# HOW TO CONDITION SCORE

Introduction

- Condition scoring your horse is an objective assessment of his current body condition, essentially scoring fat cover.
- The level of fat cover is assessed using a numeric grading system.
- There are a number of factors that can affect the condition score of a horse. Primarily condition is related to feed in-take, but also other factors such as fitness, age, pregnancy and general health will be influential.
- Many horse owners find it difficult to differentiate between fat and muscle. Condition scoring needs to be hands-on in order to feel the relevant areas of the horse.
- The areas where horses store fat are:
    - Neck – including their topline
    - Over their shoulders
    - Ribs
    - Backbone
    - Rump (pelvis area)
    - Top of the tail
- A top tip is to divide your horse into three sections, condition score each area and then divide your score by three to give an average score.
- If you see your horse everyday it can be very difficult to fully notice any slight differences in your horse. It is advised to condition score your horse every two weeks, and taking photos will help maintain a very useful record.

Condition Scoring Systems

There are two numerical grading systems which can be used to condition score your horse. One system devised by Henneke scores from 1 (emaciated) to 9 (extremely fat).
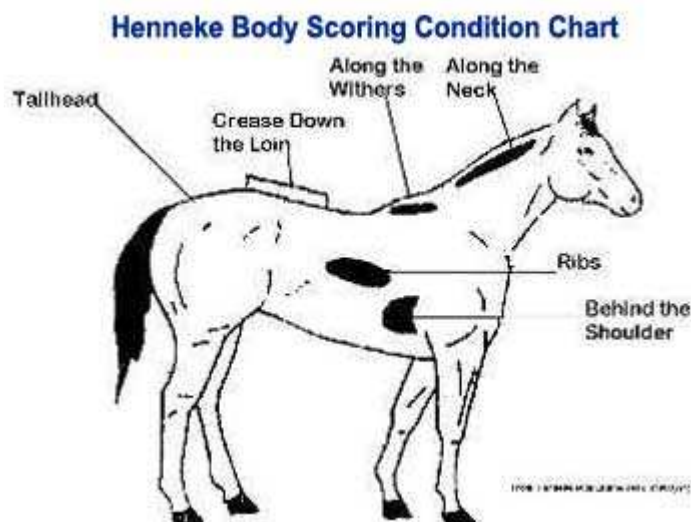
The other system which is more regularly used in the UK, was devised by Carroll and Huntington (1988). This system is based on a grading system of 0 (emaciated) to 5 (obese). Within this system half points can be awarded to provide more accuracy.

CONDITION SCORE 0 - Emaciated (word descriptions taken from *Equine Industry Welfare Guidelines Compendium for Horses, Ponies and Donkeys Second Edition*).
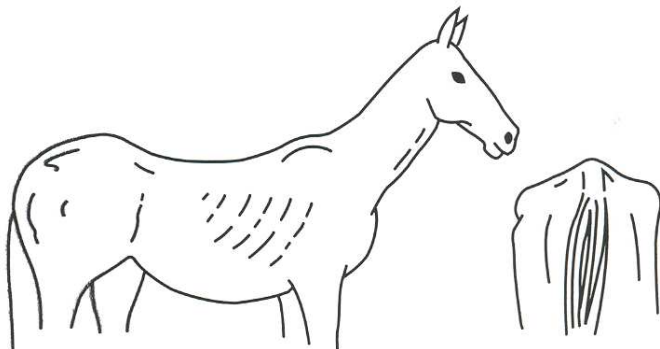

Pelvis: Angular, skin tight. Very sunken rump. Deep cavity under tail.

Back and Ribs: Skin tight over ribs. Very prominent and sharp backbone.

Neck: Marked ewe neck. Narrow and slack at base.
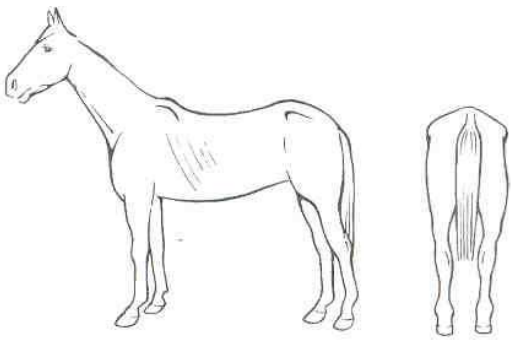
CONDITION SCORE 1 - Poor

Pelvis: Prominent pelvis and croup. Sunken rump but skin supple. Deep cavity under tail.

Back and Ribs: Ribs easily visible. Prominent backbone with sunken skin on either side.

Neck: Ewe neck, narrow and slack base.
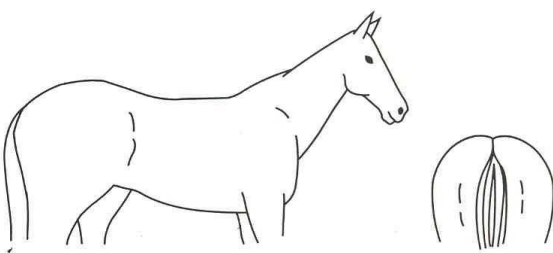
CONDITION SCORE 2 – Moderate

Pelvis: Rump flat either side of back bone. Croup well defined, some fat. Slight cavity under tail.

Back and Ribs: Ribs just visible. Backbone covered but spine can be felt.

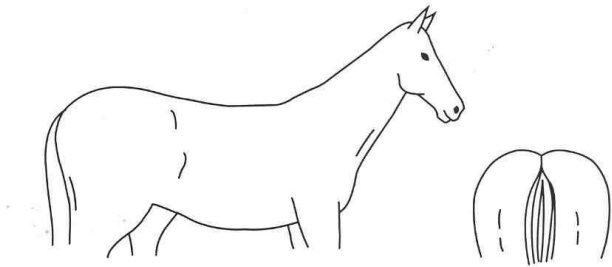**Neck:** Narrow but firm.

CONDITION SCORE 3 – Good

Pelvis: Covered by fat and rounded. No gutter. Pelvis easily felt.

Back and Ribs: Ribs just covered and easily felt. No gutter along the back. Backbone well covered but spine can be felt.

Neck: No crest (except for stallions) firm neck.
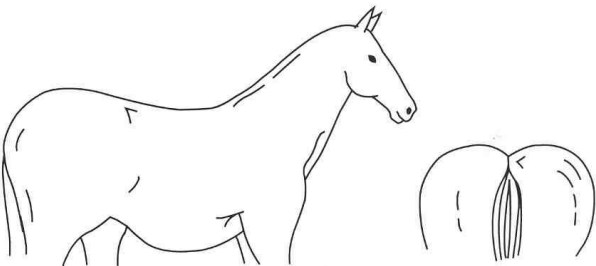
CONDITION SCORE 4 – Fat

Pelvis: Gutter to root of tail. Pelvis covered by fat. Need firm pressure to feel.

Back and Ribs: Ribs well covered – need pressure to feel. Gutter along backbone.

Neck: Wide and firm.

CONDITION SCORE 5 – Obese

Pelvis: Deep gutter to root of tail. Skin distended. Pelvis buried, cannot be felt.

Back and Ribs: Ribs buried, cannot be felt. Deep gutter along back. Back broad and flat.

Neck: Marked crest very wide and firm. Fold of fat.