

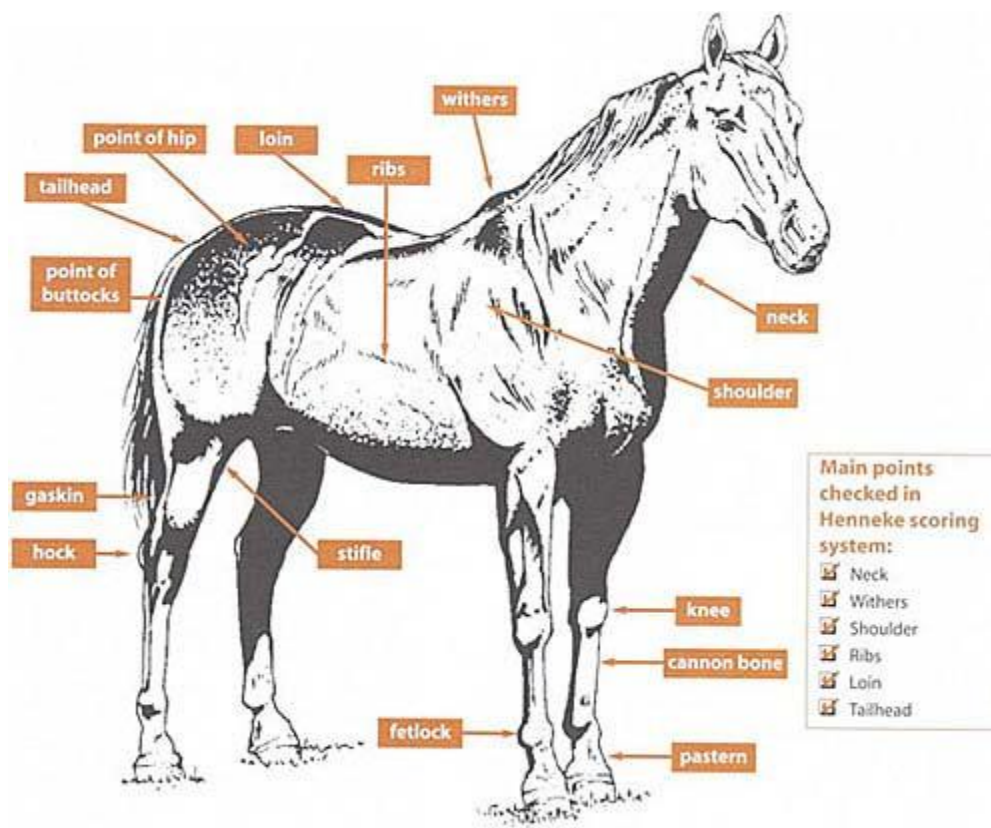
Henneke Body Condition Scoring System

Don Henneke, PhD, developed the Henneke Body Condition Scoring System during his graduate study at Texas A & M University . It is based on both visual appraisal and palpable fat cover of the six major points of the horse that are most responsive to changes in body fat. The Henneke Chart is a standardized scoring system, whereas the terms, "skinny", "thin", "emaciated" or "fat" are all subjective terms that have different meanings to different people.

The Henneke Scoring System is a scientific method of evaluating a horse's body condition regardless of breed, body type, sex or age. It is now widely used by law enforcement agencies as an objective method of scoring a horse's body condition in horse cruelty cases. The Chart is accepted in a court of law.

Six parts of a horse are checked in this system—the neck, withers (where the neck ends and the back begins), shoulder, ribs, loin, and tailhead. When using the Henneke system, you should always make physical contact with these parts, and the kind of touch you use is important. Simply stroking the animal lightly won't provide an accurate idea of the horse's condition; you have to apply pressure to each part in turn.

The pressure you apply should be much like that of a massage; if you press a horse's side with your hand, you'll be able to feel the fat covering his ribs, and get an idea of how much fat is present. Likewise, when checking the withers, feel all around the area, as if you were squeezing firm clay. It is possible to be firm and gentle at the same time, and both traits are necessary to properly score a horse.



After pressing each part of the horse with your hands to feel for body fat. You then assign each area of the body the numerical score that corresponds with the horse's condition. When a horse has a long haircoat it is imperative that you use your hands to feel the horse. The horse's long haircoat will hide the protrusion of bones, all except in the most extreme cases. The scores from each area are then totaled and divided by 6. The resulting number is the horse's rating on the Henneke Body Scoring Condition Chart.

Conformational differences between horses may make certain criteria within each score difficult to apply to every animal. In these instances, those areas influenced by conformation should be discounted, but not ignored when determining the condition score.

Conformation also changes in pregnant mares as they approach parturition (birth). Since the weight of the conceptus tends to pull the skin and musculature tighter over the back and ribs, emphasis is placed upon fat deposition behind the shoulder, around the tailhead and along the neck and withers in these cases.

The Chart rates the horses on a scale of 1 to 9. A score of 1 is considered poor or emaciated with no body fat. A 9 is extremely fat or obese. Horse veterinarians consider a body score of between 4 and 7 as acceptable. A 5 is considered ideal.



Marco = 1



Maggie = 2



Blue = 5



Sand Dollar = 6



Jasper = 9

Condition	Neck	Withers	Shoulder	Ribs	Loin	Tailhead
1 Poor	Bone structure easily noticeable	Bone structure easily noticeable	Bone structure easily noticeable	Ribs protruding prominently	Spinous processes projecting prominently	Tailhead, pinbones, and hook bones projecting prominently
2 Very Thin	Bone structure faintly discernible	Bone structure faintly discernible	Bone structure faintly discernible	Ribs prominent	Slight fat covering over base of spinous processes. Transverse processes of lumbar vertebrae feel rounded. Spinous processes are prominent	Tailhead prominent
3 Thin	Neck accentuated	Withers accentuated	Shoulder accentuated	Slight fat over ribs. Ribs easily discernible	Fat buildup halfway on spinous processes, but easily discernible.	Tailhead prominent but individual vertebrae cannot be visually

					Traverse processes cannot be felt	identified. Hook bones appear rounded, but are still easily discernible. Pin bones not distinguishable
4 Moderately Thin	Neck not obviously thin	Withers not obviously thin	Shoulder not obviously thin	Faint outline of ribs discernible	Negative crease (peaked appearance) along back	Prominence depends on conformation. Fat can be felt. Hook bones not discernible
5 Moderate (Ideal Weight)	Neck blends smoothly into body	Withers rounded over spinous processes	Shoulder blends smoothly into body	Ribs cannot be visually distinguished, but can be easily felt	Back is level	Fat around tailhead beginning to feel soft
6 Moderately Fleshy	Fat beginning to be deposited	Fat beginning to be deposited	Fat beginning to be deposited	Fat over ribs feels spongy	May have a slight positive crease (a groove) down back	Fat around tailhead feels soft
7 Fleshy	Fat deposited along neck	Fat deposited along withers	Fat deposited behind shoulder	Individual ribs can be felt with pressure, but noticeable fat filling between ribs	May have a positive crease down the back	Fat around tailhead is soft
8 Fat	Noticeable thickening of neck	Area along withers filled with fat	Area behind shoulder filled in flush with body	Difficult to feel ribs	Positive crease down the back	Fat around tailhead very soft
9 Extremely Fat	Bulging fat	Bulging fat	Bulging fat	Patchy fat appearing over ribs	Obvious crease down the back	Bulging fat around tailhead

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