

REPORTING NEGLECT

If you suspect a case of abuse or neglect call your local Humane Society. In a situation of emergency that would cause death to the animal if not immediately responded to by an Animal Control Agency call 911

Rescue Facilities cannot remove an animal without owner consent. You must contact proper Animal Control so the rescue facility can collaborate with them. Entering onto the owner's property without permission could lead to trespassing charges, if you are documenting and taking pictures be safe! Do not trespass.

Henneke Body Condition Scoring Chart

An Objective Method For Judging A Horse's Body Condition

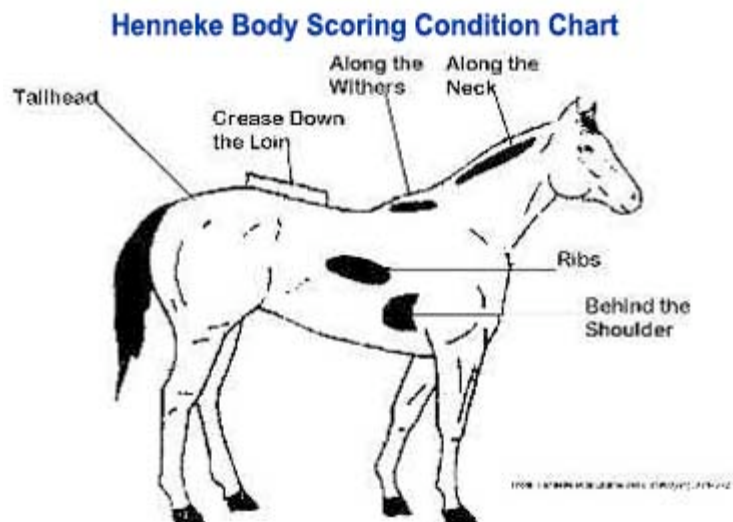
The Henneke System is an objective evaluation of a horse's body condition. Developed in 1983 by Don R. Henneke, Ph.D., of Tarleton State Texas University, it is based on both visual appraisal and palpable fat cover of the six major points of the horse that are most responsive to changes in body fat.

Don R. Henneke, Ph.D., of Tarleton State Texas University, developed the Henneke Body Scoring Condition Chart in 1983. The original purpose of the system was to determine the fertility of thin mares. It is a scientific method of evaluating a horse's body condition regardless of breed, body type, sex or age. It is now widely used by law enforcement agencies as an objective method of scoring a horse's body condition in horse cruelty cases. The chart is accepted in a court of law.

The chart covers six major parts of the horse; neck; withers, (where the neck ends and the back begins) the shoulder area; ribs, loins, and the tailhead area. The chart rates the horses on a scale of 1 to 9. A score of 1 is considered poor or emaciated with no body fat. A nine is extremely fat or obese. A horse that is rated a 1 on the Henneke Chart is often described as a walking skeleton and is in real danger of dying. Courts in the United States have upheld the seizure of such horses by law enforcement citing exigent circumstances, meaning there was a very strong possibility the horse would die unless immediate action was taken. Horse veterinarians consider a body score of between 4 and 7 as acceptable. A 5 is considered ideal.

Observers are trained to visually inspect the horse and also to palpate each part of the horse with their hands to feel for body fat. The observer then assigns each area of the body the numerical score that corresponds with the horse's condition. When a horse has a long haircoat it is imperative that the person scoring the horse use their hands to feel the horse. The horse's long haircoat will hide the protrusion of bones, all except in the most extreme cases.

The scores from each area are then totaled and divided by 6. The resulting number is the horse's rating on the Henneke Body Scoring Condition Chart.



Conformational differences between horses may make certain criteria within each score difficult to apply to every animal. In these instances, those areas influenced by conformation should be discounted, but not ignored when determining the condition score.

Conformation also changes in pregnant mares as they approach parturition (birth). Since the weight of the conceptus tends to pull the skin and musculature tighter over the back and ribs, emphasis is placed upon fat deposition behind the shoulder, around the tailhead and along the neck and withers in these cases.

Description of the Condition Score System

Score Description

1 - Poor:

Emaciated. Prominent spinous processes, ribs, tailhead and hooks and pins. Noticeable bone structure on withers, shoulders and neck. No fatty tissues can be palpated.

2 - Very Thin:

Emaciated. Slight fat covering over base of spinous processes. Transverse processes of lumbar vertebrae feel rounded. Prominent spinous processes, ribs, tailhead and hooks and pins. Withers, shoulders and neck structures faintly discernible.

3 - Thin:

Fat built up about halfway on spinous processes, transverse processes cannot be felt. Slight fat cover over ribs. Spinous processes and ribs easily discernible. Tailhead prominent, but individual vertebrae cannot be visually identified. Hook bones appear rounded, but easily discernible. Pin bones not distinguishable. Withers, shoulders and neck accentuated.

4 -Moderately Thin:

Negative crease along back. Faint outline of ribs discernible. Tailhead prominence depends on conformation, fat can be felt around it. Hook bones not discernible. Withers, shoulders and neck not obviously thin.

5 - Moderate:

Back is level. Ribs cannot be visually distinguished, but can be easily felt. Fat around tailhead beginning to feel spongy. Withers appear rounded over spinous processes. Shoulders and neck blend smoothly into body.

6 - Moderate to Fleshy:

May have slight crease down back. Fat over ribs feels spongy. Fat around tailhead feels soft. Fat beginning to be deposited along the sides of the withers, behind the shoulders and along the sides of the neck.

7 - Fleshy:

May have crease down back. Individual ribs can be felt, but noticeable filling between ribs with fat. Fat around tailhead is soft. Fat deposits along withers, behind shoulders and along the neck.

8 - Fat:

Crease down back. Difficult to palpate ribs. Fat around tailhead very soft. Area along withers filled with fat. Area behind shoulder filled in flush. Noticeable thickening of neck. Fat deposited along inner buttocks.

9- Extremely Fat- Obvious crease down back. Patchy fat appearing over ribs. Bulging fat around tailhead, along withers, behind shoulders and along neck. Fat along inner buttocks may rub together. Flank filled in flush.