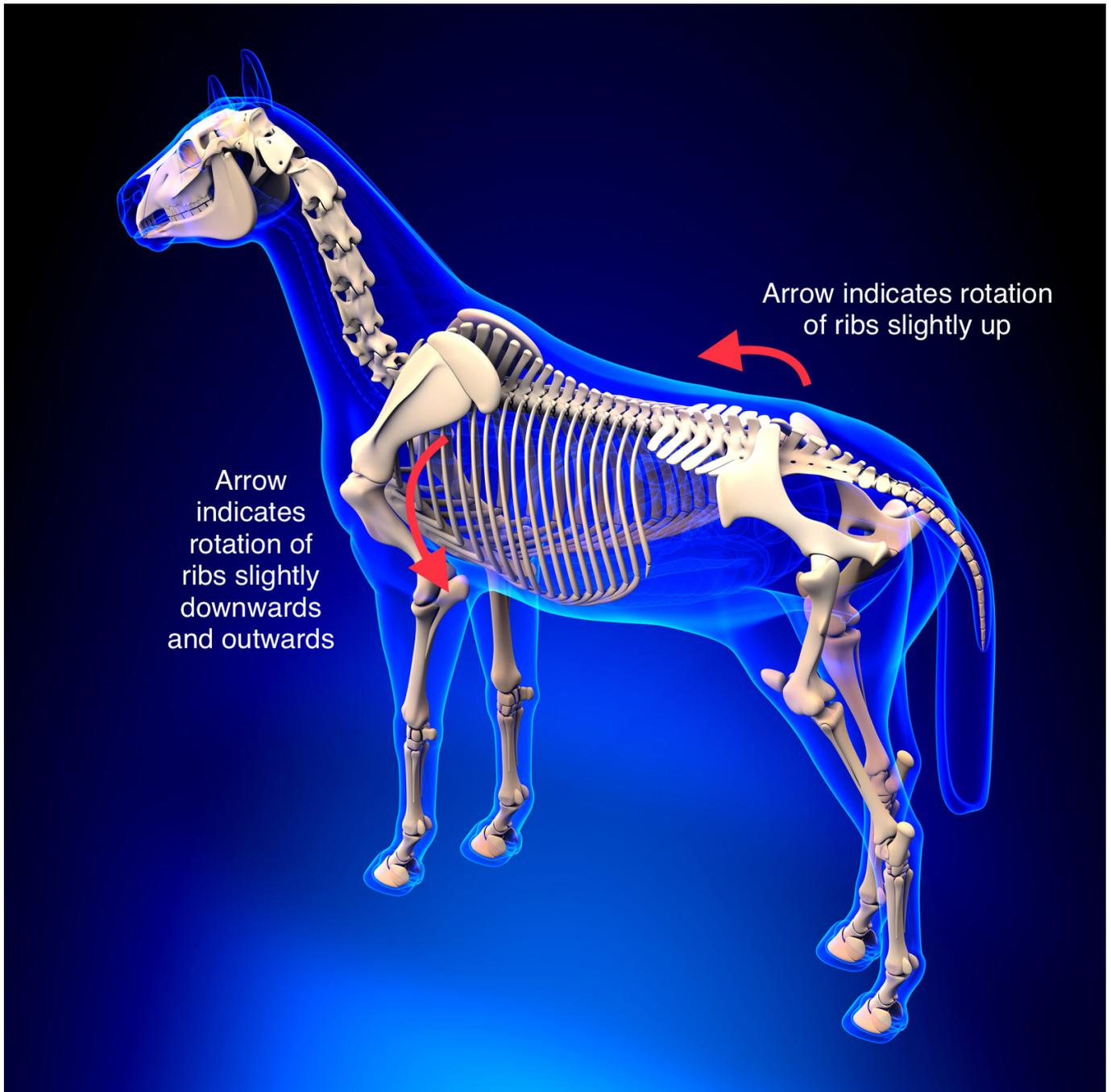
A normal horse has 18 ribs - 8 true, attached to the sternum (breast bone) and 10 false not attached to anything at the bottom. All ribs are attached at the top to the thoracic vertebrae. The ribs have minimal flexibility and rotation and are affected by mis use of the hind legs and shoulders leading to a knock on affect through the spine, neck and at the poll.

In an ideal world

For the horse to obtain self carriage and self propulsion limbs need to be aligned and the ribs need to be upright allowing the breast bone to become directly in between the shoulders. The ribs should be upright with no rotation

What goes wrong

Horses have a hollow side creating a curve through the body. This creates misalignment of limbs and a block in the flow of power through the body. The effect of this on the ribs causes a slight rotation with the hollow side lifting and the apposing side falling down and out. This causes the breast bone to shift from the centre and has a detrimental affect on the balance of the shoulders.



Things to look for

If a horse is continually stuck in this pattern it will present with some of the following.

The distance between each elbow and the ribs is different.

An area lacking muscle either side on the spine (size will vary depending on severity and time)

One shoulder bigger than the other

The rider constantly sitting to one side

One shoulder goes out the other goes down

Reluctance to flow freely forward

Neck and poll twisting

Hollowing through transitions

Bending too much one way and not enough the other

Uneven wither muscle

(please note the above can be symptoms of other issues too)

Developing a horse with the ribs upright and In the middle allows the rider to sit either side of the spine and the back muscle to develop evenly. All four limbs can then work in correct forward motion without overloading. So next time you get on your horse ask yourself 'are the ribs upright and in the middle?'

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