

Instructions on how to estimate body condition score

The following methods for estimating a horse's body condition score are taken from Henneke et al. Equine Vet J. (1983) 15 (4), 371-372

Some points to note....

1. The body condition score is designed to assess the amount of fatty deposits in the horse's body.
2. It is recommended that you use a combination of palpation and visualisation to obtain the score.
3. The characteristics of different breeds will influence your score. For example, you are likely to score a Draught horse higher than a Thoroughbred when they may in fact have the same degree of fat deposits.
4. Conformation can also affect your score. If a horse has a conformational problem, such as a sway back, try to use fat deposits in areas not affected by the conformational problem to obtain your score.
5. Consider the physiological status of your subject. Pregnant mares and aged horses can appear to have less fatty deposits than they actually do due to changes in the musculature.

Figure 1: The fatty deposits to be examined when body condition scoring a horse.

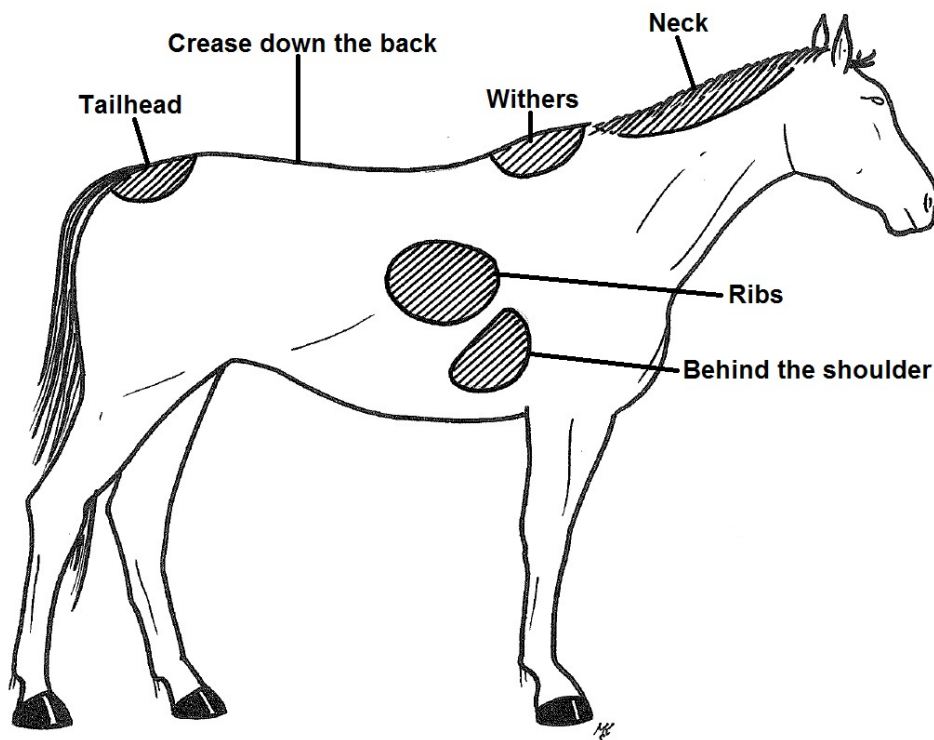


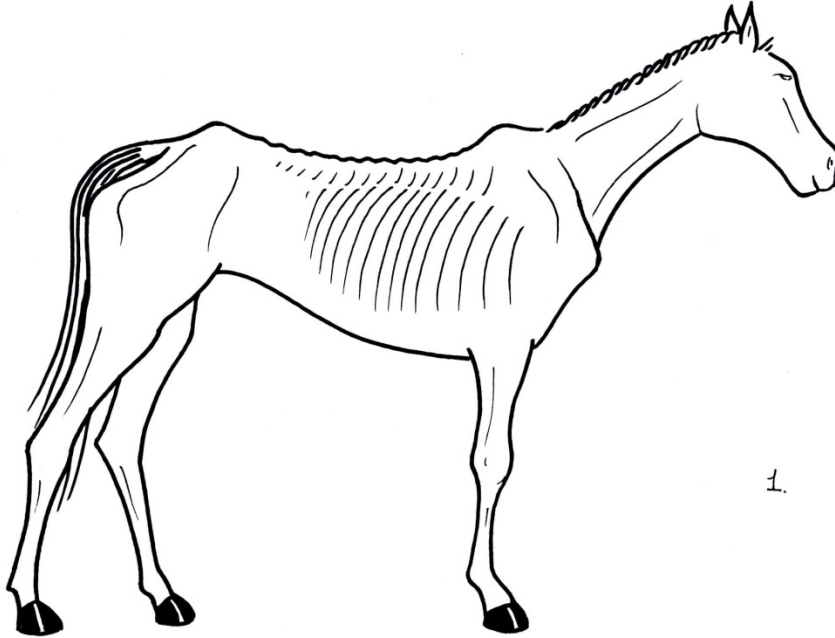


Table 1: Description of body condition scores for horses on a scale of 1-9 as described by Henneke et al. in 1983.

Score	Description	Example
1. Poor	Animal extremely emaciated. Spinous processes, ribs, tailhead, tuber coxae and ischii projecting prominently. Bone structure of withers, shoulders and neck easily noticeable. No fatty tissue can be felt.	See appendix
2. Very thin	Animal emaciated. Slight fat covering over base of spinous processes, transverse processes of lumbar vertebrae feel rounded. Spinous processes, ribs, tailhead, tuber coxae and ischii prominent. Withers, shoulders and neck structures faintly discernible.	See appendix
3. Thin	Fat build up about halfway on spinous processes, transverse processes cannot be felt. Slight fat cover over ribs. Spinous processes and ribs easily discernible. Tailhead prominent, but individual vertebrae cannot be visually identified. Tuber coxae appear rounded, but easily discernible. Tuber ischia not distinguishable. Withers, shoulders and neck accentuated.	See appendix
4. Moderately Thin	Negative crease along back. Faint outline of ribs discernible. Tailhead prominence depends on conformation, fat can be felt around it. Tuber coxae not discernible. Withers, shoulders and neck not obviously thin	See appendix
5. Moderate	Back level. Ribs cannot be visually distinguished but can be easily felt. Fat around tailhead beginning to feel spongy. Withers appear rounded over spinous processes. Shoulders and neck blend smoothly into body	See appendix
6. Moderately fleshy	May have slight crease down back. Fat over ribs feels spongy. Fat around tailhead feels soft. Fat beginning to be deposited along the side of the withers, behind the shoulders and along the sides of the neck.	See appendix
7. Fleshy	May have crease down back. Individual ribs can be felt, but noticeable filling between ribs with fat. Fat around tailhead is soft. Fat deposited along withers, behind shoulders and along the neck.	See appendix
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.	See appendix
9. Extremely fat	Obvious crease down back. Patchy fat appearing over ribs. Bulging fat around tailhead, along withers, behind shoulders and along neck. Fat along inner thighs may rub together. Flank filled with fat	See appendix

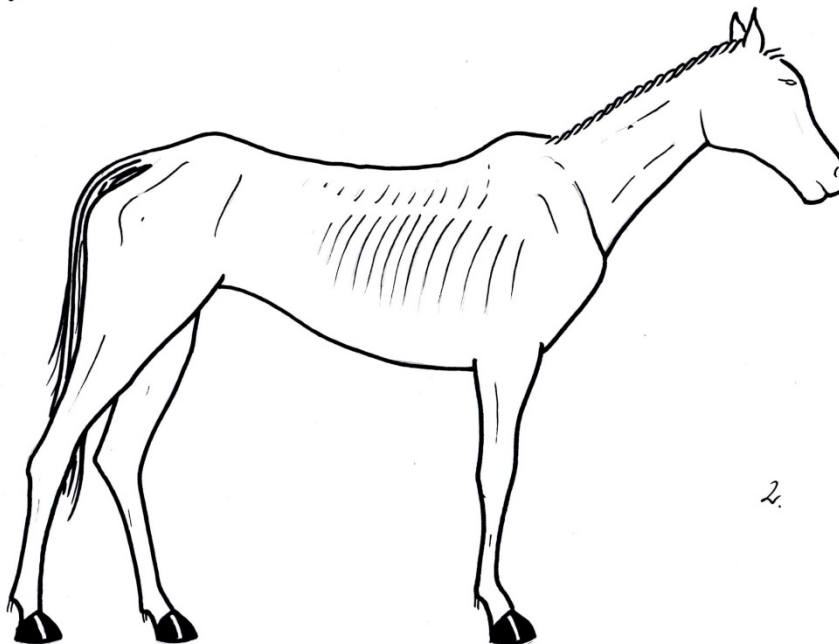
Appendix

1. Poor



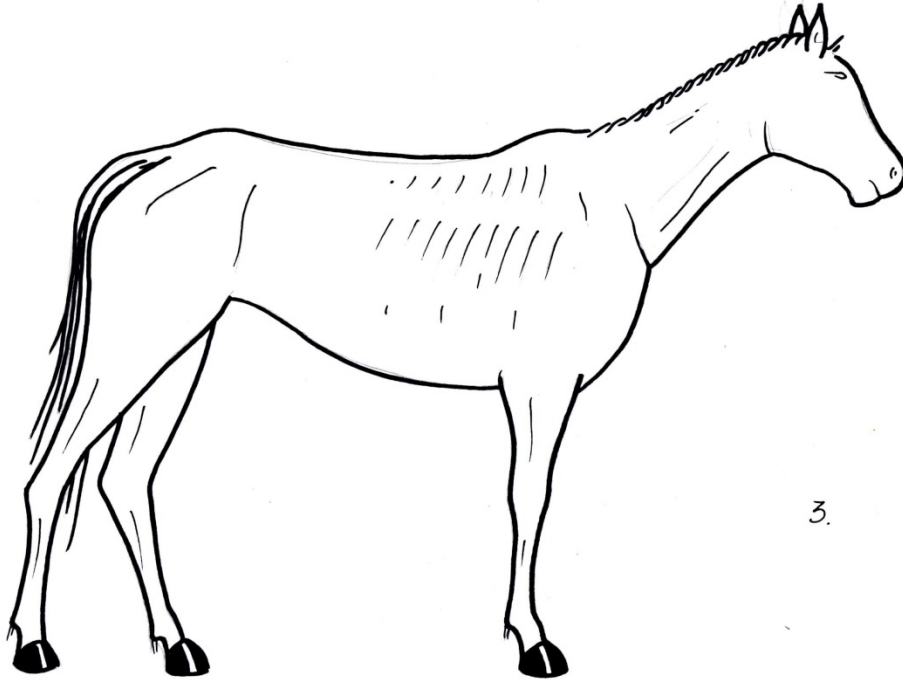
1.

2. Very Thin



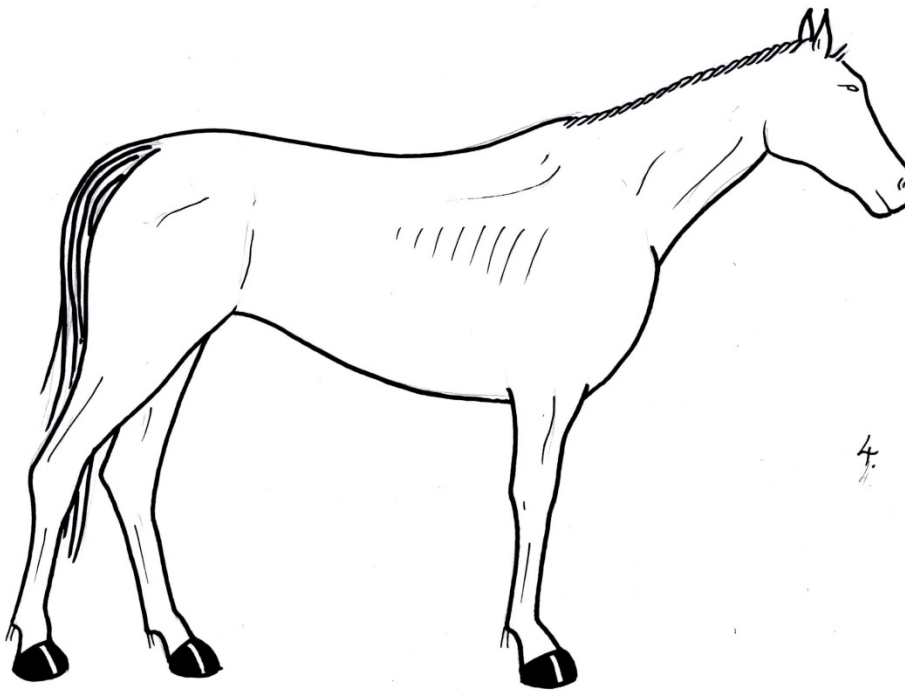
2.

3. Thin



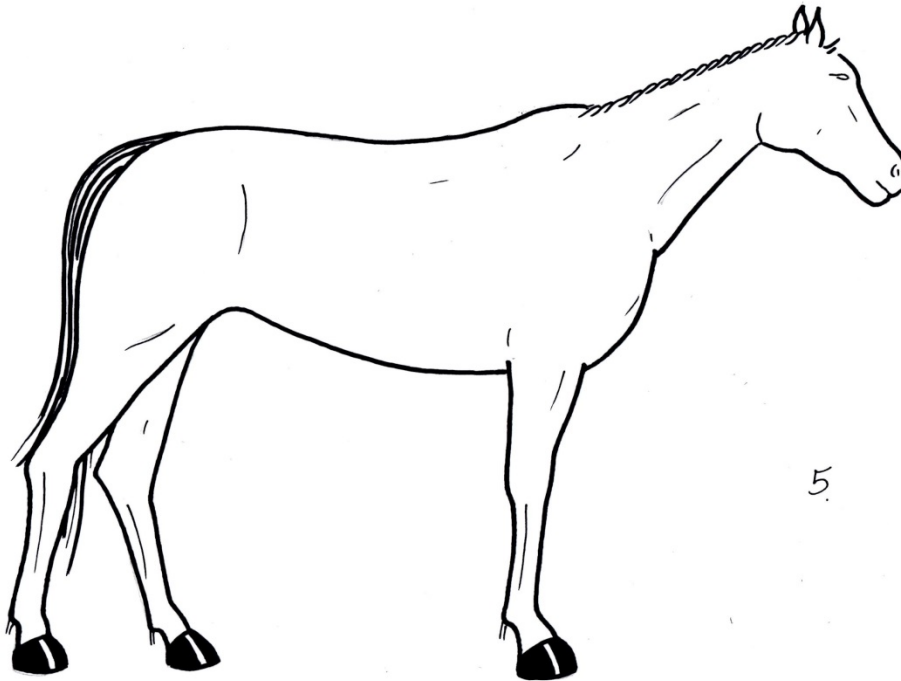
3.

4. Moderately Thin



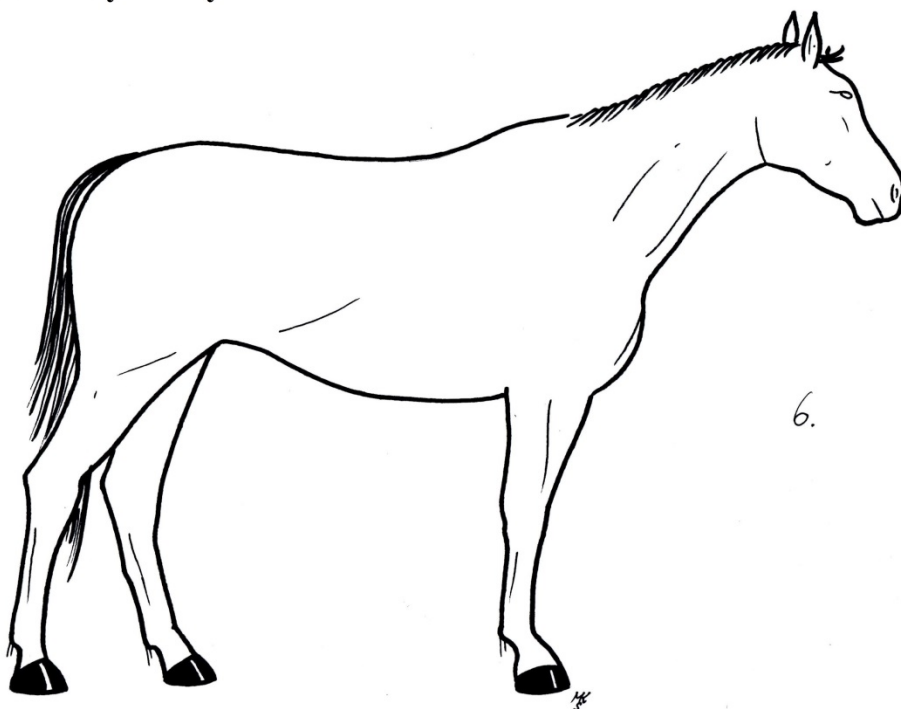
4.

5. Moderate



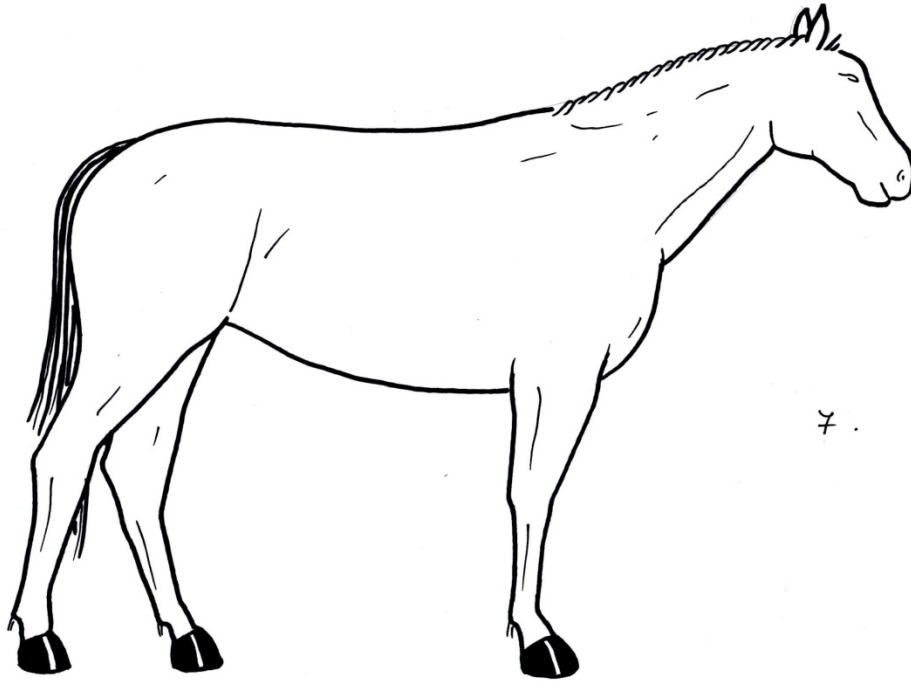
5.

6. Moderately Fleshy

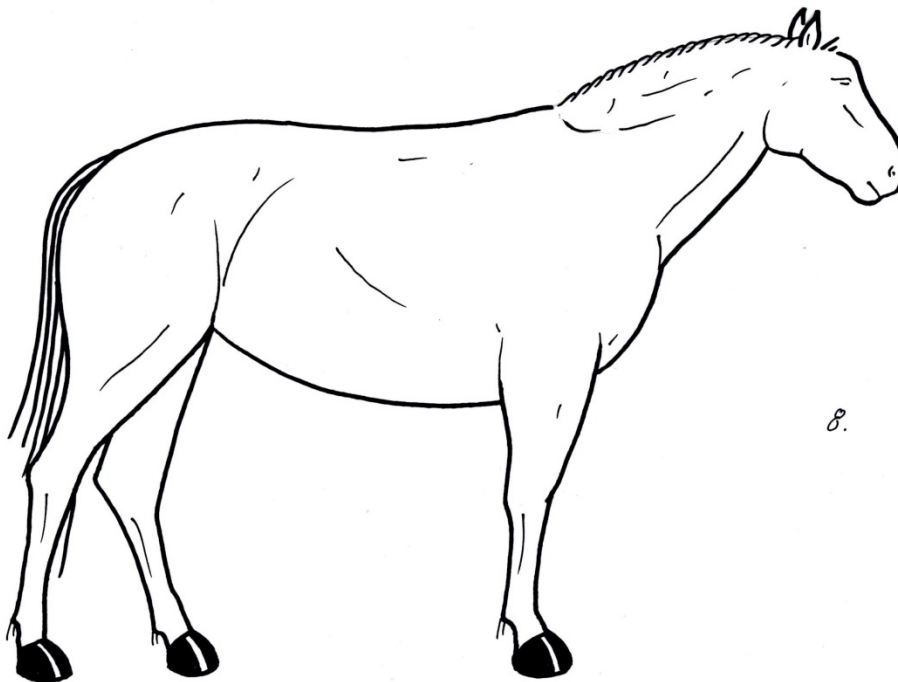


6.

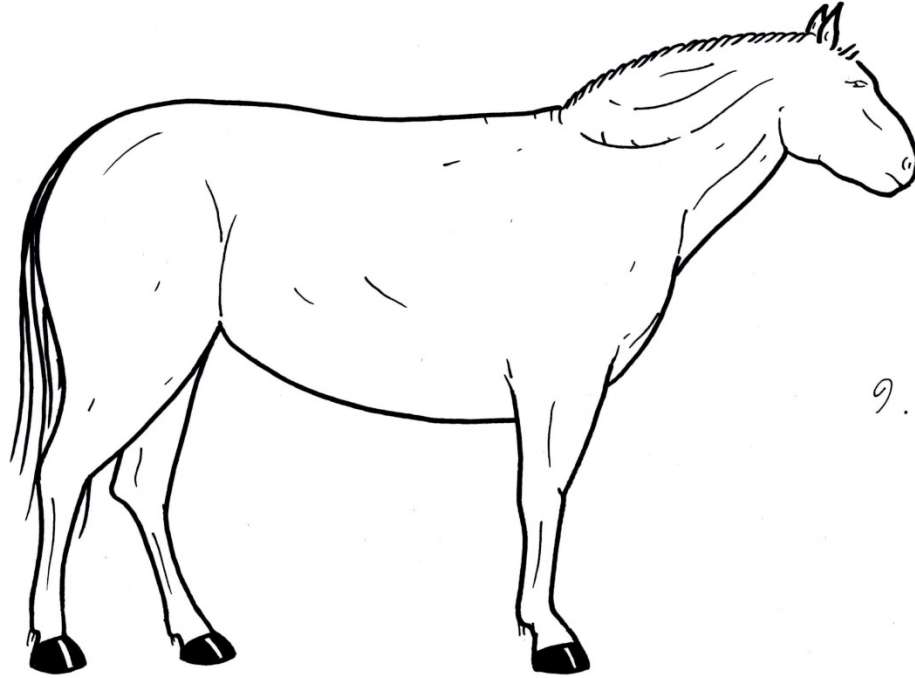
7. Fleshy



8. Fat



9. Extremely Fat



9.