

NEW BODY CONDITION SCORE PARAMETERS

Notification has been received from AERA about a change in logbook parameters that will apply from 1st January 2009. Anal tone will be removed as a parameter to be checked by the vets at any vet inspections at a ride. It will be replaced by the use of the body condition. The following scoring system for body condition is to be used:

Score	Neck	Back and Ribs	Tail and Pelvis
0 Very poor	Marked 'ewe' neck which is narrow and slack at the base.	Skin is stretched tightly over ribs. Individual ribs and vertebrae prominent.	Deep cavity under tail, rump is sunken, pelvis structure prominent
1 Poor	'Ewe' neck still obvious. Neck narrow and slack.	Ribs and individual vertebrae well defined.	Deep depression under tail, rump is sunken but skin supple, pelvis well defined.
2 Moderate	Narrow but firm neck	Ribs just visible. Individual vertebrae cannot be seen but are easily felt.	Slight cavity present under tail. Rump flat either side of the backbone.
3 Good	Firm neck but no crest (with the exception of stallions)	Ribs and vertebrae cannot be seen but are easily felt.	Rump is rounded, pelvis is easily felt.
4 Fat	Wide firm neck with a slight crest forming.	Firm pressure is needed to feel ribs. Slight gutter forming along the loin.	Gutter forming down rump to tail head, pelvis can be felt with firm pressure.
5 Very Fat	Very wide and firm neck with a marked crest.	Ribs cannot be felt; back is broad with a definite gutter.	Rump is bulging, definite gutter down rump to tail head. Pelvis buried.

References for further information on body condition scoring system for horses can be found in the following books:

Carroll C.L., and Huntington P. J., Body Condition Scoring and Weight Estimation of Horses, Equine Veterinary Journal (1988) 20 (1), 41 - 45.

Huntington, P.J. (1991) Field estimation of body condition and weight. In: Equine Nutrition Proceedings 181. Post Grad. Comm. Vet. Sci. 15 – 23.

The rationale for this change, as provided by the AERA Veterinary Panel, is: Concerns have been raised about horses in very light condition competing in endurance. There is good evidence linking adequate body condition with performance, e.g. from the Tevis Cup. It is possible that poor condition may reflect inadequate nutrition or disease processes.

It should be noted that horses can now be eliminated from entering a ride if their body condition score is not appropriate for the event in which they are competing. Recording the details of the body condition of the horse will provide historical data to assist a vet in making a decision about allowing the horse to start in a ride in the future if the condition of the horse does not improve.

As all current logbooks show a column for anal tone and do not include a column for body condition there will be some modification required to the logbook page. Anal Tone will be crossed out and Body Condition will be written into the column. This change can only be made by ride staff and should not be undertaken by members.

If anyone has any questions in regard to this new rule please contact the VERA President, Linda Tanian. Contact details for Linda are available at the back of the newsletter.