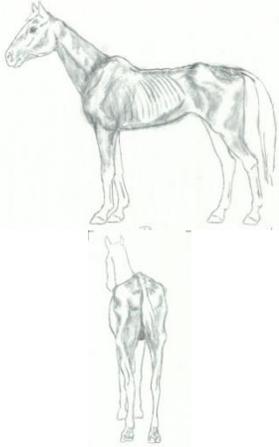
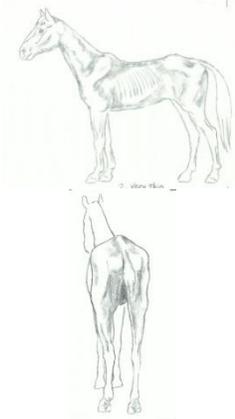


## Characteristics of Individual Condition Scores

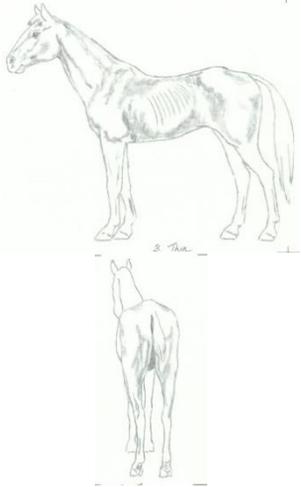
Condition	Neck	Withers	Loin	Tailhead	Ribs	Shoulder
<b>1-Poor</b> 	Bone structure easily noticeable, animal extremely emaciated, no fatty tissue can be felt.	Bone structure easily noticeable.	Spinous processes (vertebrae along the back) project prominently.	Spinous processes project prominently.	Tailhead (pinbone) and hook bones (pelvis) project prominently.	Bone structure (scapula) easily noticeable.

**Notes on BCS 1-**Horses in a body condition score of 1 are critical cases of prolonged starvation, neglect and/or disease. No fatty tissue can be felt on the body and all reserves have been used up. Immediate veterinary care is required to determine the next steps. It is highly likely that this horse is in immediate danger of dying. A horse in this condition should not be moved unless with consultation or supervision by a veterinarian.

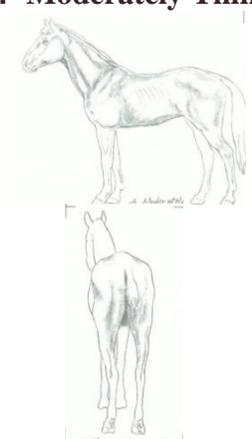
<b>2-Very Thin</b> 	Faintly discernible, animal emaciated.	Faintly discernible.	Slight fat covering over base of spinous processes. Transverse processes of lumbar vertebrae feel rounded. Spinous processes	Tailhead prominent.	Slight fat cover over ribs. Ribs easily discernible.	Shoulder accentuated.
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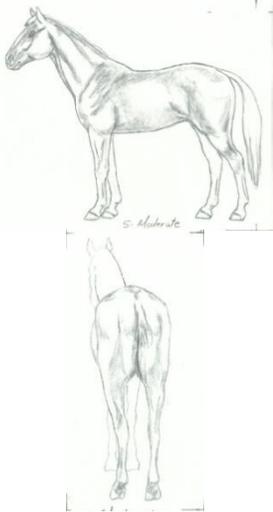
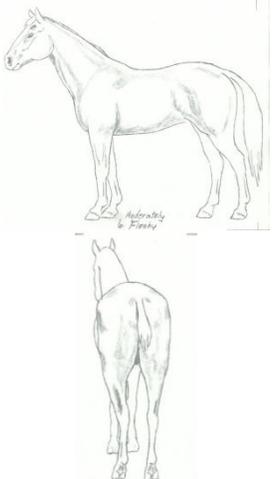
**Notes on BCS 2-**A horse in a condition score of 2 is in serious shape, from long-term malnutrition, dehydration, disease and/or illness. Immediate veterinary assistance is required.

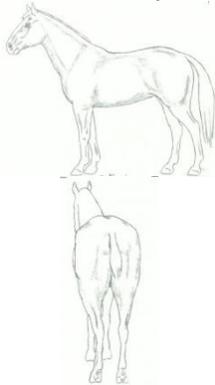
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3 - Thin</b></p> 	Neck accentuated.	Withers accentuated.	Fat buildup halfway on spinous processes but easily discernible. Transverse processes cannot be felt.	Tailhead prominent but individual vertebrae cannot be visually identified. Hook bones (“hip” bone of pelvis) appear rounded but are still easily discernible. Pin bones not distinguishable	Slight fat cover over ribs. Ribs easily discernible.	Shoulder accentuated.
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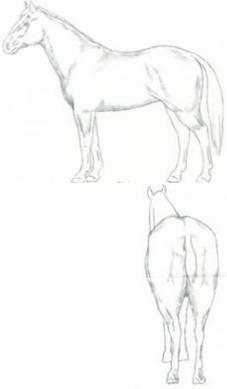
**Notes on BCS 3**All ribs can be seen on a horse with a score of 3. Veterinary consultation is required for a horse in a condition score of 3 as the horse does not have adequate fat stores to be healthy. Stallions may drop to a score of 3 by the end of the breeding season if not carefully managed, and below 3 there will be impairment of the reproductive capacity. Horses on winter pasture will lose condition and they have not enough reserves to maintain body temperature.

<p><b>4 -Moderately Thin</b></p> 	<p>Neck not obviously thin.</p>	<p>Withers not obviously thin.</p>	<p>Negative crease along back (spinous process of vertebrae protrude slightly).</p>	<p>Prominence depends on conformation; fat can be felt. Hook bones not discernible</p>	<p>Faint outline discernible of ribs.</p>	<p>Shoulder not obviously thin.</p>
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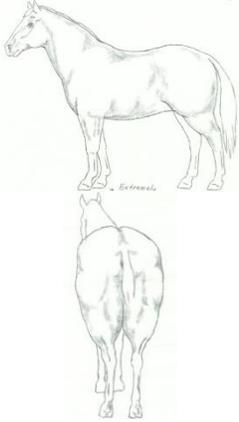
**Notes on BCS 4-**This is the minimum acceptable scores for horses, but they will not be able to handle any illness or stress safely. Horses that are 4 or less if not working will have varying degrees of malnutrition. Broodmares at 4 or less will have problems with reproduction and producing adequate milk, and if lactating will quickly lose more weight with a nursing foal at side. Horses in race training or endurance competition may be a 4.5, as they are fit and muscled but will not have much fat on the body due to the training schedule, and will not be able to thermoregulate in the winter or in cold/rainy conditions.

<p><b>5 -Moderate</b></p> 	<p>Neck blends smoothly into body.</p>	<p>Withers rounded over spinous processes.</p>	<p>Back level.</p>	<p>Fat around tailhead beginning to feel “spongy”.</p>	<p>Ribs cannot be visually distinguished but can be easily felt.</p>	<p>Shoulder blends smoothly into body.</p>
<p><b>Notes on BCS 5-</b>This is the ideal BCS for most horses, including broodmares and stallions and most performance horses. The average performance horse is usually in this range with a blended overall smooth body.</p>						
<p><b>6 -Moderately Fleshy</b></p> 	<p>Fat beginning to be deposited.</p>	<p>Fat beginning to be deposited.</p>	<p>May have slight positive crease down back (i.e., a depression along the midline).</p>	<p>Fat around tailhead feels soft.</p>	<p>Fat over ribs feels spongy.</p>	<p>Fat beginning to be deposited.</p>

<p><b>Notes on BCS 6-</b>Breeding stallions can be at a 6-7 at the start of the breeding season as they generally lose weight over the season. Horses on pasture over the winter may start at a score of 6 or 7 as there may be loss over the winter depending on access to feed/forage. This is the ideal for mares going into the breeding season and a typical good score for horses on pasture or for pleasure horses. It is not ideal if higher athletic performance is expected.</p>						
<p><b>7 -Fleshy</b></p> 	<p>Fat deposited along neck.</p>	<p>Fat deposited along neck.</p>	<p>May have positive crease down back.</p>	<p>Fat around tailhead is soft.</p>	<p>Individual ribs can be felt, but noticeable filling between ribs with fat.</p>	<p>Fat deposited behind shoulder.</p>
<p><b>Notes on BCS 7-</b>This is adequate condition for mares going into the foaling season, as they will lose condition with foaling and nursing. Horses in work should not be at this level as it imposes more stress on the supportive tissues and thermoregulation in the heat becomes more challenging, particularly with humidity. It can be acceptable for horses that are wintering outside.</p>						

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>8 -Fat</b></p> 	<p>Noticeable thickening of neck, fat deposited along inner buttocks.</p>	<p>Area along withers filled with fat.</p>	<p>Positive crease down back.</p>	<p>Tailhead fat very soft.</p>	<p>Difficult to feel ribs.</p>	<p>Area behind shoulder filled in flush with body.</p>
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**Notes on BCS 8-**The ribs are difficult to feel and the crease down the back is easily viewed (think of it having the ability to “hold water” as the crease is deep). Inner thighs are rubbing together. Broodmares should not be allowed to reach this score as this is unhealthy for the mare and increases joint and skeletal stress due to the added weight on top of the foal weight. Breeding performance for the stallion can be compromised at 8 or higher. This puts a great deal of stress on the locomotor structures and predisposes a horse to lameness as well as greater heat stress.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>9 -Extremely Fat</b></p> 	<p>Bulging fat. Fat along inner buttocks may rub together. Flank filled in flush.</p>	<p>Bulging fat.</p>	<p>Obvious positive crease down back.</p>	<p>Building fat around tailhead.</p>	<p>Patchy fat appearing over ribs.</p>	<p>Bulging fat.</p>
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**Notes on BCS 9-**All definition of muscles and contours have been lost. A horse in a BCS of 9 is at very high risk of disease, injury and thermoregulatory issues in the summer heat/humidity. The crease down the back will actually “hold” water (frequently resulting in “rain rot” in

the skin) and the inner thighs are pressed together when standing square. This is the result of little or no exercise and extreme overfeeding of calories and predisposes the horse to many health risks from the extreme obesity.

Source of descriptions of Body Condition Score: Henneke et al. Equine Vet J. (1983) 15 (4), 371-2. Notes compiled from several sources and extension notes.

Older horses may appear to have a decreased score (by about ½ point) as the muscles have softened. Also, be aware that due to hormonal changes in the late trimester broodmare, the hip bones will be more prominent as the weight of the foal is increasing and there will be less muscle tone due to the impending birth of the foal. Body Condition Scoring is a technique that needs to be practiced, and it is best to go out with a trained assessor to really learn to be consistent on this technique. As a trial, find 10-15 horses of varying BCS, and score them independently with notes, then compare your assessment with that of a trained person.

For a helpful video, please go to the following, with Dr. Bob Coleman.

<http://www.thehorse.com/videos/30355/whats-your-horses-body-condition-score>

Other sources of information for body condition score:

<http://extension.umaine.edu/publications/1010e/>

<http://msucares.com/livestock/equine/pdfs/p2465-horses.pdf>

<http://msucares.com/livestock/equine/pdfs/p2465-horses.pdf>

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex4830](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex4830)