

Fact Sheet

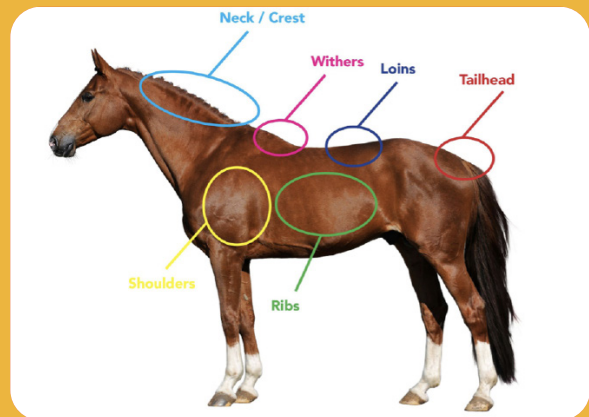
Body Fat Scoring

Although measuring the weight of your horse is extremely useful, body fat scoring helps you to understand if that weight is appropriate for your individual horse.

The most commonly used system in the UK scores the horse from 0 (emaciated) to 5 (obese) with half scores used. On this scale, depending on the individual, a score of 2.5-3.5 would be considered a healthy range for the vast majority of horses. As lots of horses deposit fat unevenly across their bodies it is often easiest to divide the body into three areas:

- 1) Neck and shoulders
- 2) Back and ribs
- 3) Pelvis

Particular areas to pay attention to include the neck (especially if they are developing a crest); behind the shoulder; over the ribs; along the withers and backbone; the bony points of the pelvis and how the rump looks from behind.



A practical guide to body fat scoring your horse

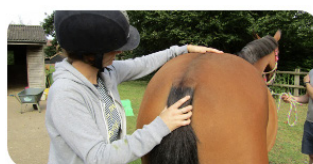
Score each of these areas from 0-5 using the diagrams on the scoring chart below. Remember, a score of 2.5-3.5 would be considered a healthy range for the vast majority of horses.



Neck and shoulder - Feel along the top of your horse's neck/crest. You should be able to wobble it. Next, run your hand over your horse's shoulder which should be clearly defined. If your hand runs smoothly from the neck to the shoulder, this indicates fat accumulated in front of the shoulder.



Back and side - Run your hand along the back where you should be able to feel the spine. If your hand lays flat across their back, they are carrying too much fat. Run your hand over their side and you should be able to feel their ribs with ease and with light pressure. If you can't feel them, or have to press firmly, your horse is carrying excess fat.



Hindquarters - Run your hand over the hip bones, which you should see, even under quite a thick layer of fat. If you are unable to feel or see them, your horse is carrying far too much fat. Safely look at your horse from behind. Their hindquarters should be rounded with limited fat pads around the tail head.

Body Fat Scoring | Fact Sheet

Body fat scoring chart

0 Emaciated

- Prominent spinous processes, ribs, tail-head
- Prominent withers, shoulders and neck
- No fatty tissue can be palpate



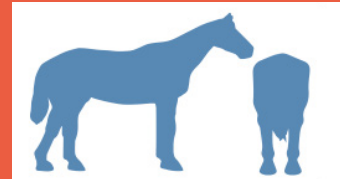
1 Thin

- Slightly less emaciated
- Slight fat covering over base of spinous processes
- Transverse processes of lumbar vertebrae feel rounded
- Withers, shoulders and neck faintly noticeable



2 Lean

- A slightly narrow neck
- Ribs just visible and can be felt
- A thin coating of fat covering the entire body
- You can feel the spine
- Croup well defined



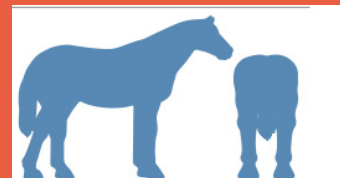
3 Moderate

- No crest
- Ribs cannot be visually distinguished but can be easily felt
- Withers appear rounded over spinous processes
- Shoulders and neck blend smoothly into body shape



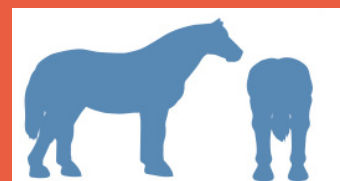
4 Fat

- Crease along back
- Difficult to palpate ribs
- Fat around tail-head is very soft
- Noticeable thickening of the neck and cresty appearance



5 Obese

- Obvious crease along back
- Patchy fat appearing over ribs
- Bulging fat around tail-head, along withers, behind shoulders and along neck
- Fat along inner buttocks
- Large crest



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This factsheet was created by the VetPartners Equine Team, with assistance from our Marketing Team and Veterinary Regulatory Advisors.

**For further information, please contact your local
VetPartners Equine Veterinary Practice on:**

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VetPartners Equine has a diverse range of practices and expertise within the group.

Together with our practices, our focus is on providing an excellent service to our equine clients. No two practices are the same, and we understand and embrace that independent spirit.