

Sample Inspection Checklist

Animal control officers (ACO's) may deal with hundreds of dogs and cats each week but may not have the training or knowledge to objectively assess a horse's health and well-being, let alone determine why a horse is emaciated or lethargic, for example. Therefore, it's imperative that ACO's arm themselves with as much knowledge as possible. That way, in addition to being able to spot neglect, they will know better how to fix the situation in order to ensure the horse's improved care.

Don't be afraid to ask the ACO to take note of the following before he or she investigates. (Suggest that the ACO take a camera along and offer to fax or e-mail him or her the checklist below as well as the Henneke Body Condition Scoring Sheet.) When you call back to find out the results of the investigation, have this list on hand so you can record the ACO's reported observations; your documentation will come in handy should you pursue the matter further.

■ A thorough ACO will look for these possible signs of neglect:

- no shelter
- debris or more than five droppings in a stall
- ammonia fumes or urine stench in the stall (damages lungs, causes thrush)
- hay stored near the stall (causes respiratory problems)
- walnut shavings for bedding (toxic)
- chew marks on the stall (indicates starvation)
- limited access to a water tank (pasture-kept horses) or a bucket or automatic waterer (stall-kept horses)
- algae, debris, or small animals in the water
- hay that is yellow, dusty, moldy, or smelly or that contains fine dust, flakes, or clumps of plant matter (causes colic, respiratory problems, starvation)
- foul-smelling black discharge coming from the horse's hooves (indicates thrush)
- pebbles or debris in the foot (causes bruising)
- overgrown, untrimmed hooves
- sharp, pointy teeth (painful, leads to refusal to eat)
- unstable, weak fences
- a lethargic, limping, or bony horse (must conduct Henneke Body Condition Scoring System)

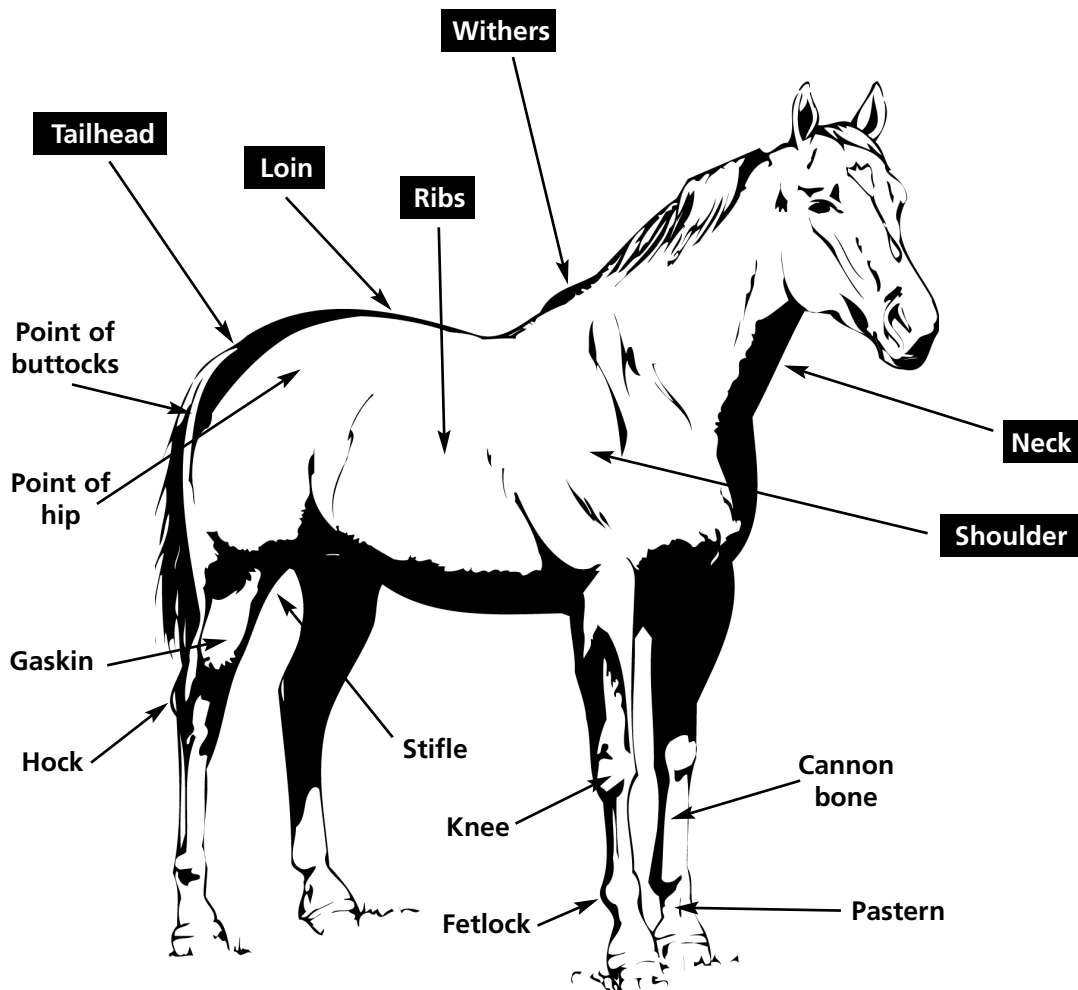
■ A thorough ACO will ask:

- to see feed receipts (taking into account any other horses on the property who are sharing or competing for hay)
- to contact the horse's veterinarian (to verify regular tooth care, inoculations, and parasite control)
- to contact the horse's farrier (to verify regular reshoeing and/or hoof trimming)
- how often water tanks, buckets, or automatic waterers are cleaned
- how much the horse eats each day and what dietary supplements are being given
- how often the manure pile is disposed of
- how much exercise and fresh air a stall-kept horse receives
- for the horse's age and health history (to verify with veterinarian)

Factsheet

Henneke Body Condition Scoring System

To evaluate a horse's condition, ACO's and veterinarians use a standard system of checks, developed by Don Henneke, Ph.D., whose illustration and chart originally appeared in the *Equine Veterinary Journal* in 1983. The system involves massaging and scoring six main parts of a horse's body—neck, withers, shoulder, ribs, loin, and tailhead—on a scale of one to nine for their fat content.



Main points checked in
Henneke scoring system:

- Neck
- Ribs
- Withers
- Loin
- Shoulder
- Tailhead

(over)

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 prominent	Tailhead prominent
3 Thin	Neck accentuated	Withers accentuated	Shoulder accentuated	Slight fat cover over ribs. Ribs easily discernible	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 appear rounded but 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	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 feels somewhat soft
6 Moderately fleshy	Deposited fat faintly discernible along neck	Deposited fat faintly discernible along withers	Deposited fat faintly discernible behind shoulder	Fat over ribs feels spongy	May have slight positive crease (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 positive crease down 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 back	Fat around tailhead very soft
9 Extremely fat	Bulging fat along neck	Bulging fat along withers	Bulging fat behind shoulder	Patchy fat over ribs	Obvious crease down back	Bulging fat around tailhead