

Horse Body Condition Scorecard



1

SCORE

Back

Ribs

Neck

Shoulder

Withers

Tailhead

Poor

very prominent

very prominent vertebrae

extremely thin

very prominent

very prominent

very prominent

Description: The horse is emaciated. The spinous processes (backbone), ribs, tailhead, and hooks and pins all project prominently. The bone structures of the withers, shoulders, and neck are easily noticeable, and no fat can be felt anywhere.



2

Very Thin

prominent vertebrae

prominent

very thin

very thin

very thin

very thin

Description: The spinous processes are prominent. The ribs, tailhead, and pelvic bones stand out, and bone structures of the withers, neck, and shoulders are faintly discernable.



3

Thin

vertebrae fat 1/2 way up

see easily

thin

thin

thin

prominent

Description: The spinous processes stand out, but fat covers them to midpoint. Very slight fat cover can be felt over the ribs, but the spinous processes and ribs are easily discernable. The tailhead is prominent, but individual vertebrae cannot be seen. Hook bones are visible but appear rounded. Pin bones cannot be seen. The withers, shoulders, and neck are accentuated.



4

Moderately Thin

negative crease

can see outline of ribs

moderately thin

moderately thin

moderately thin

some fat

Description: The horse has a negative crease along its back and the outline of the ribs can just be seen. Fat can be felt around the tailhead. The hook bones cannot be seen and the withers, neck, and shoulders do not look obviously thin.



5

Moderate

level (no crease)

cannot see, easily feel

blend into shoulder

blend smoothly into body

rounded

moderate fat

Description: The back is level. Ribs cannot be seen but can be easily felt. Fat around the tailhead feels slightly spongy. The withers look rounded and the shoulder and neck blend smoothly into the body.



6

Moderately Fleshy

slight crease

cannot see, can feel

little fat

little fat

little fat

moderate fat

Description: There may be a slight crease down the back. Fat around the tailhead feels soft and fat over the ribs feels spongy. There are small deposits along the sides of the withers, behind the shoulders, and along the sides of the neck.



7

Fleshy

crease

barely feel

average fat

average fat

average fat

fleshy fat

Description: There may be a crease down the back. Individual ribs can be felt, but there is noticeable fat between the ribs. Fat around the tailhead is soft. Fat is noticeable in the withers, the neck, and behind the shoulders.



8

Fat

obvious crease

difficult to feel

fat

flush behind

fat filled

very soft fat

Description: The horse has a crease down the back. Spaces between ribs are so filled with fat that the ribs are difficult to feel. The area along the withers is filled with fat, and fat around the tailhead feels very soft. The space behind the shoulders is filled in flush and some fat is deposited along the inner buttocks.



9

Extremely Fat

very obvious crease

cannot feel (patchy fat)

bulging fat

bulging fat

bulging fat

bulging fat

Description: The crease down the back is very obvious. Fat appears in patches over the ribs and there is bulging fat around the tailhead, withers, shoulders, and neck. Fat along the inner buttocks may cause buttocks to rub together, and the flank is filled in flush.

BCS adapted from Henneke, 1983. Description source: Texas A&M University.

For custom feeding suggestions to help you maintain or change your horse's body condition score, call the FORAGE FIRST™ EQUINE NUTRITION HELPLINE at 1-800-680-8254.