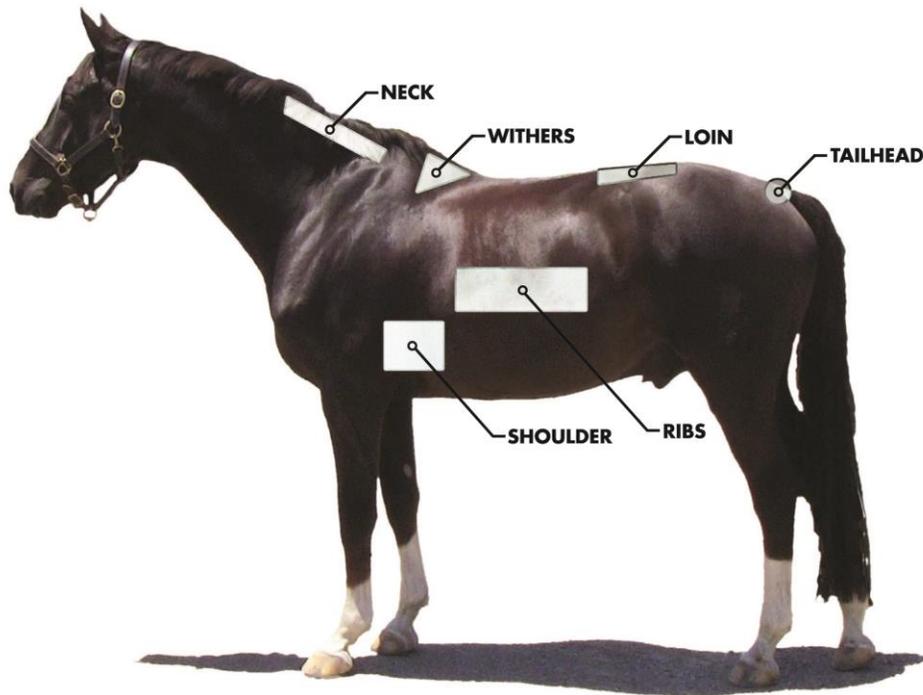




## CONDITION SCORING INSTRUCTIONS

Body condition scoring (BCS) is an **objective** method of evaluating a horse's level of condition by palpating and visually assessing the degrees of fatness over certain areas of the horse's body in relation to musculature. The system was developed by Dr Don Henneke and assigns a numeric value which can allow comparison of the horse's condition over time, or between multiple horses. It is often difficult to recognize changes in body weight and this can result in over or under feeding. The level of fat identified in the areas is dependent on the balance between the energy the horse consumes and that which is lost due to activity. If the horse is in a state of relative negative energy balance (less energy consumed than used) fat deposits in these areas will be diminished, and body condition will be lowered. The opposite is true if the horse's diet provides more energy than the horse utilizes. Energy balance is affected by such factors as level of activity, reproductive status (pregnancy and lactation), weather (humidity, wind chill, ambient temperature), age, and health status. The regions of the body that are assessed for fat cover to create a body condition score are; along the neck, along the withers, the tail head, over the ribs, behind the shoulders and the loins.

### Areas of the horse's body to be assessed during a condition scoring evaluation



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## Technique

To condition score your horse, stand the horse squarely on level ground and use the flat of your hand with fingers together and when facing the rear of the horse use the hand closest to the horse (i.e. on the left side of the horse use your left hand). Place your flat hand on the area to be palpated and run your hand over the area pushing your weight evenly into your hand and paying attention to what you feel. Read the descriptions in the table below for each of the areas and along with your visual assessment of the area assign your score to each area. Work through all 6 areas assigning a score to each (look at picture above for area location) note half scores e.g. 5.5 if the horse is neither one score or the other i.e. between a 5 and a 6. Different areas may or may not score the same and so once finished average all 6 scores to give an overall body condition score.

**ENTER YOUR RESULTS IN TO THE ONLINE INTAKE FORM.**



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CONDITION	NECK (A)	WITHERS (B)	SHOULDER (F)	RIBS (E)	LOIN (C)	TAILHEAD (D)
<b>1 POOR</b>	Bone structure easily noticeable	Bone structure easily noticeable	Bone structure easily noticeable	Ribs protruding prominently	Spinous processes projecting prominently	Tailhead, pinbones, and hook bones projecting prominently
<b>2 VERY THIN</b>	Bone structure faintly discernible	Bone structure faintly discernible	Bone structure faintly discernible	Ribs prominent	Slight fat covering over base of spinous processes. Transverse processes of lumbar vertebrae feel rounded. Spinous processes are prominent	Tailhead prominent
<b>3 THIN</b>	Neck accentuated	Withers accentuated	Shoulder accentuated	Slight fat cover over ribs. Ribs easily discernible	Fat buildup halfway on spinous processes, but easily discernible. Transverse processes cannot be felt	Tailhead prominent but individual vertebrae cannot be visually identified. Hook bones appear rounded, but are still easily discernible. Pin bones not distinguishable.
<b>4 MODERATELY THIN</b>	Neck not obviously thin	Withers not obviously thin	Shoulder not obviously thin	Faint outline of ribs discernible	Negative crease (peaked appearance) along back	Prominence depends on conformation. Fat can be felt. Hook bones not discernible
<b>5 MODERATE</b>  Ideal weight	Neck blends smoothly into body	Withers rounded over spinous processes	Shoulder blends smoothly into body	Ribs cannot be visually distinguished, but can be easily felt	Back is level	Fat around tailhead beginning to feel soft
<b>6 MODERATELY FLESHY</b>	Fat beginning to be deposited	Fat beginning to be deposited	Fat beginning to be deposited	Fat over ribs feels spongy	May have a slight positive crease (a groove) down back	Fat around tailhead feels soft
<b>7 FLESHY</b>	Fat deposited along neck	Fat deposited along withers	Fat deposited behind shoulder	Individual ribs can be felt with pressure, but noticeable fat filling between ribs	May have a positive crease down the back	Fat around tailhead is soft
<b>8 FAT</b>	Noticeable thickening of neck	Area along withers filled with fat	Area behind shoulder filled in flush with body	Difficult to feel ribs	Positive crease down the back	Fat around tailhead very soft
<b>9 EXTREMELY FAT</b>	Bulging fat	Bulging fat	Bulging fat	Patchy fat appearing over ribs	Obvious crease down the back	Bulging fat around tailhead

\*Modified from: Henneke et al. (1983) Equine Vet. J. 15(4):372.



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