



THE CONFORMATION STANDARD



The Purpose of the Conformation Horse Class

The purpose of conformation classes is to preserve the ultimate, ideal conformation of stock-type horses by selecting individuals in the order of their overall resemblance to the WCHA Conformation Standard. The selection should be based on the most positive combination of balance, structural correctness and movement; attractive, high quality, well-muscled with appropriate gender and breed-type characteristics.

Judging the Conformation Horse

When judging, every horse in the class will be assessed in alignment to the WCHA Conformation Standard. Balance is the single most important trait to consider when selecting the most desirable individual in any class. It is the duty of the judge to compare each individual based on which is the most balanced, eye appealing that exhibits the highest combination of positive traits, keeping in mind that no individual is perfect. The ideal Conformation Horse should never be judged on one single trait. The judging should be based on which individual has the highest combination of the following traits of balance, structural correctness, appropriate quality, gender and breed-type characteristics, and high quality muscling compared to all of the other individuals in that class.

The most critical point to consider when evaluating balance is viewing a horse from the side profile. First, determine the equivalence of the length of the shoulder to the length of the back and to the length of the hip. Secondly, observe the proportional and equivalent relationship from the withers to the floor of the chest to the ground. The final evaluation of balance is the levelness of the topline with the withers being at least the same height as the top of the croup, or slightly higher, particularly in a horse four years old or older. Moderate exceptions are acceptable when a horse is young and growing.

Structural correctness is the skeletal structure of the horse and is inclusive of all bones being at the proper angles to allow for balance and maximum shock absorbance from concussion during performance. Blemishes on the legs should only be considered if they contribute to a mechanical or structural unsoundness.

Overall appropriate quality, gender, and breed-type characteristics and the amount and definition of muscling should be considered as a part of determining the individual that has the most positive combination of desirable traits.

The World Conformation Horse Association's Standard

The ideal Standard for the World Conformation Horse Association is a horse of stock-type that is first and foremost balanced, as well as structurally correct, attractive, high quality, and well-muscled. This horse should be symmetrical from head to tail, with eye appeal that is a result of the blending of an attractive head, refined throat latch, well-proportioned long trim neck, long sloping shoulder, deep heart girth, short strong back, long hip and croup. These characteristics should be coupled with straight, structurally correct legs and feet that are free of major deviation. The ideal Conformation Horse should appear athletic and be uniformly well-muscled throughout with a well-defined and muscular forearm, chest, shoulder, stifle and gaskin.

The head should be short with a wide, flat forehead, small refined muzzle, gender related jawline and have large, soft eyes. The ears should be small, short and well-positioned on the head while showing alert expression. The head should be gender specific with a stallion having a defined jawbone, a mare having a reasonable sized jawbone that is not emphasized, and a gelding having a reasonable sized jawbone that is slightly larger than a mare, but less than a stallion.

The neck should begin with a clean, defined throatlatch. The neck should be lean and long in relation to the balance of the individual, cylindrical in shape, and blend smoothly into the shoulder. The crest of the neck should be narrow and clean across the top. The bottom of the neck should originate high out of the chest, and the top of the neck should tie into a prominent wither.

The shoulder extends from the point of the shoulder to the wither, and should be long—sloping at a 45 degree angle or less, well-defined, tie smoothly and set back well into the wither, thus easily allowing for a full extension of a stride.

The overall topline should appear strong and be reasonably smooth, and level in height at the top of the withers and croup. The wither should be prominent and be the highest point on the horse's back and positioned above the heart girth area. The heart girth should be deep and proportional to the length of leg. The back and loin should be strong and short as compared to a relatively long underline, and tie smoothly into the croup. The croup should be long and smooth turning, with a well-placed tail set.

The legs should be correctly aligned and square under the body. They should be free of blemishes with adequate size of bone and feet, and have sloping pasterns that correspond with the angle of the shoulder. This allows for maximum shock absorbance from concussion during performance.

Front Leg:

Front view—A straight line should run from the point of the shoulder through the center of the forearm, knee, parallel to the cannon bone, with the line extending through the center of the fetlock, pastern and toe of the hoof.

Side View- A straight line should run through the center of the radius in the forearm, knee, cannon bone, and fetlock with the line extending straight to the bulb of the hoof.

Back Leg:

Rear view – A straight line should run from the end of the hip through the center of the hock,

Side view-A straight line should run from the top of the tail head, straight down to the point of the hock, parallel to the cannon bone, with the line extending straight to the bulb of the hoof. The muscling should be well-developed, defined, and in size relationship to the skeleton, frame and size of the individual.

Chest- When viewed from the front, the chest should be proportional in width to the rear, tie high into the neck, and be very deep (greater than 8 inches in a horse that is two years or older). The chest muscling should have obvious definition with an inverted deep "V".

Forearm- The forearm should be bulging and well-defined, tie high and smooth to the chest and shoulder, and then blend deep and smoothly to the knee.

Shoulder- The shoulder muscle should be bulging and well-defined, and tie smoothly into the barrel.

Stifle- The stifle muscle should be very wide and most importantly be the widest point when viewed from the rear. There should be a significant amount of bulge, tone, and definition of the stifle muscle, as well as be long and low-tying when viewed from the side and rear. The stifle muscle from the side should be equivalent to the length of the shoulder and to the length of the back, excluding the extra muscle that extends out beyond the end of the hip and tail head.

Gaskin- The gaskin muscle should be bulging and defined on both the inside and outside. The gaskin muscle should tie high and smooth into the stifle, and blend in low and smooth to the hock joint.

DISQUALIFICATION

1. Lameness – Obvious Lameness is:

Consistently observable at a trot under all circumstances;

Marked nodding, hitching or shortened stride;

Minimal weight-bearing in motion and/or at rest and inability to move.

2. Parrot/Monkey Mouth – defined as no occlusal contact between the upper and lower central incisors.

3. Cryptorchid – Cryptorchidism in a stallion that is 2 years of age or older where there is evidence of only one testicle present.

4. Incorrect Pattern – all contestants that do not complete the prescribed pattern correctly.

Exception: Contestants in all Youth Divisions, Intermediate Non-Pro Division and Limited Non-Pro Division that do not complete the prescribed pattern are not to be placed over any contestant that completes the pattern correctly, but will not be disqualified.

5. Setting Up/Inspection – All contestants that do not get their horse set up and standing still for inspection long enough to allow for proper inspection of all four sides.

Exception: Contestants in all Youth Divisions, Intermediate Non-Pro Division and Limited Non-Pro Division that do not get their horse set up and standing still for inspection long enough to allow for proper inspection of all four sides are not to be placed over any contestant that completes the set up and inspection, but will not be disqualified.

FAULTS

Major faults in Balance:

Steep shoulder

Long back

Weak loin

Short croup

Steep croup

Major Faults In Balance Continued On Next Page

Major Faults In Balance Continued:

Weakness behind the withers

Shallow heart girth

Extremely short or long legs in relation to the heart girth

Extremely unlevel from withers to croup

Extremely disproportionate with the shoulder, back or stifle being greatly different in lengths when viewed from the side

Minor Faults in Balance:

Moderate slope to the shoulder

Slightly long in the back

Slightly weak in the loin

Slight steepness to the croup

Slight rounding of the croup

Slight weakness or dip behind the withers

Slightly shallow in the heart girth

Shorter legs or longer legs than depth of heart girth

Slightly unlevel from withers to croup

Slightly disproportionate with the shoulder, back or stifle being different lengths when viewed from the side

Major Faults in Structural Correctness:

Steep shoulder that only allows for 4 or less inches of depth of chest

Long back that gives the appearance of being much longer than shoulder length and hip length when viewed from the side

Weak back that gives the appearance of being much more than 2 inches from the top of the withers

Front legs from the front when the knee joint is obviously to the inside or outside of a straight line

Major Faults In Structural Correctness Continued:

Front legs from the front when the fetlock joint is obviously deviated to the inside or outside of a straight line

Front legs from the front when the hoof is severely deviated to the inside or outside of a straight line possibly causing interference when tracking

Front legs from the side when the knee is forward of a straight line and can never come close to locking into a straight line

Front legs from the side when the knee is anywhere behind a straight line or referred to as calf kneed

Front legs from the side when the pastern is directly above and runs straight from the pastern joint to the hoof with little or no angle

Rear legs from the rear when the point of the hock is obviously to the inside or outside a straight line running from the point of the hip

Rear legs from the rear when the hooves are obviously deviated to the inside or outside of the straight line from the point of the hip

Rear legs from the side³ when the hock joint itself (only looking at the hock joint) is anything greater than a 160 degree angle or less than 140 degrees

Minor Faults in Structural Correctness:

Steep shoulder that allows for some depth of chest, but not at the proper 4 degree angle

Long back that is longer than the shoulder or hip lengths when viewed from the side

Weak back that is less than 2 inches from the top of the withers to the back, but still shows weakness

Front legs from the front where there is a slight deviation of the knee joint to the inside or outside of a straight line

Front legs from the front where there is a slight deviation of the knee joint to the inside or outside of a straight line

Front legs from where the fetlock joint is deviated to the inside or outside of a straight line

Front legs from the front when the hoof is deviated to the inside or outside of a straight line, but not severe enough to interfere when tracking

Front legs from the side when knee is slightly forward of a straight line and can lock into a straight line

Minor Faults In Structural Correctness Continued:

Front legs from the side when the knee is only slightly behind the vertical or slightly calf kneed

Front legs from the side when the pastern has some angle from the pastern joint to the hoof, but not enough angle to give proper concussion

Rear legs from the rear when the point of the hock is to the inside or outside of a straight line running from the point of the hip

Rear legs from the rear when the hooves are deviated to the inside or outside of a straight line from the point of the hip

Rear legs from the side when the hock joint itself (only looking at the hock joint) that is slightly outside the boundaries of ideal which vary from 140 to 160 degrees

Rear legs from the side when the pastern joint has some angle, but lacks the correct angle to give proper concussion

Maior Fault in Quality, Gender or Breed-Type Characteristics:

Excessively long head, Roman nose

Pig eyed

Excessively narrow between the eyes

Excessive bulge between the eyes

Excessively Long Ears, Floppy ears

Poor set ears or ears with bad expression

Minor Faults in Quality, Gender or Breed-Type Characteristics:

Long Head

Small bulge between the eyes

Narrow between the eyes

Small eyes

Long ears , Offset ears, Pin Ears

Excessively small nostrils

Major Faults in Muscling:

Chest muscling that appears as a wide flat or no V

Chest muscling that appears to be less than 6 inches from the neck/chest junction to the floor of the chest when viewed from the front

Shoulder muscling that appears to be less than half the length of the back or stifle when viewed from the side

Forearm muscling that has little or no bulge or definition

Forearm muscling that fails to tie in high with no blending to the chest or knee

Stifle muscling that appears more narrow than the top of the hip when viewed from the rear giving an appearance of being "apple butted"

Stifle muscling that appears flat with little or no definition

Stifle muscling that appears to be less than half the length of the back or extremely short with no length when viewed from the side

Gaskin muscling that has little or no bulge or definition

Gaskin muscling that fails to tie in high with no blending to the stifle or hock

Minor Faults in Muscling:

Chest muscling that appears to have an inverted V, but lacks the depth of high quality muscling

Chest muscling that appears more than 6 inches in depth from the neck/chest junction, but lacking true high quality depth of chest

Shoulder muscling that is proportional in length when viewed from the side, but not equivalent to the back and stifle

Forearm muscling that has definition, but lacks the bulge of high quality muscling

Forearm muscling that ties in and blends into the chest and knee, but lacks the bulge and definition of true high quality muscling.

Stifle muscling that appears to have definition, but lacks the bulge and width of true high quality muscling.

Stifle muscling that appears shorter when viewed from the side in comparison to the back and chest, but is still proportional.

Gaskin muscling that has definition, but lacks the bulge of high quality muscling

Gaskin muscling that ties in and blends into the stifle and hock, but lacks the bulge and definition of true high quality muscling.

Front Leg Alignment

#16 in the illustrations on opposite page is ideal alignment from the side. Ideal because it utilizes the total column of bone, tendon, muscle and ligaments to absorb the concussion all the way down to the fetlock that is at the correct angle and used as a shock absorber. And , “the line of concussion comes down the leg to the bulb of the heel, not at the middle of the foot”.

Comparing the other illustrations:

#17 is a horse that's over at the knee which is easy to identify. Yes, a fault but because the knee is made to bend forward it is not as bad as #18 that is backwards., a fault we call calf-kneed.

Unfortunately #18 and #19 is often preferred in halter class placings over #17 because the horse over in the knee and shaking is more obvious.

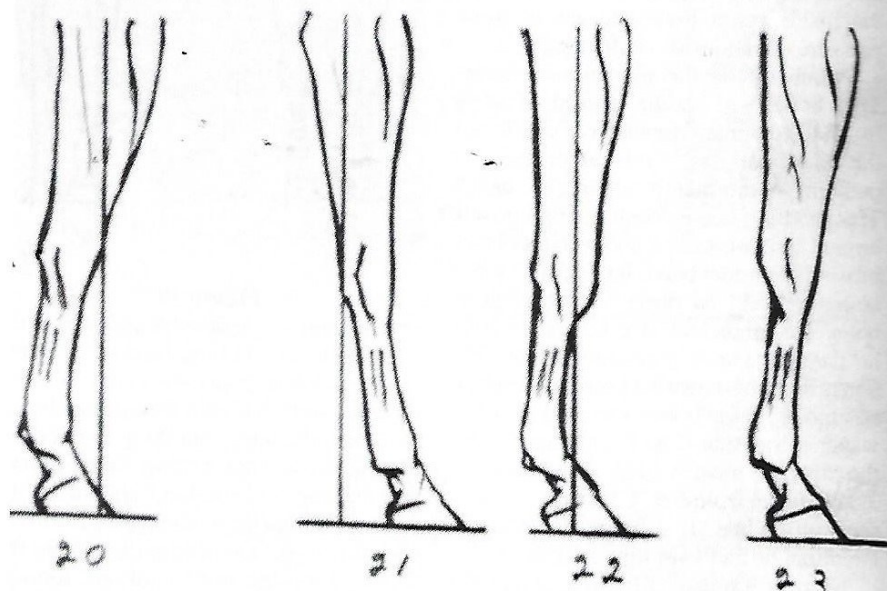
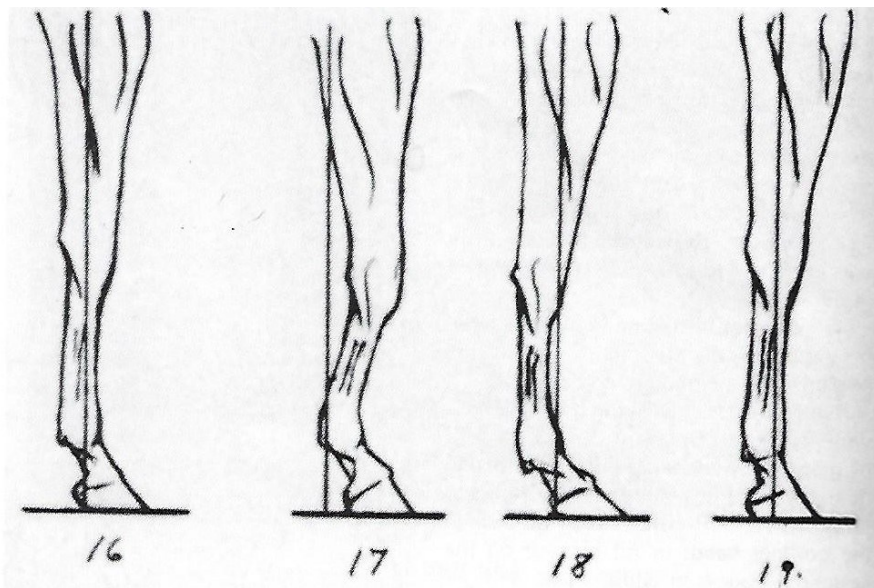
#19 is a horse that is too straight in the pastern and you can see that the line of concussion comes down the leg to the middle of the hoof right where the navicular bone is located. That is the primary reason a straight-shouldered, straight pasterned horse gets navicular disease, because he absorbs most of concussion right through the center of the foot where the navicular bone is located.

Number 20 is a horse that is camped under in front.

Number 21 is camped out.

Number 22 is a horse that has small cannon bone in relationship to the rest of his leg.

Number 23 is a horse that is “tied in” below the knee.



Viewing From The Front:

Illustration # 6 is ideal alignment from the front.

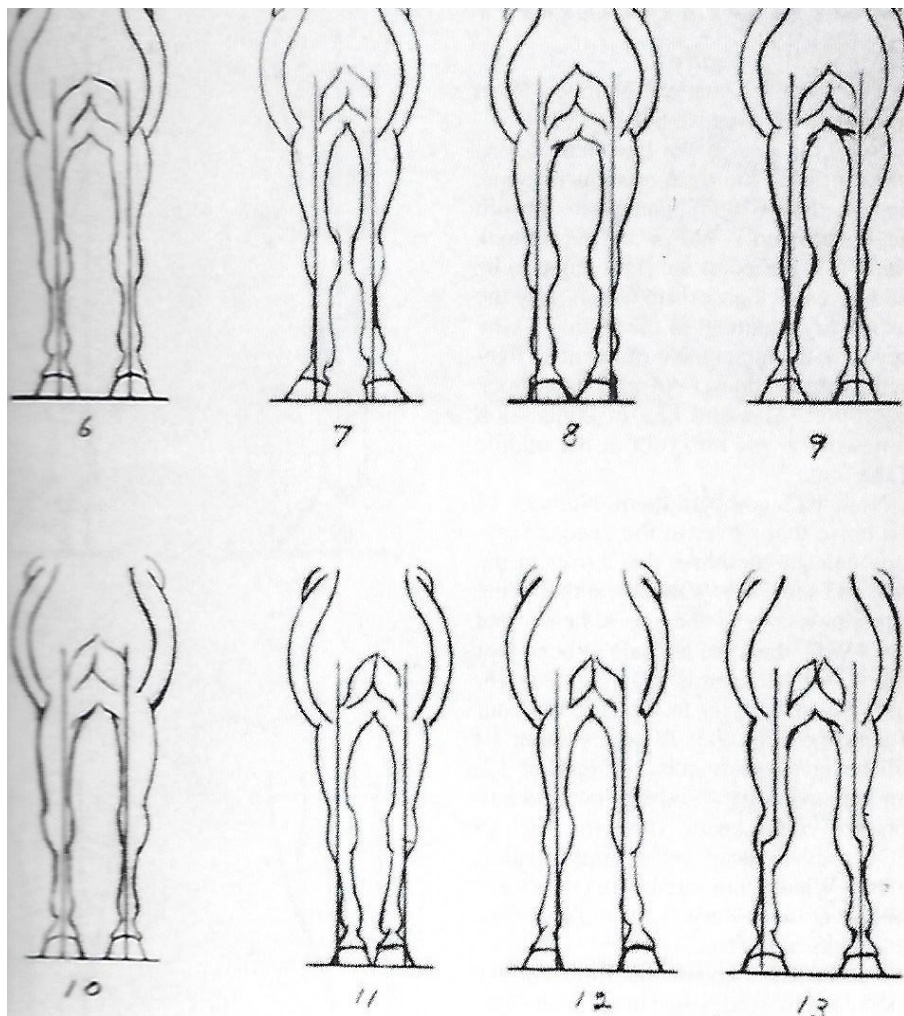
A horse's front legs support 65% of his total body weight so correct alignment is critical to maintain soundness.

#7 is a horse that is base-wide, this horse has excessive pressure on inside of knee and will be prone to splints. #

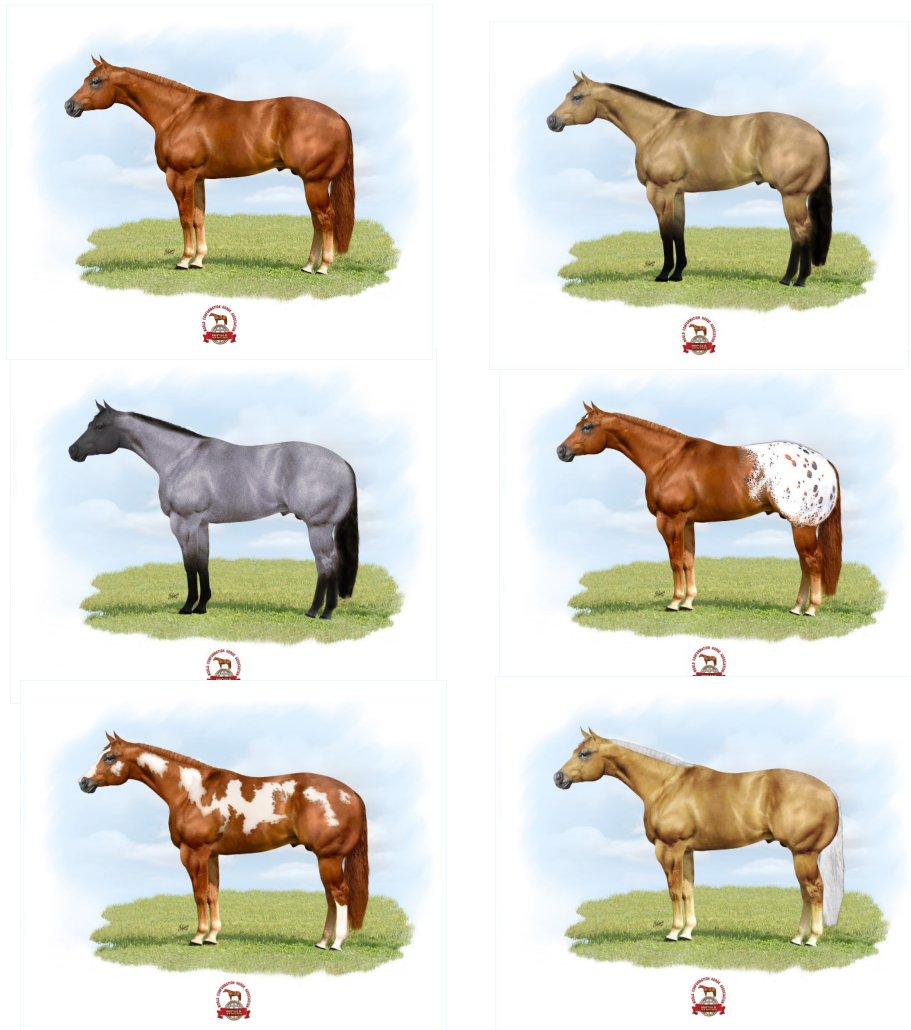
8 is the pigeon-toed horse. #10 is a horse that's wide and most likely not much of an athlete. #11 is a horse that is base narrow.

12 is off-set at the knees and base wide.

13 is the 'bench-legged" horse. This horse will likely have soundness problems if stressed.



Judging the conformation horse is a positive evaluation of balance, structural correctness, proportional, defined muscling, eye appeal and breed and gender characteristics. The ideal conformation horse is a horse that simply put is the most attractive horse in that class on “that particular day” and never based on size or color. (Below see our WCHA Standard in colors of our Breed Affiliates) The class should never be placed on one single trait but ***reward horses that possess the highest number of quality traits, in the greatest combination, compared to all the other horses in the class.***



CLASS PROCEDURE

a. Only the exhibitor and the horse are to be allowed to enter the alleyway according to the established draw or working order. There will be no trainers, parents or grooms with the exhibitor or horse once the exhibitor breaks the plane of the alleyway or in sight of judges is arena set up is allowable.

b. Each exhibitor and horse must complete the prescribed pattern. The pattern is as follows: Horses will walk to the judge one at a time. As the horse approaches, the judge will step to the right (left of the horse) to enable the horse to trot straight to a cone placed 50 feet away. At the cone, the horse will continue trotting, turn to the left and continue trotting until it reaches the next cone.

c. After trotting, horses will be lined up head to tail for individual inspection by the judge. The judge shall inspect each horse from both sides, front and rear. All stallions and mares will be inspected for parrot mouth or monkey mouth. All stallions 2 years of age or older will be inspected for cryptorchidism.

d. Loose horse – Any horse that becomes detached from its handler and is no longer under control may be disqualified, however the rules of the event and decision of show management will take precedence. If the initial horse exhibiting poor mannerisms causes other exhibitors to lose their horse, only the initiating horse may be disqualified.

e. Disruptive horse – Any horse that is disruptive, a danger to the exhibitor, other exhibitors or horses may be disqualified at the judge's discretion.



MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

The World Conformation Horse Association's mission shall be to unite for the purpose of stimulating fair and competitive opportunities for enthusiasts of the conformation horse, while protecting the welfare and integrity of the horse through responsible stewardship.

We strive to preserve and promote the value of correct conformation in the equine industry.

We believe that correct conformation serves as the foundation to the horse's ability to successfully perform in any discipline.

We are committed to protecting, preserving, and promoting the conformation standard of the horse and to constantly pursue growth in our industry.



Revised Edition: Falcon/2020