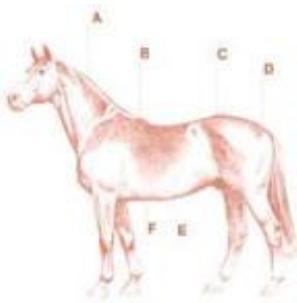


EVALUATING BODY CONDITION



When it comes to a horse's ideal body condition, beauty is often in the eye of the beholder. For example, a competitive endurance horse is usually leaner than a show-fit halter horse.

Because "fitness" is subjective, equine health care professionals utilize a "Body Condition Scoring" system to talk in relative terms. The horse's physical condition is rated on visual appraisal and palpation (feel) of six key conformation points: (See illustration) **A**- the amount of flesh or fat covering along the neck, **B**- the withers, **C**- down the crease of the back, **D**- at the tail head, **E**- ribs and **F**- behind the shoulder at the girth. Scores range from 1-9, from poor to extremely fat.

CONDITION SCORES

Score of 1- Poor: Animal extremely emaciated, with spinous processes, ribs, tail head, tuber coxae (hip joints) and ischia (lower pelvic bones) projecting prominently; bone structure of withers, shoulders and neck easily noticeable; no fatty tissue can be felt.

Score of 2- Very Thin: Animal emaciated, slight fat covering over base of spinous processes; transverse processes of lumbar vertebrae feel rounded; spinous processes, ribs, tail head, tuber coxae (hip joints) and ischia (lower pelvic bones), prominent withers, shoulders and neck structure faintly discernible

Score of 3- Thin: Fat buildup about halfway on spinous processes; transverse processes cannot be felt; slight fat cover over ribs; spinous processes and ribs easily discernible; tail head prominent but individual vertebrae cannot be identified visually; tuber coxae (hip joints) appear rounded but easily discernible; tuber ischia (lower pelvic bones) not distinguishable; withers, shoulders and neck accentuated.

Score of 4- Moderately Thin: Slight ridge along back; faint outline of ribs discernible; tail head prominence depends on conformation fat can be felt around it; tuber coxae (hip joints) not discernible; withers, shoulders and neck not obviously thin.

Score of 5- Moderate: Back is flat; ribs not visually distinguishable but easily felt; fat around tail head beginning to feel spongy; withers appear rounded over spinous processes; shoulders and neck blend smoothly into body.

Score of 6- Moderately Fleishy: May have slight crease down back; fat over ribs spongy, fat around tail head soft; fat beginning to be deposited along side of withers, behind shoulders and along sides of neck.

Score of 7- Fleishy: May have crease down back; individual ribs can be felt, but noticeable filling between ribs with fat; fat around tail head soft; fat deposited along withers behind shoulders and along neck.

Score of 8- Fat: Crease down back; difficult to feel ribs; fat around tail head very soft; area along withers filled with fat; area behind shoulder filled with fat; noticeable thickening of neck; fat deposited along inner thighs.

Score of 9- Extremely Fat: Obvious crease down back; patchy fat appearing over ribs; bulging fat around tail head, along withers, behind shoulders and along neck; fat along inner thigh may rub together; flank filled with fat.