



# EQUINE BODY CONDITION SCORING



TOP: Gabriel upon arrival, BCS 1  
RIGHT: Gabriel 5 months later, BCS 6



**NEVER SIMPLY THROW HAY OR GRAIN TO AN EMACIATED OR STARVING HORSE! DOING SO CAN KILL THEM! THEIR BODY NEEDS TIME TO ADJUST TO PROPER NUTRITION.**

## EMERGENCY

HORSES IN THIS CONDITION WILL NOT SURVIVE WITHOUT IMMEDIATE SKILLED INTERVENTION!

**FREEDOM REIGNS RANCH EMERGENCY NUMBER FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN TENNESSEE: 615-736-3783**



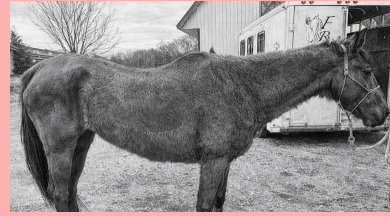
### BCS 1 - EMACIATED

Backbone, ribs, hips, neck, and pelvic bones are prominent. Little fatty tissue discernible. Even BCS 1 horses can appear to have a "belly". A horse should never be in this condition. Emergency.



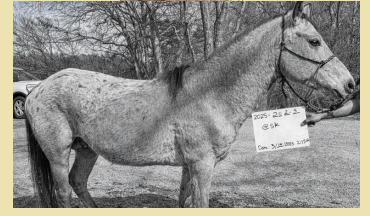
### BCS 2 - VERY THIN

Hips, tailhead, withers, shoulders and part of pelvic bone are discernible and angular. Slight "shelf" appearance along spine. A horse should never be in this condition. Intervention required.



### BCS 3 - THIN

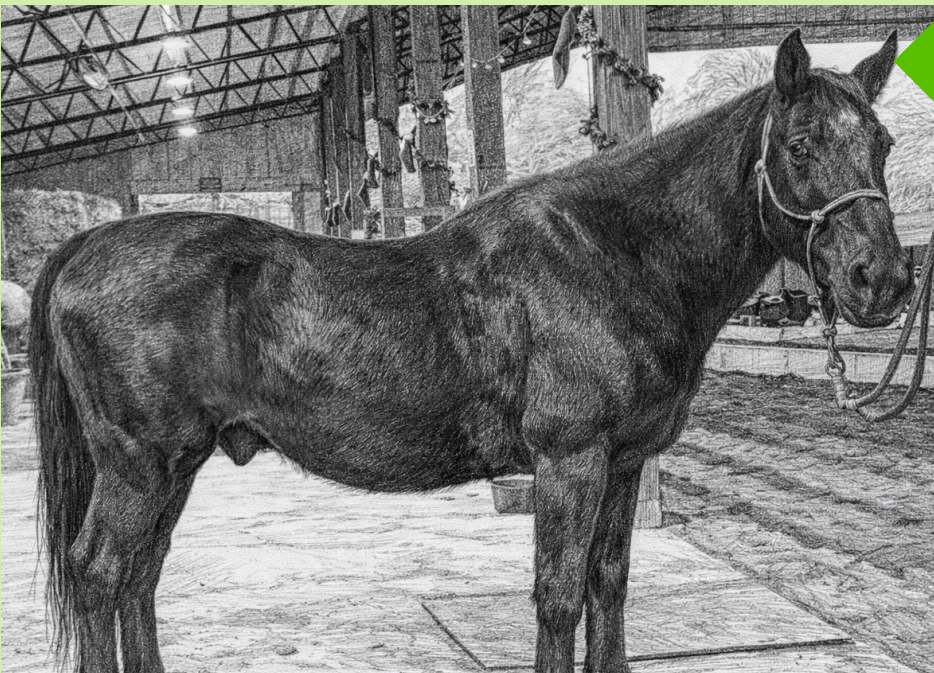
Hips, spine, withers and shoulders appear slightly angular but still have fat covering. Individual vertebrae cannot be identified. A horse should not be in this condition unless recovering from illness/injury and actively moving toward a BCS 4.



### BCS 4 - MODERATELY THIN

Slight ridge along spine. Ribs are slightly discernible, and easily palpated. Hip joints not discernible.

Horses with a BCS of 3 or under may meet the definition of "neglected" in regard to body condition. Other factors are often considered.



### BCS 8/9



Cresty neck, lack of definition in throat latch, fat pads on body. A BCS of 8-9 can be equally as dangerous as a BCS 1. Immediate management should be established to prevent laminitis, founder, and other conditions from metabolic distress.

### BCS 5 - IDEAL

Back is flat, hindquarters rounded. Hip bones are not discernible but can be palpated. Ribs can be felt but are not discernible to the eye. Withers are rounded and little/no concavity to the neck.

## OLD ≠ SKINNY!

Senior horses thrive in their later years with the right care!



Joseph, age 36 BCS 5, came in as an emaciated rescue at age 30. He has almost no teeth, and gets a soaked mash of beet-pulp based Senior Feed, alfalfa pellets, and a weight booster 3 times per day to maintain condition.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

We are happy to help horse owners struggling to know how to care for or put weight on their horse. We provide guidance, support, and follow up at no cost. Temporary assistance for emergency hay and feed is also available by application for those in Southern-Middle Tennessee. Please have owners call 615-721-2550 for information in non-emergency cases.

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# FEEDING SENIOR HORSES

Senior horses can thrive in their later years with the right management. A horse should never be allowed the excuse that they're thin "because they're old", and we would like to prove that to you!



WHENEVER ADJUSTING FEED RATIONS, IT MUST BE DONE SLOWLY OVER A PERIOD OF TIME TO AVOID GASTRIC UPSET AND RELATED CONDITIONS THAT COULD LEAD TO SEVERE ILLNESS AND EVEN DEATH!

DO NOT USE THE FOLLOWING PROTOCOL FOR STARVED HORSES PRIOR TO DAY 30 OF REHABILITATION.



TOP: Gabriel upon arrival, BCS 1  
ABOVE: Gabriel 5 months later, BCS 6

## SENIOR HORSE CHECKLIST

Before adjusting your horse's diet, ensure the following:

- ☒ Your horse has had their teeth checked or floated within 6 months.
- ☒ Your horse does not have Cushings, EMS, PPID, PSSM, or other condition requiring different protocols
- ☒ You have an area in which to feed your senior horse where he doesn't have to compete with other horses.
- ☒ Your horse has been de-wormed appropriately or has a FEC below 100
- ☒ You have talked with your vet about this protocol and they approve.

## SENIOR HORSE FEED PROTOCOL:

SENIOR GRAIN  
AMOUNT:

**5 LBS.**

Per feeding

We recommend  
Triple Crown  
Senior

SUPPLEMENTS:

**ADD A FAT  
SOURCE IF  
NEEDED.**

We recommend Purina Amplify, Cool  
Calories, or Calf Manna after day 16.

SOAK:

Make into a  
mash by  
soaking for 20  
minutes to the  
consistency of  
thick oatmeal.

USE ROOM TEMP WATER!

FREQUENCY:

**3 TIMES  
PER DAY**

With a minimum of 4 hours  
between each feeding.

**Days 1-3:** Start at 1lb per feeding or switch out ¼ of the horse's current feed type

**Days 4-7:** Increase to 2lb per feeding or switch out ½ of the horse's current feed

**Days 8-11:** Increase to 3lb per feeding or switch out ¾ of the horse's current feed

**Days 12-15:** Increase to 4lb per feeding and switch out for 100% of horse's current feed

**Day 16+:** Increase to 5lb per feeding and maintain to condition.

When horse's condition reaches a BCS 6, decrease 1lb per feeding per week until condition maintains at a BCS 5 for an extended time bearing in mind needs may change with seasons.

**Supplements:** A quality bio-available Vitamin E supplement (like Nano-E) and Amino-Acid supplement (like Equinity) can provide additional support.

**OLD ~~IS~~ SKINNY!**



Joseph, age 36 BCS 5, came in as an emaciated rescue at age 30. He has almost no teeth, and gets a soaked mash of beet-pulp based Senior Feed, alfalfa pellets, and a weight booster 3 times per day to maintain condition.

## FORAGE:

Horses must have *\*quality\** forage (hay) to thrive!

**Many senior horses have trouble chewing hay because of worn or missing teeth.** If

they can't properly chew hay, they cannot get the nutrients from it even if they swallow it. If your horse cannot chew hay, provide *\*SOAKED\** hay pellets or cubes as an alternative to make up 1.5-2.5% of their body weight in hay per day. (The average 1,000lb horse needs 20 +/-lbs. of hay per day.)

We recommend Standlee hay pellets soaked for 2 hours at a 2-1 water-pellets ratio. Pellet weight should be determined prior to soaking.

This page does not constitute professional advice, it is for informational purposes only based on our experience with our organization's horses.

ENSURE YOUR HORSE HAS FRESH, CLEAN WATER AT ALL TIMES!

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# REFEEDING PROTOCOL FOR EMACIATED HORSES

Adapted based on UC Davis' protocol with modifications based on our experience with starved horses. This is provided for information purposes only and does not constitute professional advice.



**THIS DIET IS RECOMMENDED BY UC DAVIS FOR HORSES THAT HAVE BEEN STARVED FOR A LENGTH OF TIME AND REQUIRE TIME FOR THEIR BODY TO ADJUST TO RECEIVING NUTRITION. IT IS \*VITAL\* THAT YOU WORK WITH YOUR VET TO CAREFULLY MONITOR FOR SIGNS OF REFEEDING SYNDROME OR CHALLENGES THAT CAN OCCUR WITH REFEEDING EMACIATED/STARVED HORSES!**



Before offering the horse any feed or water do the following:

- ☒ Take vital signs and record on log to monitor progress. Temperature, pulse, respiratory rate, capillary refill time, and listen to all 4 GI quadrants.
- ☒ If possible, get horse's starting weight on a scale and have your vet run a CBC and FEC
- ☒ Offer free choice loose minerals and salt in individual buckets and then fresh clean water. Pay careful attention and slow consumption if horse gorges on salt.
- ☒ Give a low-sugar electrolyte paste based on weight every 12 hours for the first week. The horse may need IV fluids if they are severely dehydrated.



**UNDERSTAND THAT THIS PROTOCOL IS A BASELINE AND THAT IT MAY NEED TO BE ADJUSTED FOR EACH HORSE! STARVED/EMACIATED HORSES USUALLY ARRIVE WITH LITTLE TO NO INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR HISTORY OR WITH MISINFORMATION (EXAMPLE: OWNER SAYING THEY FED THEIR HORSE BUT DIDN'T) ASSUME NOTHING AND BE WILLING TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS BASED ON EVIDENCE.**

**WE RECOMMEND MONITORING YOUR HORSE EVERY 2 HOURS AROUND THE CLOCK FOR THEIR FIRST 10 DAYS AND HAVING A CAMERA ON THEM 24-7**

**WE DO NOT RECOMMEND DEWORMING, VACCINATING, OR DOING DENTAL FLOATS UNTIL HORSE IS A BCS 3+**

## DAYS 1-3:

NOTE: UC Davis' protocol recommends every 4 hours.

**1 LB. OF ALFALFA**

**EVERY 3 HOURS**  
(around the clock!)

## DAY 4:

**1.5 LBS. OF ALFALFA**

**EVERY 3 HOURS**  
(around the clock!)

## DAY 5:

**2 LBS. OF ALFALFA**

**EVERY 4 HOURS**  
(around the clock!)

## DAY 6-7:

**2.5 LBS. OF ALFALFA**

**EVERY 4 HOURS**  
(around the clock!)

## DAY 8-9:

**3 LBS. OF ALFALFA**

**EVERY 4 HOURS**  
(around the clock!)

## DAY 10-13:

**5 LBS. OF ALFALFA**

**EVERY 6 HOURS**  
(around the clock!)

**DAY 14+:** Offer free-choice Alfalfa.

**DAY 21:** If there have been no complications, slowly introduce a soaked, low NSC beet pulp based Senior feed. Follow "Feeding Senior Horses" sheet:

**Days 21-25: Start at 1lb** 3x per day, add a probiotic and Ulcergard for two weeks

**Days 26-30:** Increase to 2lb, 3x per day,

**Days 31-34:** Increase to 3lb, 3x per day,

**Days 35-39:** Increase to 4lb, 3x per day

**Day 40+:** Increase to 5lb, 3x per day to reach BCS 5/6. Add in supplements if needed.

When horse's condition reaches a BCS 6, decrease 1lb per feeding per week until condition maintains at a BCS 5 for an extended time.

We use and recommend Triple Crown Senior for feed. For

supplements we use Purina Amplify, Calf Manna, and Cool Calories.

## TRACKING PROGRESS:



Taking photos of the horse in the same stance, and in the same lighting at regular intervals can help track progress to ensure you're headed in the right direction. If you are holding a horse for legal proceedings, be sure to follow the required custody care documentation

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