

Article of the month - How to monitor my horse/pony's weight?

Part 1 – How to estimate the weight of my horse or pony?

In order to successfully monitor our animal's weight, we need to know what their baseline weight is. The most accurate way to determine a horse or pony's weight is to have them weighed on a weighbridge. However, when this is not possible, an objective way of weight estimation is to take some simple body measurements. To start off with, you will need to:

- Find a level, firm surface for your horse/pony to stand on.
- Position your horse/pony so that they are standing square and in a straight line. Also ensure they are bearing weight on all four feet.
- An extra pair of hands to help you secure the tape measure and hold your horse or pony

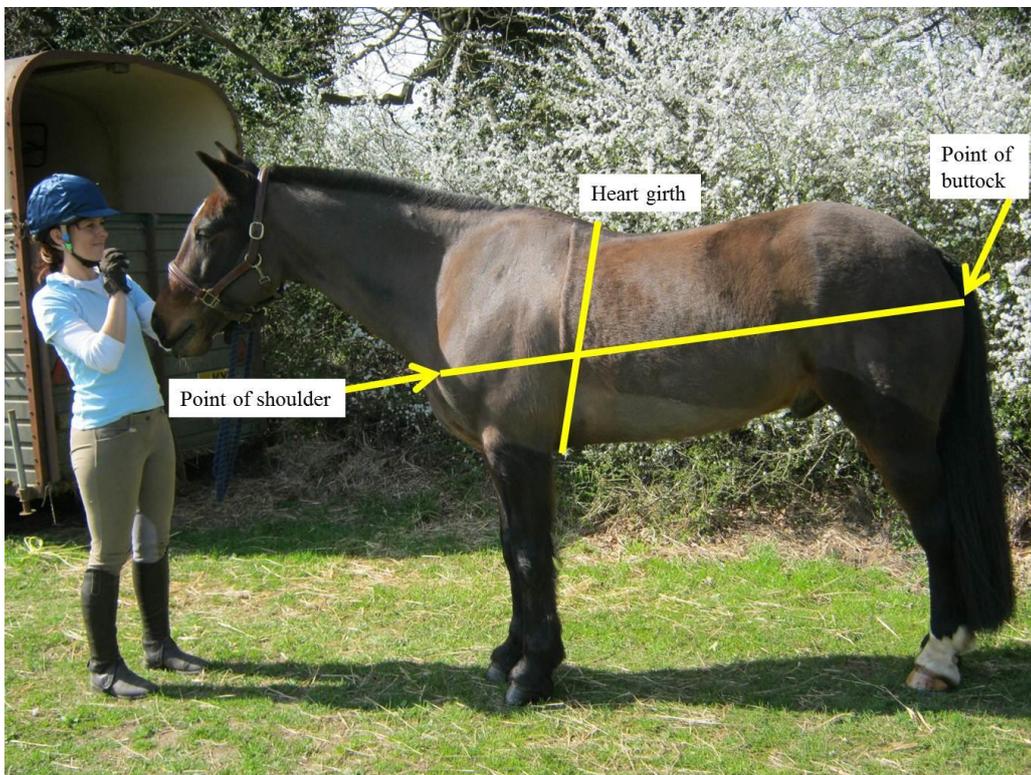


Fig. 1 The point of shoulder, point of buttock and heart girth indicated on a horse that is standing square and straight.

You will need to take two measurements (*Fig.1*):

1. **Body length** - measure from the point of the shoulder in a straight line, and around the hindquarters, to the point of buttock on one side only (*Fig. 2 & 3*)



Fig. 2 Run the palm of your hand down the shoulder blade until you reach a "point" after which the shoulder slopes

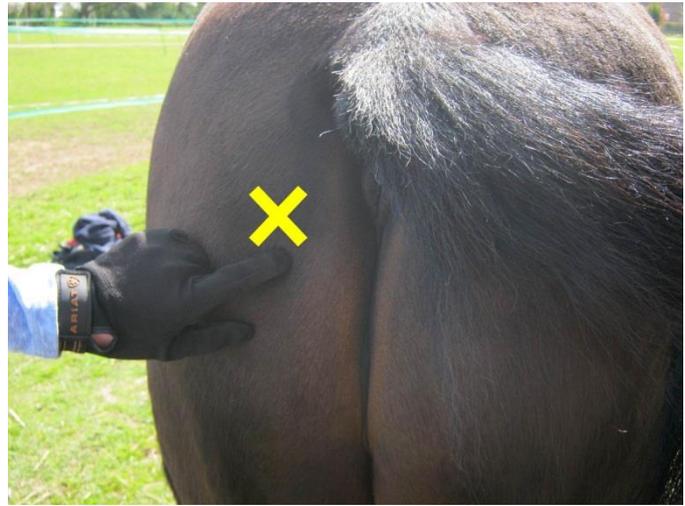


Fig. 3 The point of buttock can be found a few centimetres away from the tail (when you are looking at your horse/pony from behind) and can be described as the "most pointy" part of the buttock

2. **Heart girth** - measure all the way around the horse's girth from immediately behind the slope of the withers going to just behind the elbow on a slight diagonal (Fig. 4)



Fig. 4 Position the tape measure at the lowest point of the withers (just before they slope into the back) and as close behind the elbow as you can (**NOT** as you would place a girth). Pull the tape measure snugly and line it up to take your reading. Be aware of not placing your hand under the tape measure when you are taking the reading!

Inputting these measurements in the online weight calculator on the Weight Tracker page of the CARE about laminitis website, will give you a weight estimate in either kilograms or pounds (depending on if you measured in centimetres or inches). For detailed instructions on how to take the body measurements, click on the link below:

- [How to take measurements to estimate the weight of your horse/pony](#)

Ways keeping consistency and improving accuracy of measurements are to take measurements:

- at the same time of day, in relation to feeding and exercise
- in the same place
- by the same person
- in the same way

However, the weight alone does not tell us how much fat versus muscle the animal is carrying. The best way to assess the presence of fat on our animal's bodies is to regularly assign them a Body Condition Score (BCS) (body condition scoring is often also referred to as fat scoring). As body condition scoring is a subjective measurement, if used in conjunction with an objective way of weight estimation (such as using a weighbridge or taking body measurements), it paints a clearer picture of the shape our animals are in. Next month, in Part 2, we will take a look at how to determine the BCS for our horse/pony.