

10 Characteristics that are Unique to the Horse

Equine Care

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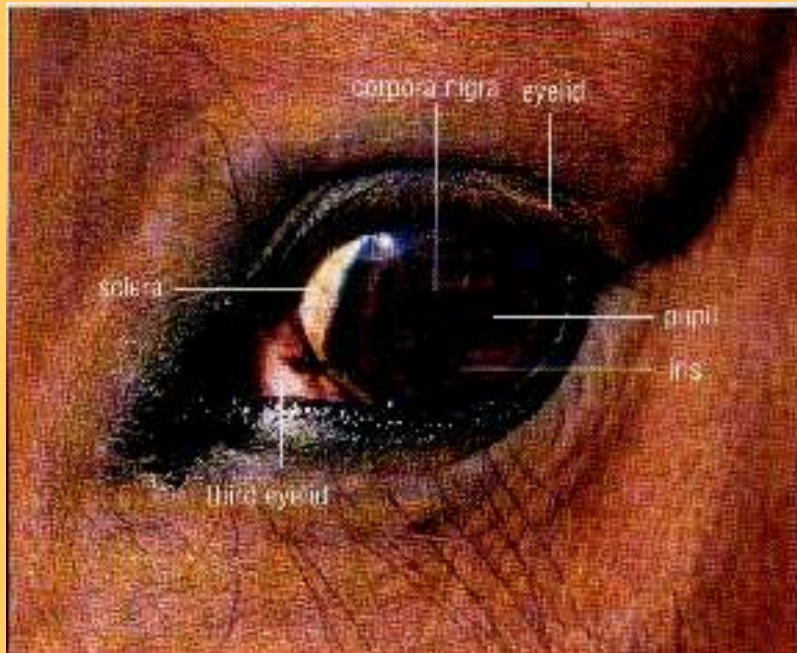
1. Flight

- Primary Defense
- Most timid
- Must feel safe

2. Most Perceptive 5 senses

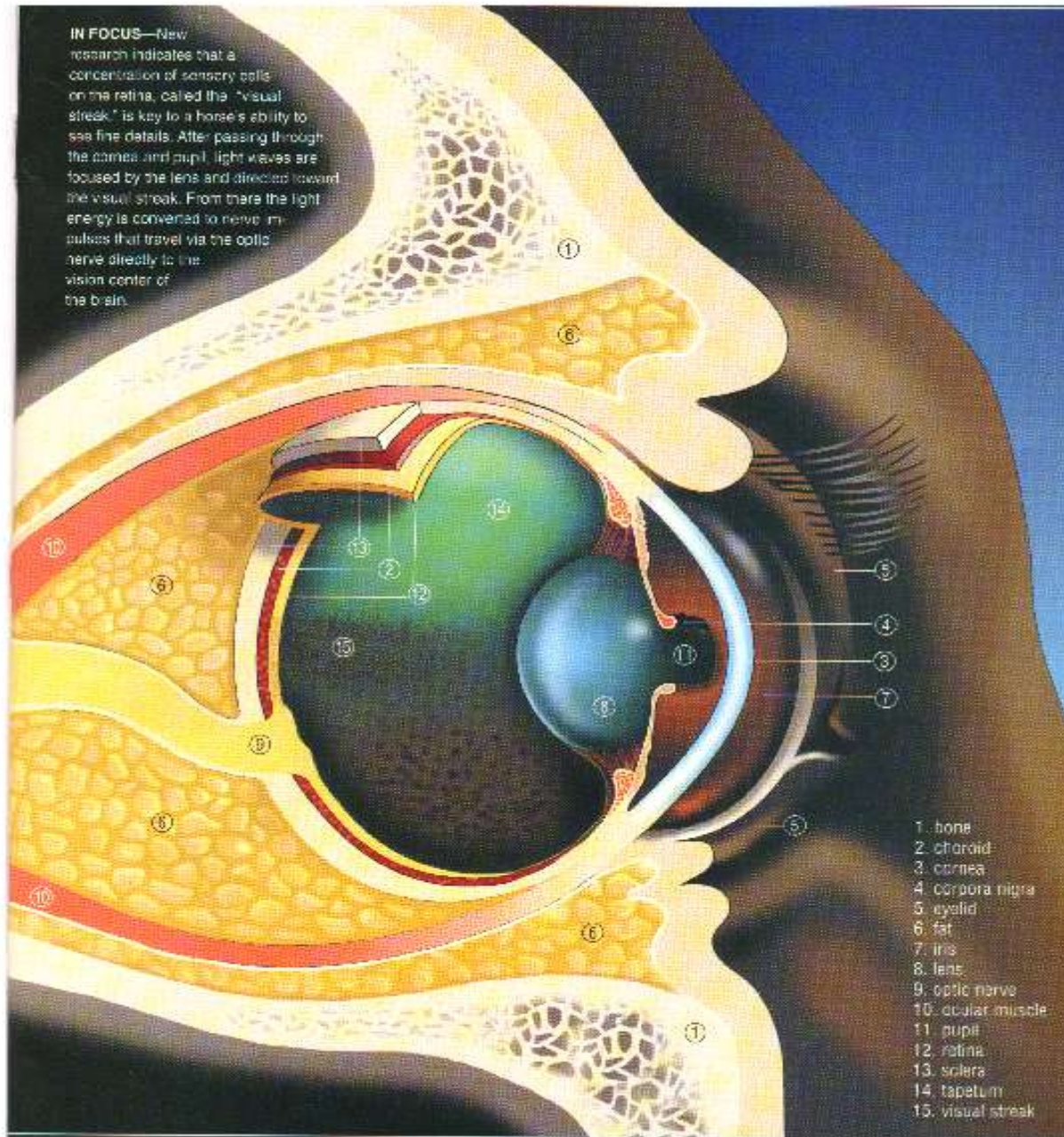
- Taste: likes salty and sweet, not medicinal
- Hearing: directional ears, keener than humans, mood indicator
- Smell: becomes familiar
- Touch: very sensitive, especially around head
- Sight: monocular and binocular

Sight



- Lateral, Monocular
- Binocular
- Limited color, Movement more important.
- Large vision
- Horizontal Visual Streak-Head position determines visual field
- Has to turn eye sideways to look at ground

IN FOCUS—New research indicates that a concentration of sensory cells on the retina, called the “visual streak,” is key to a horse’s ability to see fine details. After passing through the cornea and pupil, light waves are focused by the lens and directed toward the visual streak. From there the light energy is converted to nerve impulses that travel via the optic nerve directly to the vision center of the brain.



1. bone
2. ciliary
3. cornea
4. corpora nigra
5. eyelid
6. fat
7. iris
8. lens
9. optic nerve
10. ocular muscle
11. pupil
12. retina
13. sclera
14. tapetum
15. visual streak

- In Focus:
- Eye Parts

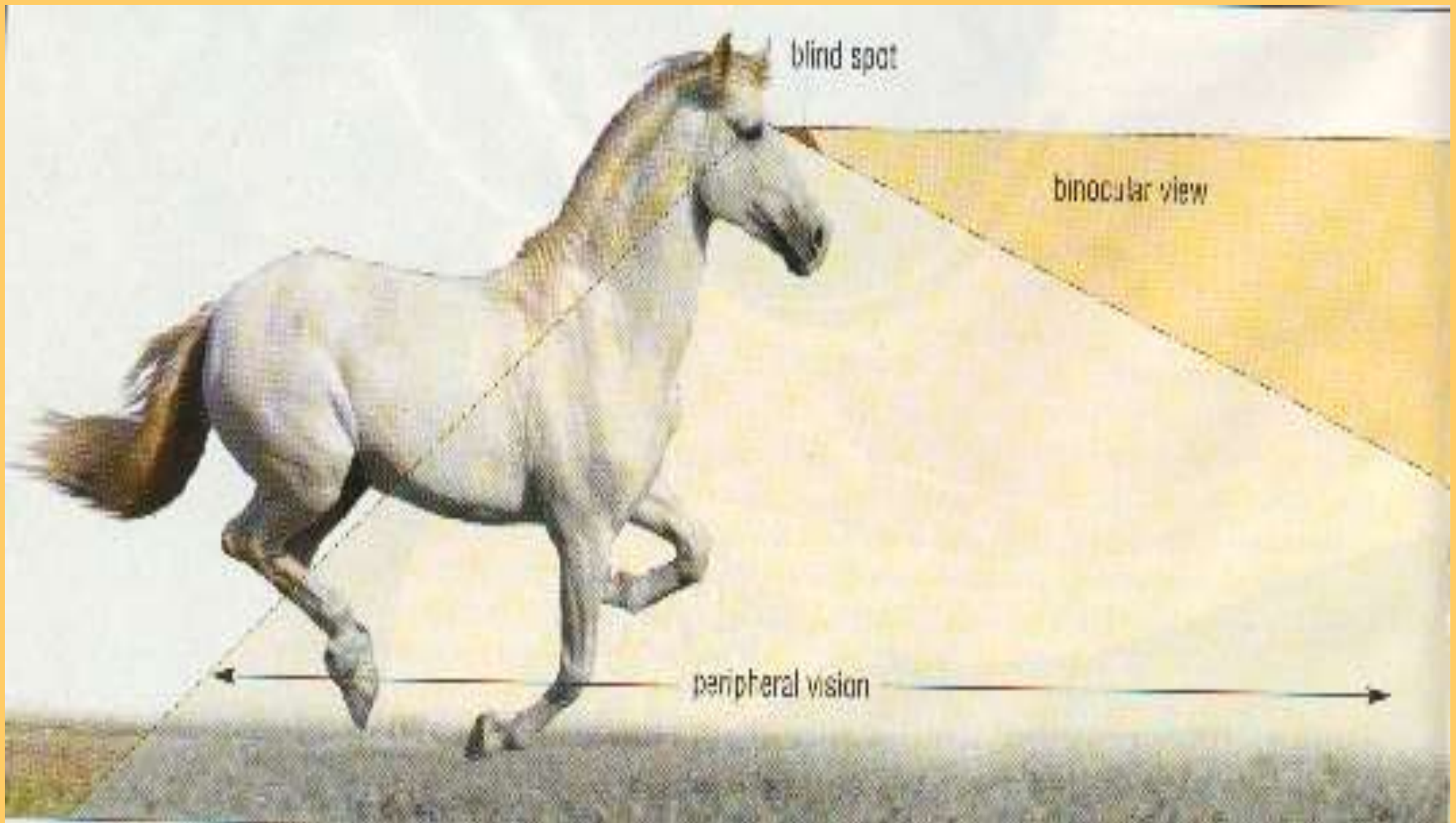
Points of View (peripheral vision)



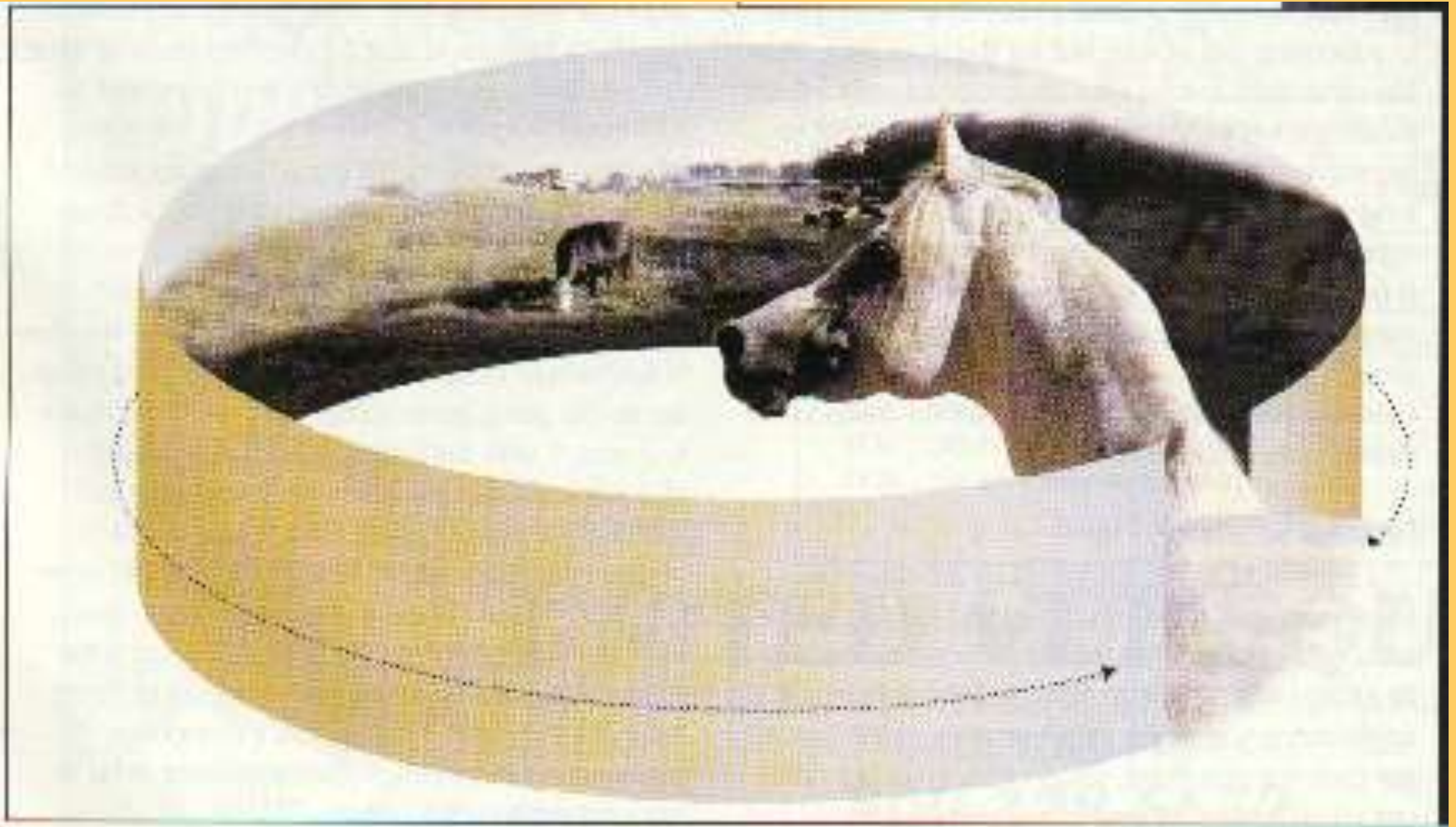
Points of View



Points of View



More than 300 degrees of vision



3. Fast Learner

- Fastest of domestic species
- Learn in 3's
- Learn from RELEASE of pressure
- Generalize learning: same in multiple locations

4. Reaction Time

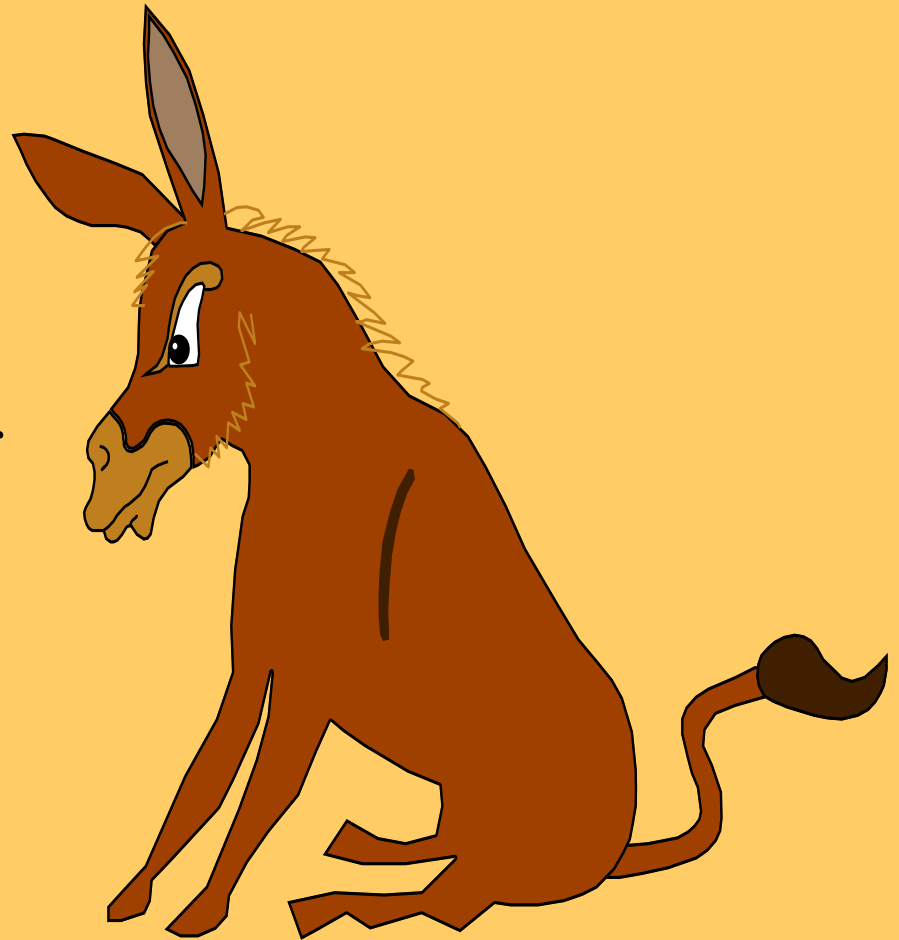
- Faster than Humans
- If they really want to get you; you won't see it coming..
- Blow up with no warning

5. Desensitization

- 2 types:
 - 1. Progressive: approach and retreat
 - Best for adult horses
 - 2. Flooding: persistent and quick
 - Best for imprinting foals

6. Memory

- Forgive but don't forget
- Mules don't forget or forgive
- Retention very high



6. Memory cont'd

- Categorize
 - Fearful but doesn't hurt them
- Do not stimulate the amygdala
 - Permanent
 - “No dust”
- Horses don't rationalize
 - 2 sides - 2 horses

7. Leadership

- Horses easily dominated
- Person or horse in charge of movement
- Wild: 2 leaders
 - Alpha mare: seniority
 - Stallion: owns herd
 - Handler needs to be both
- Assertive, not aggressive
- Means Leadership **NOT CRUELTY**

8. Body Language

- Handlers have to be able to read
 - Use their own to control horse
- Flight position
 - Head elevated, flight hormones working
- Defensive: rounded, tight and ready
- Muscle guarding, sinking
- Submissive: head down, licking, vulnerable

9. Dominance Hierarchy

- Only species dominated by movement
 - It is Survival
- If you control the feet, you control the horse
- Control in 2 ways:
 - 1. Dominant makes submissive move when doesn't want to
 - 2. Dominant takes movement away from submissive
- Leadership established

10. Precocial

- Imprinting period: first few hours after birth
 - Don't stop till foal relaxes: if not, will learn to fight humans
- Critical learning period: 3-5 days after birth
- Learn: human can touch me anywhere they want, horse must not touch human

Horse Training and Learning

- Aids- things important to a horse
 - 1. **SAFETY-most important**
 - 2. Comfort
 - 3. Play
 - 4. Food
- Horses learn from release, must be fast
 - Pressure is the motivator
 - Release teaches
 - Quicker the release, faster learning

Learning and Training cont'd

- Watch body language
- Horses have opposition reflex:
 - Never pull harder than horse is pulling
- Claustrophobic
- Always stand so that handler is in as safe a position as possible