Cresty Neck Score

For horses and ponies at risk of laminitis, researchers have also developed a cresty neck score system to complement standard body fat scoring. Studies have shown that horses and ponies with a cresty neck score of greater than three are at increased risk of insulin resistance, a condition that is associated with a higher risk of EMS and laminitis.

| CNS 0 | No visual appearance of a crest. No palpable crest. |
| CNS 1 | No visual appearance of a crest, but slight filling felt with palpation. |
| CNS 2 | Noticeable appearance of a crest, but fat deposited fairly evenly from poll to withers. Crest easily cupped in one hand and bent from side to side. |
| CNS 3 | Crest enlarged and thickened, so fat is deposited more heavily in middle of neck than toward poll and withers, giving a mounded appearance. Crest fills cupped hand begins losing side to side flexibility. |
| CNS 4 | Crest grossly enlarged and thickened, can no longer be cupped in one hand or easily bent from side to side. Crest may have wrinkles/creases perpendicular to top line. |
| CNS 5 | Crest is so large it permanently droops to one side. |

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Top Tip:

For more information on how to feed horses with EMS and/or laminitis please read our EMS and Laminitis Fact Sheets.

Keeping your horse at the correct weight and fat score is vital for their health and well-being. Some horses tend to lose weight easily whilst others can be prone to weight gain. For more information on feeding horses prone to weight gain or weight loss please read our Feeding the Good Doer or Feeding the Underweight Horse leaflets.

Weighing your horse

We recommend that you monitor your horse’s weight on a fortnightly basis as it is often difficult to notice changes when you see your horse every day. Use your Dodson & Horrell weigh-tape to record your horse’s weight. If your horse is gaining or losing too much weight you will need to adjust their diet. Our team of Nutritional Advisors is on hand to help you ensure your horse receives a diet tailored to their individual needs. Remember calories are energy and energy is calories. If you feed a cuddly, laid-back horse more calories than he requires it won’t give him more energy, in fact it will result in more weight gain as fat.

More factsheets and advice available. Please visit our website or call:
Nutritional Helpline: 0845 345 2627
email: enquiries@dodsonandhorrell.com www.dodsonandhorrell.com

Right Weight
All you need to know
How to keep your horse fit, healthy and the right weight!

How to use our weigh-tape
- Make sure that your horse is standing square.
- Use the pony side for those under 14.2hh and the horse side for those above 14.2hh.
- Hold the blue block in one hand and pass the rest of the tape over the lowest point of your horse’s withers.
- Bring the tape up under the horse’s stomach, as close as possible to the elbow.
- The tape should be in a diagonal position from the lowest point of the withers towards the elbow; it will not be in a straight line.
- Read the number opposite the white line at the end of the blue block. This is your horse’s weight in kilos.

Top Tip: Our weigh-tapes can be purchased online, simply visit www.dodsonandhorrell.com

Fat scoring your horse
It is important to determine what ‘condition’ your horse is in as an overweight horse will need a different diet to an overweight horse of the same breed. ‘Condition’ should be a result of good muscle development. Muscles develop due to work; fat develops due to excess calories. Sadly we cannot change one into the other; they are completely different tissues. By exercising, your horse will be burning off fat as he uses more calories than being consumed. Exercise will also help build up muscles and because this happens at the same time we often think we are converting one to the other. Interestingly 60% of people’s visual assessment of their horse’s fat score is different to their ‘hands on’ fat score. You should aim to fat score your horse every fortnight to monitor the amount of fat being carried.

A step-by-step guide to fat scoring

Top Tip: Practise fat scoring on different horses so that you get used to feeling the difference between fat and muscle.

1. Divide the horse into 3 areas
   a. the neck (everything forward of the withers)
   b. the middle (behind the shoulder blade)
   c. the bottom (hips, pelvis and hind quarters)

2. Each area is given a separate score out of 5.
   Do not average as horses store fat in different places and lose fat from them at different rates. In addition, horses with Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS) or Cushings store their fat atypically. This is therefore important that you score each area separately.

3. Check what you are feeling and score accordingly. You can use half scores, so for example if there is fat above the nuchal ligament (4) but the shoulder is easily felt (1), then the overall neck score is 3.5.

**Height (hh)**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Height (hh)</th>
<th>Breed/Type</th>
<th>Average weight (kg)</th>
<th>Weight range (kg)</th>
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<td>200-240</td>
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<td>Shire</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>890-1000</td>
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</table>

**Top Tip:**

- Read the number opposite the white line
- The tape should be in a diagonal position
- Bring the tape up under the horse’s stomach, as close as possible to the elbow
- Make sure that your horse is standing square
- The tape should be in a diagonal position from the lowest point of the withers towards the elbow; it will not be in a straight line
- Read the number opposite the white line at the end of the blue block. This is your horse’s weight in kilos

**Neck**
Crest and supraspinous fat deposits
- i. Start by finding the nuchal ligament and with your thumb and first finger, follow it along the neck (1)
- ii. Place your hand flat on the top of your horse’s bottom to feel the top of his pelvis
- iii. Run your hand flat on his hind quarters onto his tail, feeling for his tailbone (4)

**Middle**
Ribs even and spinous back fat
- i. Run your hand diagonally across your horse’s rib cage (2) Use a firm pressure but not so the horse moves away from your hand
- ii. Place your left hand at the bottom of your horse’s withers at 90° to the backbone (3)
- Place your right hand next to it, with your fingers pointing across (not along) the backbone. Relax the fingers of your right hand and note what you feel in the table below

**Bottom**
Sternum and tailbone back fat, subcutaneous fat over the hove prominences of pelvis
- i. Place your hand flat on the top of your horse’s bottom to feel the top of his pelvis
- ii. Run your hand flat on his hind quarters onto his tail, feeling for his tailbone (4)
- iii. Find his ‘hips’ and curve your hand around to feel the outline of the bones

**Top Tip:**

- ii. Run your hand from his hind quarters to the hips
- i. Place your hand flat on the top of your horse’s withers at 90° to the backbone (3)
- ii. Run your hand diagonally across your horse’s rib cage (2) Use a firm pressure but not so the horse moves away from your hand
- iii. Run your hand diagonally across your horse’s rib cage (2) Use a firm pressure but not so the horse moves away from your hand
- iv. Check above his eyes (supra orbital fossa)

**How to score**

- 1 – Poor
  - Neck – marked neck, narrow and slack at base
  - Rib area and spinous back fat
  - Gutter along the neck

- 2 – Moderate
  - A fit racehorse should be carrying this amount of fat

- 3 – Good
  - Most Harness horses will carry this level of fat
  - Neck – no crest (except stallions), firm neck
  - Rib area – ribs just covered, easily felt
  - Pelvis – gutter along back spine processes well-defined
  - Pelvis – rump flat, pelvic bones not visible

- 4 – Fat
  - Neck – slight crest, wide and firm
  - Rib area – ribs just covered, easily felt
  - Pelvis – rump flat, pelvic bones not visible

- 5 – Very Fat
  - Neck – marked crest, wide and firm, full of fat
  - Rib area – ribs just covered, easily felt
  - Pelvis – rump flat, pelvic bones not visible