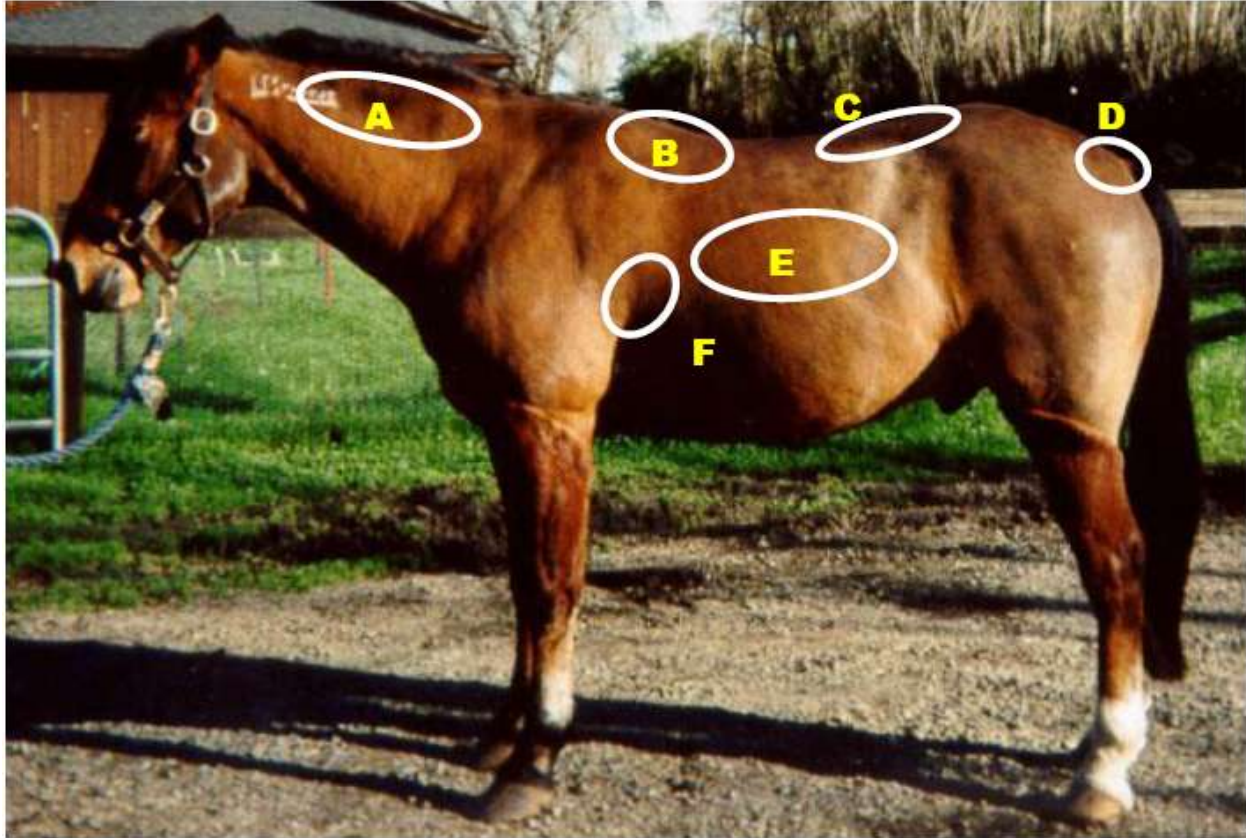

Body Condition Scoring

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. It was developed by Dr. Don Henneke at Texas A & M University. A numeric value is assessed which can allow comparison of the horses condition over time, or between multiple horses. It is often difficult for horse owners 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 crease down the back.

While a horses use may dictate a slightly fleshier body condition (breeding mares) or slightly less fleshy condition (race horses), in general, the ideal body condition is typified by the following; a neck that flows smoothly into the shoulder and that rounds out the withers, a level back, a layer of fat over ribs (ribs can be felt but not seen) and hip bones that cannot be felt on palpation. On a 10 point scale this is scored a 5 and on a 5 point scale this is scored a 3. It is possible that a horse may be awarded different scores for different body areas. If this is the case, the score for each body area are averaged to give an overall score. There is also a range between scores and these may be given half scores i.e. it is neither a 2 nor a 3 and is thus given a 2.5.

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 below for each of the areas and along with your visual assessment of the area assign your score. Work through all 6 areas as seen in the picture below (neck A, withers B, behind shoulder F, loin C, ribs E and tailhead D) assigning a score that best describes what you feel, note half scores e.g. 5.5 if the horse is neither one score nor the other i.e. between a 5 and a 6 can be awarded.



If condition scoring is performed regularly for example once per month, you will start to build up an objective view of your horse's condition and will also catch changes earlier than you might by visual assessment alone.

Score		Description
1	Emaciated	Animal very emaciated. Spinous processes (top of the backbone – in the shoulder area this is the withers; in the pelvis it is the palpable top of the spine in the middle of the back), ribs, tailhead, and point of hip and point of buttocks project prominently; bone structure of withers, shoulders, and neck easily noticeable; no fatty tissue can be felt.
2	Very Thin	Animal emaciated. Slight fat covering spinous processes; transverse processes (portion of the vertebrae that sticks out to the sides in the lumbar region behind the ribs), of the lumbar vertebrae feel rounded; spine, ribs, tailhead, point of hip and point

of buttocks prominent; withers, shoulders and neck structures faintly discernable.

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| 3 | Thin | Fat is built up about halfway on spinous processes; tranverse processes cannot be felt; slight fat cover over the ribs; spinous processes and ribs easily discernable; tailhead prominent, but individual vertebrae cannot be individually identified; point of buttocks appear rounded but are not easily discernable; withers, shoulders, and neck accentuated. |
| 4 | Lean | Slight ridge discernable along back; faint outline of ribs discernable; tailhead prominence depends on conformation; but fat can be felt around it; point of hip not discernable; withers, shoulders, and neck not obviously thin. |
| 5 | Moderate | Back is flat (no crease or ridge); ribs not visually distinguishable but easily felt; fat around tailhead feel slightly spongy; withers appear rounded over spinous processes; shoulders and neck blend smoothly in to body. |
| 6 | Moderately Fleshy | May be slight crease down back; fat over ribs is spongy; fat to fleshy. Around tailhead is soft; a little fat deposited along the side of the withers, behind the shoulders, and along the sides of the neck. |
| 7 | Fleshy | May have a crease down the back; individual ribs can be felt, but noticeable fat is between ribs; fat around tailhead is soft; fat is deposited along the withers, behind shoulders, and along neck. |
| 8 | Fat | Crease down back; difficult to feel ribs; fat around tailhead very soft; area along withers filled with fat; area behind shoulder filled with fat; noticeable thickening of neck; fat deposited along inner thighs. |
| 9 | Extremely Fat | Obvious crease down back; patchy fat appearing over ribs; bulging fat around tailhead, along withers, behind shoulder, and along neck; fat along inner thighs may cause thighs to rub together; flank filled with fat. |