

Horse Body Condition Scorecard



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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.						
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.						
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.						
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.						
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.						
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.						
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.						
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.						
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.