

# Investigating & Reporting Equine Abuse & Neglect



Working Together to Serve Oklahoma Equines



# Reporting Cruelty...Making a Difference!

Animal cruelty in Oklahoma is a felony. That is in every county and every jurisdiction. That does not change if the jurisdiction does not have animal control or an officer designated to handle animal cases.

## **Cruelty**

Title 21. Crimes and Punishments, Section 1685 - Acts of Cruelty to Animals

Any person who shall willfully or maliciously torture, destroy or kill, or cruelly beat or injure, maim or mutilate any animal in subjugation or captivity, whether wild or tame, and whether belonging to the person or to another,

## **Neglect**

or deprived of necessary food, drink, shelter, or veterinary care to prevent suffering;

or who shall willfully set on foot, instigate, engage in, or in any way further any act of cruelty to any animal, or any act tending to produce such cruelty, shall be guilty of a felony and shall be punished by imprisonment in the State Penitentiary not exceeding five (5) years, or by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding one (1) year, or by a fine not exceeding Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00).

Any animal so maltreated or abused shall be considered an abused or neglected animal.

Cruelty in Oklahoma includes all animal fighting, there is a statute for abandonment, and animals may be included in domestic violence restraining orders

## What you can do...

**Determine the correct agency for the jurisdiction that is the scene of the report;** that will be the police department or the sheriff's office. In Oklahoma, only public agencies are "commissioned" meaning they have arrest powers and are the ones to call. If you report a crime to an animal welfare organization make sure that the report will go to the correct agency; if it does not, the crime is actually unreported. If you are in a city in which the police tell you to call the shelter, make sure of which division is actually expected to act so that your complaint doesn't simply get bounced around.

**Have the correct address if possible.** If you do not have that, be able to give detailed directions to the location of the crime. Provide the name of the perpetrator and the number and a description of the animals.

**Do not make the complaint to the dispatcher.** Tell the dispatcher it is an animal cruelty complaint and that you want a deputy, the sheriff, or the undersheriff to call you back. If you have photos of the scene provide them to the agency.

***If you are unwilling to testify regarding details that you have seen, or photos that you have taken, these items will not be able to be used in court.***

Remember that law enforcement agencies are ultimately run by elected officials, whether they are a sheriff or a city council that hires a police chief.

If cruelty is not handled as a crime, bring your complaint to the ballot box and make halting cruelty part of the next election.

If you are happy with the way the cruelty is addressed, write a letter to the editor of the local paper thanking the agency that took action.

This lets everyone know that compassionate people are watching how cruelty is addressed.



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## Henneke Body Condition Scoring

The information in this flip chart should be used to assist in determining the general health and well-being of a horse. This body condition scoring system is intended to provide you with **GENERAL** guidelines for evaluating a horse's condition. This scoring system uses a combination of visual appraisal and manual [touch] appraisal to estimate body condition. It is a hands-on process in which the investigator must touch the horse's neck, withers, shoulders, ribs, loin, and buttocks to feel for fat deposits. Whether through a search warrant or permission from the owner, in order to accurately assess the condition of the horse you must be able to touch it.

The first clue to a horse's body condition is angles. A horse should be round over their hindquarters and their back. A horse's hipbones and spine should not be protruding. In winter, when horses grow heavy coats to keep themselves warm, they appear much plumper than they really are, making it impossible to get a complete picture of their body condition without doing a hands-on examination. Even in summer, you have to get up close to the animal in order to properly assess his health and weight.

The horse's body condition dictates how quickly a veterinarian needs to examine the horse. Horses with a body condition score of 1 or 2 and horses that are down need a vet immediately. Horses rated a 3 should be seen within 4-7 days.

The body condition score for most horses should be between 4 and 6. However, you must take into consideration the activity level of the horse you are evaluating. Horses with body condition scores of less than 4 or greater than 6 have poor body condition that may have a negative impact on their general welfare.

**You should be present when the veterinarian examines the horse.** Blood drawn by the veterinarian can determine if the horse has problems with any major organs, anemia, disease or dehydration. Fecal tests can determine a horse's internal parasite load.



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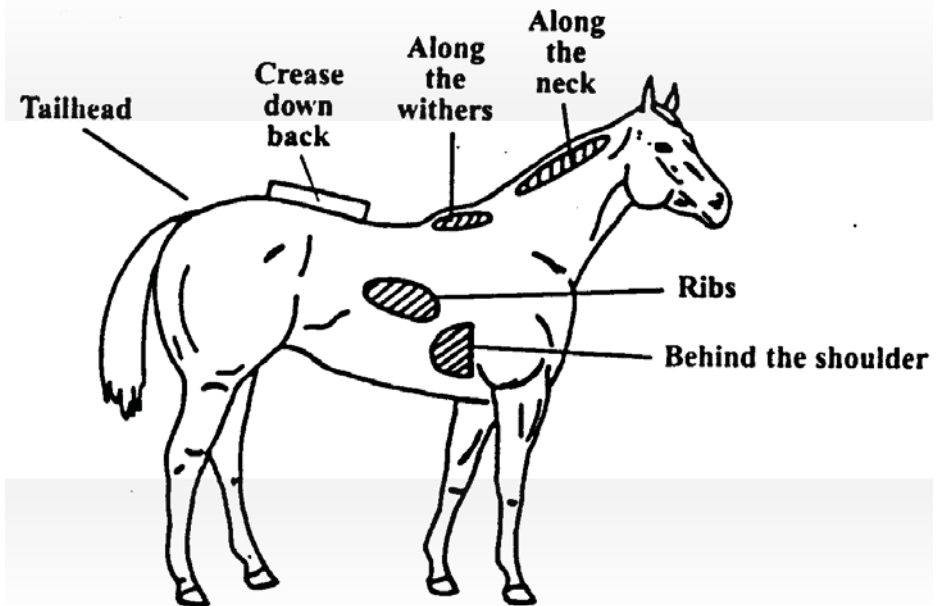


## Key Reference Points



- A—Point of buttock
- B—Tailhead
- C—Point of hip
- D—Crease of back
- E—Withers
- F—Crest
- G—Behind Shoulders
- H—Ribs

## Body Condition Score Card



Score	Condition	Back	Ribs	Neck	Shoulder	Withers	Tailhead
1.	Poor	Very Prominent Vertebrae	Very Prominent	Extremely Thin	Prominent	Prominent	Very Prominent
2.	Very Thin	Prominent Vertebrae	Prominent	Very Thin	Very Thin	Very Thin	Very Thin
3.	Thin	Vertebrae – Fat ½ way up	See Easily	Thin	Thin	Thin	Prominent
4.	Moderately Thin	Negative Crease	See Slight Outline	Moderately Thin	Moderately Thin	Moderately Thin	Some Fat
5.	Moderate	Level (no crease)	Can't See Easy to Feel	Blend Into Shoulder	Blend Smoothly Into Body	Rounded	Moderate Fat
6.	Moderately Fleishy	Slight Crease	Not See Can Feel	Little Fat	Little Fat	Little Fat	Moderate Fat
7.	Fleishy	Average Crease	Barely Feel	Average Fat	Average Fat	Average Fat	Fleishy Fat
8.	Fat	Obvious Crease	Difficult to Feel	Fat	Flush Behind	Fat Filled	Fat
9	Extremely Fat	Very Obvious Crease	Can't Feel	Bulging Fat	Bulging Fat	Bulging Fat	Bulging Fat

## Score 1 — Poor



- ❖ Horse extremely emaciated.
- ❖ The spine and vertebrae, ribs, tailhead, hip joints, and lower pelvic bones project prominently.
- ❖ Bone structure of withers, shoulders, and neck are easily noticeable.
- ❖ No fatty tissue can be felt.

### Take IMMEDIATE action.

- Do NOT feed anything without advise of a veterinarian
- Contact the local sheriff's department immediately

## Score 2 — Very Thin



- ❖ Horse is emaciated
- ❖ Very little muscle covering the vertical projections on the backbone.
- ❖ Spine, vertebrae, ribs, tailhead, hipjoints, and lower pelvic bones are prominent.
- ❖ Withers, shoulders, and neck structure are faintly discernible.

### Take IMMEDIATE action.

- Do NOT feed anything without advise of a veterinarian
- Contact the local sheriff's department immediately



### **Score 3 — Thin**



- ❖ Fat buildup about halfway on vertical projections on backbone.
- ❖ Vertical projections on backbone and ribs are easily visible.
- ❖ Slight fat cover over the ribs.
- ❖ Tail head is prominent, but individual vertebrae cannot be identified visually
- ❖ Withers, shoulders, and neck are accentuated.
- ❖ Hip joints appear rounded, but easily visible
- ❖ Lower pelvic bones not distinguishable.

- Do NOT feed without advise of a veterinarian.
- Should be seen by a veterinarian ASAP—at least within 4-7 days.

### **Score 4-Moderately Thin**



- ❖ Slight ridge along the back.
- ❖ Faint outline of the ribs is visible.
- ❖ Fat can be felt around the tail head prominence.
- ❖ Hip joints are not visible.
- ❖ Withers, shoulders and neck are not obviously thin.

**NOTE:** This is a common weight for athletic horses like those in racing form or those used in performance events.



## **Score 5 — Moderate**



- ❖ Back is flat and ribs are not visually distinguishable but can be easily felt.
- ❖ Fat around the tailhead feels spongy.
- ❖ Withers appear rounded over the vertical projections on backbones
- ❖ Shoulders and neck blend smoothly into the body

**NOTE:** This horse is within normal body condition range.

## **Score 6-Moderately Fleshy**



- ❖ Horse may have a crease down the back.
- ❖ Spongy fat can be felt over the ribs.
- ❖ Fat over the tailhead is soft
- ❖ Fat deposits are developing along side of the withers, behind the shoulders, and along the crest of the neck.

**NOTE:** This horse is within normal body condition range.

## **Score 7 — Fleshy**



- ❖ Horse may have a crease down the back.
- ❖ Individual ribs can be felt, but there is noticeable filling between the ribs with fat
- ❖ Fat around the tailhead is soft
- ❖ Fat is deposited along the withers, behind the shoulders, and along the crest of the neck.

## **Score 8—Fat**



- ❖ Horse has a crease down the back.
- ❖ It is difficult to feel the ribs.
- ❖ Fat around the tailhead is very soft.
- ❖ Areas along the withers and behind the shoulders are filled with fat.
- ❖ There is noticeable thickening of the neck.
- ❖ Fat is deposited along the inner thighs.

**Action: If desired, contact the local equine veterinarian for advice on nutritional feeding.**



## Score 9 — Extremely Fat



- ❖ Obvious crease down the back
- ❖ Patchy fat appears over the ribs.
- ❖ There are bulging fat deposits around the tail head, along the withers, behind the shoulders, and along the neck.
- ❖ Fat deposits along the inner thighs may rub together.
- ❖ Flank is filled with fat.

**Action:** If desired, contact the local equine veterinarian for nutritional recommendations

## **WARNINGS:**

- Do not make sudden moves around horses.
- Do not walk up behind a horse without first talking to the horse. Speak to the horse to make him aware that you are approaching.
- Be wary of horses whose ears are pinned flat against their heads.
- When walking behind a horse, if you cannot walk out of their kicking range, then walk right next to the horse [be aware that a horse can kick to the side as well as to the back].
- Make sure you talk to the horse as you walk behind him.

Owners of thin horses have three common excuses as to why their horse is thin. All are easily proved or disproved by a few simple questions and a veterinarian.

**“I just bought the horse”:** Owners who state they just bought the horse should be asked to produce documentation of the purchase. Possible documentation:

- Bill of sale
- Cancelled check
- Cancelled check or bill of lading for transporting the horse
- Name, address & telephone number of the former owner
- Registration papers, health charts, etc.

**“The horse is old”:** If the owner uses the excuse that the horse is old, then a veterinarian will need to examine the horse to:

- Determine the horse’s age
- Determine whether or not the horse is in need of dental work
- Determine whether or not the horse is suffering from a disease or cancer
- Recommend a feeding program for the horse. There are several feeds on the market especially designed for older horses.

**“The horse is sick”:** Your first response to this should be “Has a vet seen this horse?” If the horse is sick, he needs veterinary care.

- To prove “intent” to abuse or neglect, you need to give the owner a certain amount of time to improve the horse’s body condition. The amount of time needs to be based on the findings of the veterinarian’s examination.
- Cases involving a horse that has died from apparent neglect need to be handled in the same way as a human death. A necropsy needs to be performed to determine why the horse died. Pictures of a thin horse do not prove why or when the horse died.



## Questions To Ask

When you find a horse with a body condition score of 4 or less, there are a lot of questions that need to be asked beyond “What are you feeding him?” Below are some important questions to ask the horse’s owner or caretaker:

- **Why is this horse thin?** Horses can be thin for several reasons: Lack of sufficient food, parasite infestation, poor teeth, age or disease such as kidney or liver failure.
- **How old is this horse?**
- **Who is your veterinarian?**
- **Has your veterinarian been out to see this horse?**
- **When?**
- **What did the veterinarian do?**
- **When is the veterinarian due out again?**
- **When was the last time you dewormed this horse? When was the time before that?**
- **What dewormer did you use?**
- **Have you had this horse’s teeth checked?**
- **When? By whom?**
- **What do you feed this horse?**
- **How much do you feed this horse?**
- **When do you feed this horse?**
- **How often do you feed this horse?**
- **Ask to look at the feed and the bags the feed came in.**
- **Who is your farrier?** If the horse appears to have problems walking or hoof problems.

One factor is the presence of other horses. If there is one skinny horse in a group of fat and happy ones, it’s possible the skinny horse is being bullied out of his share of food by the others.

## Other Things To Look For

**The Horse's Surroundings:** You should include a careful scrutiny of the horses surroundings and food availability.

- **Shelter:** Shelter needs for horses varies depending on the time of year and climate conditions but some form of shelter must be provided to protect the horse from temperature and weather extremes. The shelter may be a barn or run-in shed. It should be a dry area protected from wind, rain, and snow. Shelters and stalls should be kept free of accumulations of manure and obvious safety hazards. Is the horse forced to constantly stand in mud? Are there broken boards in the stalls or holes in the floor? Are there sharp objects lying around? A thick layer of manure and urine covering the floor of a stall or lean-to area where a horse may be kept is an indicator of neglect.
- **Feed:** Grazing is the horse's natural system of feeding and grass is its natural food. A well maintained pasture of natural grasses [not weeds, dirt, stones, gravel, etc.] will usually provide adequate feed for a horse or pony during the spring, summer and early fall. During the winter months, horses need additional food.
  - **Hay:** Hay should be clean, leafy, bright, and greenish or grayish in color [never brown or yellow]. Good horse hay smells sweet and grassy with no musty odor. If it smells dusty, dirty and moldy, it probably is. Hay should be free of dust and not lumpy. If chunks of hay in a bale are stuck together, they are probably moldy. A general gauge for feeding riding horses is 20 pounds of roughage a day.
  - **Grain and Supplements:** In addition to a good quality hay, horses need free choice salt, and may need supplements such as grain, alfalfa pellets, or a processed horse feed.

Good Rules for Feeding:

1. Feed only clean and good quality food
  2. Feed on a daily basis
  3. Make an ample supply of fresh water available at all times.
  4. Keep salt and mineral blocks available where horses can reach them.
- **Water:** A clean and adequate water supply is as important for horses and ponies as food. A stagnant pond is NOT one. Horses and ponies should have fresh, clean water available at all times. Water may be provided in a variety of ways. Check for:
    - A filled water tank, water bucket, or natural source of water where the horse can reach it.
    - The water tank/bucket clean.
    - In winter, a heater to keep water from freezing.

**Deworming:** Horses should be dewormed on a regular basis. They can be dewormed periodically using a paste dewormer or on a daily basis with a pelleted dewormer.

**Manure & Urine:** Horses normally have firm manure balls that are brown to greenish brown in color. Normal urine is wheat straw colored and clear. Health and/or nutrition problems may be indicated if:

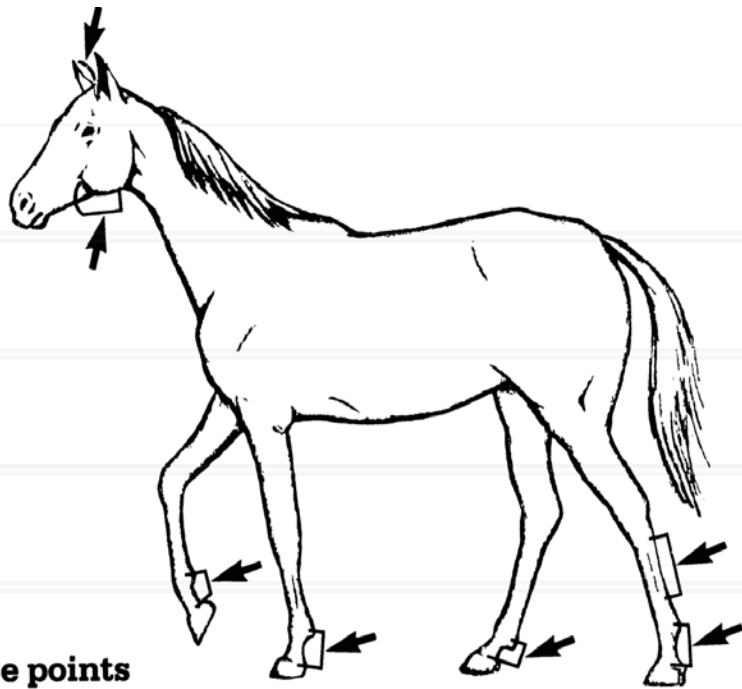
- Manure is loose or watery
- Stool contains a significant amount of undigested grain
- Urine is cloudy or discolored

**Mucous Membrane Color:** The membranes of the horse's gums and lips should be a healthy pink color. Pale, white, yellow, or deep purple colors are all cause for concern.



**Capillary Refill:** This test serves as an important indication of circulatory difficulties such as blood loss, shock or dehydration. Begin by placing the tip of your thumb on the gum above an upper tooth or below a lower tooth. Press hard and long enough to create a white spot in the pink surface. Release the pressure and count how many seconds pass before the color returns. Between 1 and 2 seconds is normal. Two-and-a-half to 3 is abnormally slow, signaling a potential problem.

**Sick Horses:** Horses that have obvious signs of colic, severe infection such as pus, untreated open wounds, broken legs, bleeding and down horses that are unable or unwilling to rise, are in need of immediate veterinary care.



key pulse points

**Heart Rate:** The normal heart rate of an adult resting horse is 32 to 48 beats per minute. This may be measured by taking the horse's pulse. You can take a horse's pulse either on a front leg, back leg, or on his head. See drawing for location of key pulse points.

To take a front leg pulse, place your thumb over the lateral (outside) artery and 3 or 4 fingers over the inside fore-leg artery where the arteries pass over the sesamoids at the corner of the ankle.

To take a hind leg pulse, put the palm of your hand across the front of the back leg, press in the groove with your index, middle and ring fingers. Press very hard with the ring finger,



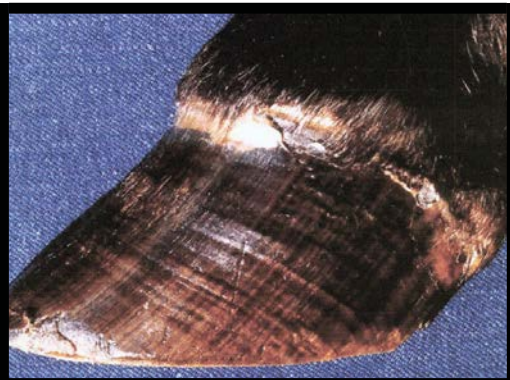
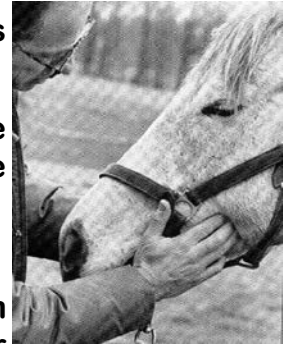
moderately hard with the middle finger and very lightly with the index finger. The lowest finger obstructs the pulse while the other two have a chance to feel it.

On the head, press your fingers on the artery that runs beneath the horse's jaw along the cheek muscle slightly behind where the halter noseband would normally lie on the side of his face. Be aware that the horse's age, as well as temperature, humidity, exercise and excitement can affect the heart rate.

**Respiratory Rate:** The normal respiratory rate of an adult resting horse is 8 to 16 or 20 breaths per minute. Measure respiration by observing inhaling or exhaling of the flanks, or by counting breaths from the nostrils. Be aware that resting respiration rates in hot, humid weather often reach 40 breaths per minute or more.

**Temperature:** Normal body temperature for an adult resting horse is 98 to 101°F. Temperature should be measured using a rectal thermometer. Temperature can be increased by high environmental temperature, exercise, or dehydration.

**Hooves:** The hooves are one of the most important and most frequently neglected parts of the horse. A horse's hooves are like your fingernails—they are constantly growing. Having hooves trimmed on a regular basis is a necessity. If a horse's hooves are not trimmed regularly, they can crack, split, or curl upwards like "elf" shoes. The equine industry standard for trimming a horse's hooves is every 6 to 8 weeks. Horses that are wearing shoes have their shoes reset every 4 to 6 weeks. In addition, horses' feet are prone to a condition called "thrush," a bacterial infection caused by standing for long periods of time in mud or moisture. The sole [underside] of a hoof infected with thrush appears moist and black and emits a particularly nasty smell.



A normal, healthy hoof



Normal hoof that needs to be trimmed. NOT neglect.



Severely overgrown hoof.  
THIS IS NEGLECT!



## Glossary

**CANNON BONE**—The long bone of a horse's lower leg.

**COLIC**—A stomachache usually caused by twists or blockages of the intestine. Symptoms include pawing, excessive lying down or rolling, and looking at, biting, or kicking at the stomach. **Should be considered a medical emergency.**

**COLT**—An unaltered male horse less than four years old.

**CRIBBING**—A behavioral vice. A cribbing horse will fix his jaws on an object, such as the side of a stall or a fence-post, and may swallow air at the same time. The chewing can wear a horse's teeth down, and the air ingestion may cause digestive problems.

**DAM**—A horse's mother.

**FARRIER**—A person who shoes horses.

**FETLOCK**—The first flexible joint above the horse's hoof, visible as a protrusion at the back of the leg.

**FILLY**—A female horse less than four years old who has not had a baby.

**FLOATING**—Fixing a horse's teeth.

**FOAL**—A baby horse.

**FOUNDER**—Also known as laminitis, founder is a painful hoof inflammation that will cause a horse to rock back on his heels to keep pressure off his toes.

**FROG**—The wedge-shaped leathery part on the bottom of a horse's hoof. The frog has a rubbery feel.

**GASKIN**—The rounded, muscular part of a horse's rear leg.

**GELDING**—A neutered male horse.

**HAND**—The unit of measurement for horses. Once defined as the width of a man's hand, the unit has been standardized to four inches.

**HOCK**—The large, flexible joint in the middle of the rear leg of a horse.

**HOOF PICK**—A tool used to pick dirt and rocks from a horse's hooves.

**LUNGEING**—A way of exercising a horse without riding it. A handler stands in the center of the ring, holding a long lead, and the horse moves around him in a circle.

**MARE**—A female horse more than four years old.

**MUCKING OUT**—Cleaning out stalls.

**NAVICULAR**—A disease that affects the navicular bones in a horse's front feet and results in lameness. The cause is unknown, but poor shoeing may contribute to the condition.

**PASTER**—The part of the lower leg between the hoof and the fetlock.

**POINT OF BUTTOCKS**—One of the points checked by the Henneke system and sometimes referred to as the pin bone, the point of buttocks is analogous to our seat bone.

**POINT OF HIP**—One of the points checked by the Henneke system and sometimes referred to as the hook bone, the point of hip is analogous to our hip bone.

**PONY**—A full-grown horse that is less than 14 hands 2 inches tall.

**SIRE**—A horse's father.

**STALLION**—An unaltered male horse more than four years old.

**STIFLE**—The uppermost joint visible in a horse's rear leg, just below the abdomen.

**TACK**—The equipment, such as saddle and halter, worn by a horse.

**WITHERS**—The area where the horse's neck meets his back. If he has his head lowered, this is often the highest point on the back. It is where the horse's height is measured.

### **IMPORTANT—BE SURE TO PRESERVE HOOF EVIDENCE**

- In horses with severely neglected feet, x-rays may be necessary to assess possible internal damage to the foot. X-rays must be properly labeled and identified as to the identity of the horse and the date the film was taken.
- When a horse with overgrown hooves is taken into custody, keep the portion of hoof that is trimmed away as potential evidence.
- Photograph the feet from top, bottom and sides before they are trimmed or treated.

**NOTES:**

# **REPORTING NEGLECT**

**Animals with a body condition score of 1-2 should be considered CRITICAL and require immediate action.**

**Animals with a body condition score of 3 should be seen within 1 week.**

**When contacting the local law enforcement, please indicate immediate action requested.**

## **References**

Purdue University. AS-460 - Recognizing and Maintaining the Healthy Horse. M.A. Russell and Janice Sojka. Horse Industry Handbook. American Horse Council. Henneke, D.R., G.D. Potter, J.L. Kreider, and B.F. Yeates. 1988. Relationship between condition score, physical measurement, and body fat percentage in mares. Equine Veterinary Journal. 15: 371-372.



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