

Online HorseCollege



Student Workbook

3.H.07 Assess Horse Health

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Assess Horse Health 3.H.07 Workbook

Students are to complete Horse Care 3.H.01-04 online assessments prior to attempting Horse Care 3.H.05-08 and to follow all recommended safety considerations.

Practical assessments for Horse Care 3.H.05-08 are as follows

- A) Work Routines
- B) Work Performance
- C) Assess Horse Health
- D) Horse First Aid

These assessments incorporate the following unit from the SIS30710 Sport Industry Training Package which include the listed elements

SISOEQO304A Apply first aid for horses

- Assess health problems and injuries in horses
- Assist the veterinarian
- Care for the convalescing horse

Further information about this assessment is available at www.training.gov.au

Assess Horse Health Introduction

Horse health includes the overall condition of the horse, its level of fitness along with the usual health ailments. As a horse person working in the industry its important you become accustomed to continually assessing the health and well being of horses. The more you do this the quicker you will be able to come to decisions and eventually you will develop an 'eye' for what a healthy horse looks like and what tasks they are able to perform.

As always, you should consult your establishments' policies and procedures regarding treatment and emergency care

Humane Treatment

The term 'Humane Treatment' means to show compassion or benevolence in the manner or method of handling or dealing with others, in this case horses. The humane treatment of horses' branches into Animal Rights, whereby the purpose is that the most basic interests of an animal should be presented the same consideration as the comparable interests of humans.

Animal Welfare organisations come from the viewpoint that it is acceptable, morally to use non-human animals for entertainment, food, clothing or in animal research as long as there is no unnecessary suffering.

Humane Societies are groups which work to stop animal (or human) suffering caused by cruelty or any other reasons such as neglect. The most common example of this is the RSPCA- Royal Society for the Humane Treatment of Animals (also known as SPCA).

Animal right, animal welfare and humane societies all operate with moralities in mind. That is that

- a) They hold an authoritative belief in the matters of right and wrong
- b) They hold an ideal code of conduct and belief
- c) They hold moral ethics- meaning conduct which has been determined by judgement of right or wrong behaviour or standards.

To summarise, when being responsible for horses you need to provide all necessary care, veterinary treatment, housing and food and handle horses' in a manner which is acceptable to industry standards.



Fitness and Conditioning

A fit horse can be described as a horse which is “*well adapted or suitable for a declared purpose and competent to do so*” and physiologically and structurally “*in good athletic condition and healthy, able and willing*” (pg.597 *The BHS Veterinary Manual*) or basically, one that has the necessary energy and stamina to be able to carry out its work whilst remaining sensible and manageable.

Condition or Conditioning is the overall mental and physical well being and state of a horse.

A horse which is in good condition isn't necessarily fit but a fit horse must be in good condition.

When deciding a program for improving fitness levels in a horse the horse person needs to consider:-

- the desired use of the horse
- the horse as a species and an individual
- the current health of the horse and any limitations
- how to apply a training programme
- monitoring training results
- monitoring the health of the horse and the ability to re-assess should unforeseen circumstances arise

A horse becoming fit is a result of responding to gradual increases in the physical and physiological stresses which have been planned and progressed with gradual intensity.

Signs of Fitness include:-

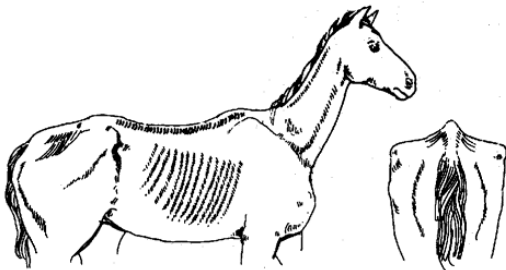
- the loss of excess fat however, ribs should not be visible
- muscular development particularly in the regions of the hindquarters, thigh, loins, crest, shoulders and forearm. Muscles should not be rigid.
- sweat should become clearer as apposed to thick, white and frothy
- signs of good health should be shown
- no loss of condition
- heart and respiration rates are within normal exercise rates when measured during work
- normal respiratory noise at work
- temperature returns to a normal rate within 30 minutes after work
- fast capillary refill
- no stiffness in limbs
- normal resting recovery rates. The heart rate should decrease within 5 minutes after work

Fitness and Conditioning (cont.)

Signs of an unfit horse:-

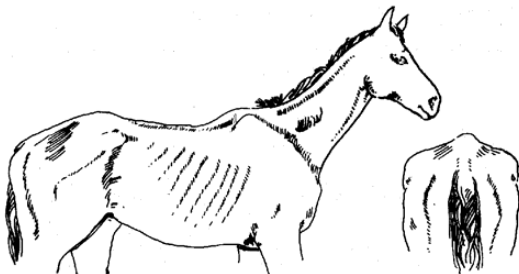
- greater than normal heart rates or if it remains elevated for longer than 5 minutes after work
- the heart rate is slower than normal to recover
- breathing rates greater than normal
- breathing rates are slow to recover
- heavy sweating which may continue after work has stopped
- stiffness in limbs
- slow capillary refill, white or blue gums

Body condition scoring is a scale which is an effective method of monitoring body condition and a reliable indicator of the suitability of a horse's diet.



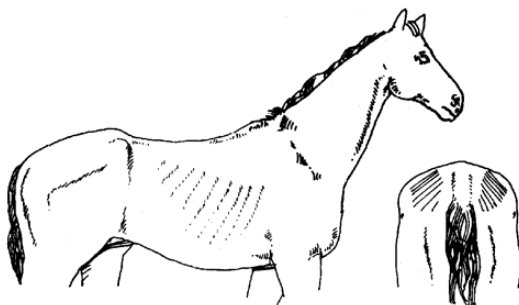
0 Very Poor:-

- Very sunken rump
- Deep cavity under tail
- Skin tight over bones, spinous processes sharp and easily felt
- Very prominent backbone and pelvis
- Marked ewe neck, narrow and slack at base



1 Poor:-

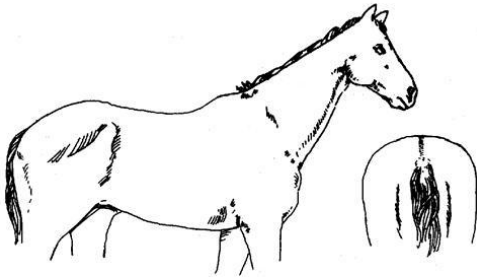
- Sunken rump, but skin supple
- skin sunken on either side of back bone
- Cavity under tail
- Ribs easily visible
- Prominent backbone and croup, spinous processes well defined
- Ewe neck - narrow and slack at base



2 Moderate:-

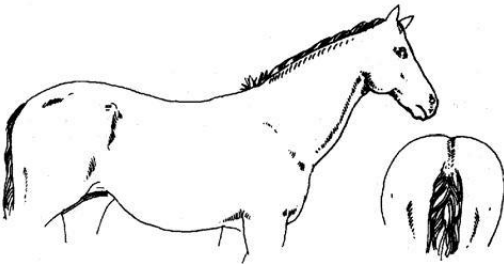
- Flat rump either side of backbone
- Ribs just visible
- Narrow but firm neck
- Backbone well covered, spinous processes felt
- Slight cavity under tail
- Croup well defined, some fat

Fitness and Conditioning (cont.)



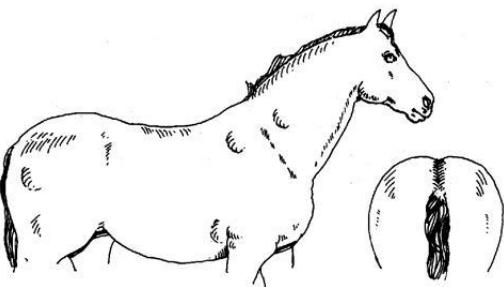
3 Good:-

- Ribs just covered but easily felt
- No crest (except for stallions), firm neck
- Spinous processes covered but can be felt
- Rump rounded and covered by fat but no gutter
- Pelvis easily felt



4 Fat:-

- Rump well rounded
- Gutter along back to root of tail
- Ribs and pelvis hard to feel
- Slight crest



5 Very Fat:-

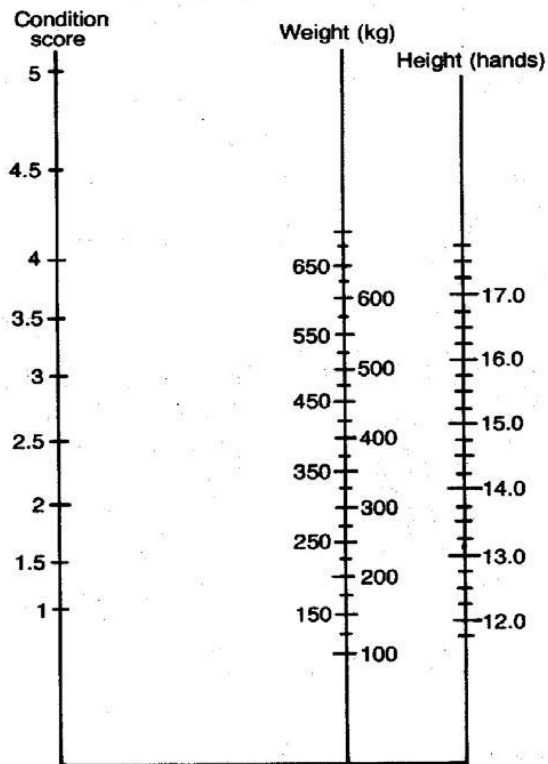
- Very bulging rump
- Deep gutter along back
- Ribs buried, cannot be felt
- Marked crest
- Neck wide and firm
- Fold and lumps of fat
- Back broad and flat
- Skin distended
- Pelvis buried, cannot be felt

Poor body condition is not always related to a lack of feed, sometimes things like heavy worm infestations, chronic injury or illness, poor dental health and lack of mobility (which affects the ability to forage) can cause a reduction in body condition. During the colder months when a horse may have a heavy winter coat it may be necessary to use your hands to feel the condition of the body because a particularly hairy coat can be deceiving.

Allowing a horse's condition to fall below a score of 1.5 is compromising horse welfare.

The measurable weight that a horse is at any given condition score will depend upon other characteristics like height and length of that horse. E.g. a 17 hand horse with a condition score of 3 will have a different weight and body length to that of a 12 hand pony of the same score.

Fitness and Conditioning (cont.)

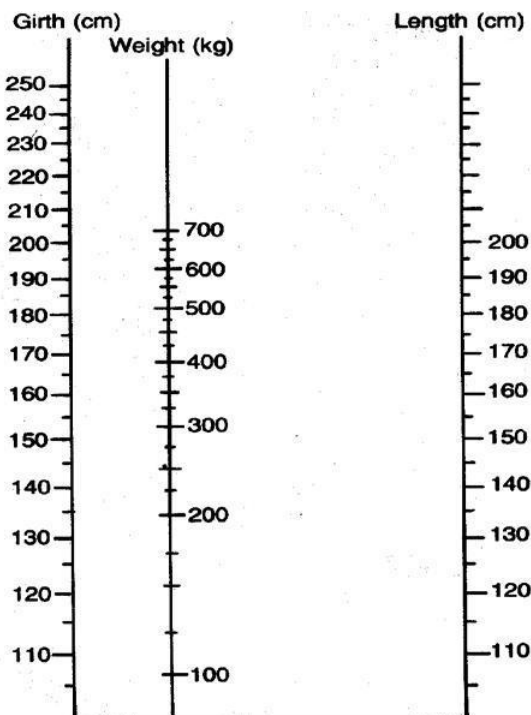


This is a nomogram which can be used to calculate a horse's weight from its height and condition score.

To use it, on the scale mark the horse's height then on the other side mark the condition score.

Draw a straight line from the point marked on the height line to the point marked on the condition score line.

Where the line crosses the weight scale is the estimation of the horse's weight.



This nomogram estimates a horse's weight using girth and length measurements.

Indicate on the left the girth measurement of the horse and on the right indicate the length measurement of the horse.

Draw a straight line connecting the two points and where the line crosses the weight scale is the estimation of the horse's weight.

First Aid Course of Action

It can be quite a stressful time when you have a sick or injured horse. What is important is the course of action you take with first aid. There will be circumstances where you may not be alerted or aware of injuries or illness until a few hours after they have occurred. But by taking swift action damage can be minimised. Wounds which have been untreated will often get dirty, have more damaged tissue and take longer to heal than those which have been kept clean and, if necessary stitched together or bandaged.

Firstly you will need to assess the injury to make a decision whether it will require the vet. Some minor cuts, scrapes and scratches will require minor first aid which can easily be performed by the experienced horse person.

To make this assessment you will need to be able to restrain the horse.

If the horse is kept in a herd situation it is wise to remove it. Leaving it in the herd may cause further injury from excessive movement or from the horse not being able to get away quick enough from more dominant horses in the herd. If the horse is kept on its own it may still be a good idea to bring the horse into a smaller yard, pen or stall for treatment. Try and keep the horse quiet, depending upon the nature and characteristic of the horse and the illness or injury this may mean the horse is isolated or another horse is kept close by to comfort the injured one (some horses may stress excessively if moved away from friends or a herd).

If the injury is serious, and this is usually depicted by excessive bleeding, flaps or folds of loose skin and change in behaviour or demeanour, you will need to catch and restrain the horse immediately.

Then call the vet, the longer you take to call the vet the longer it will be before he/she will arrive. Whilst waiting for the vet to arrive you can continue to attend to the horse. You may wish to ask the vet if they think there is anything you can do to whilst you are waiting for he/she to arrive.

Try to keep the area clean (e.g. for wounds). Avoid applying lotions, antiseptics, sprays or creams to wounds as they may interfere or compromise the treatment the vet needs to give.



Extension Lesson

Go around your establishment and condition score five horses:-

Horse (name or description)	Condition Score

Using the nomograms from this workbook, record the weight of three horses using both systems of estimation (i.e. weight/height and girth/length):-

Horse	Estimation from weight/height	Estimation from girth/length

Recommended Reading

Publication:-

NZ Pony Club Manual No.2 Pg.90-92

The BHS Veterinary Manual Pg.597-615

Foot Steps

Authors:-

Elaine Knox-Thompson & Suzanne
Dickens

P. Stewart Hastie

Sally Hinton & Joan Ecclesshare

References

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Websites:-

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humane_Society

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_welfare

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_rights

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humane>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morality>

Images:-

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Page 6 www.catzmedia.com/spca/petitions/index.as

Page 8, 9 & 10 www.dpi.vic.gov.au

Page 11 www.sunnydogink.com/page2.html