How to measure your horse/pony to estimate their weight
We would like to thank World Horse Welfare for funding the CARE about Laminitis project and for helping put together these guidelines. If you are interested in the work it does to help improve equine welfare worldwide, please visit the website at www.worldhorsewelfare.org

CARE about Laminitis is a collaborative project between the Animal Health Trust (AHT) and the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), with ongoing support from Rossdales Equine Hospital.

If you would like more information on the work the AHT undertakes to fight disease and injury in animals, please visit the website at www.aht.org.uk

If you are interested in the work that the RVC does or the study options offered, please visit the website at www.rvc.ac.uk

If you would like to see the services that Rossdales Equine Hospital offers, please visit the website at www.rossdales.com
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All these instructions are also available online at www.careaboutlaminitis.org.uk

Please don’t forget to input all final values online on the Weight Tracker page of the website.
General Instructions

There are some important rules that should be followed when taking measurements and scoring your horse/pony.

Decide on a set time (both time of day and in relation to exercise & feeding) – ideally when your horse/pony is relaxed and comfortable – and make each subsequent recording at approximately the same time. Their weight can fluctuate significantly over a 24 hour period and ensuring you take the measurements at a similar time will mean you are comparing like for like.

You should always take these steps when preparing to measure/score:

Step 1 – Find a level, firm surface for your horse/pony to stand on. Concrete is preferable, but level dirt or short grass would be fine if concrete is not at hand.

Step 2 – Position your horse/pony so that they are standing square (with their front and hind feet together) and in a straight line. Also ensure they are bearing weight on all four feet (a resting back leg will affect the measurements!).

Follow these basic rules:

- same person taking measurements/doing scoring
- same method of measuring/scoring used
- same place
- same time

Consistency in measurements/scoring will ensure the accuracy of weight monitoring.

Taking body and neck measurements

You will have received a CARE tape measure in your welcome pack. It will have centimetres (cm) printed on one side and inches on the other. Please decide whether you will take your measurements in cm or inches and stick to the same unit of measurement for all future recordings.

What you will need to take measurements

- CARE tape measure
- Pen (the one in your welcome pack might come in handy!)
- Recording chart (you can print one off the website!)
- A helper to hold your horse/pony and hold one end of the tape measure (sorry, we couldn’t provide this!)

Make sure your horse/pony is OK with the tape measure being placed on them. Start by letting them sniff it and if they do appear unsure, take time to get them used to it.
How to measure your horse/pony to estimate their weight

We will be using a method of heart girth and body length measurements to estimate our animal’s weight. This is because this method of estimating weight, in absence of a weighbridge to give us an exact weight, has been found to be more accurate when compared to using a weight tape method alone (Wagner & Tyler, 2011).

Steps 1 & 2 - Follow the steps on pg 3. Also review the general instructions and rules.

Step 3 - To take the body length measurement, measure from the point of shoulder to the point of buttock. To find the point of shoulder, place the palm of your hand at the top of the shoulder (starting nearest the neck) and run your hand down the shoulder blade until you reach a ‘bony point’. This is the point of the shoulder. If you are having trouble locating the point of shoulder, decide on a point in this general area and always take measurements from this point.

Above left: Follow the line of the shoulder blade with the flat of your hand.

Above right: Run the palm of your hand down the shoulder blade until you reach a “point” after which the shoulder slopes downward.

Left: Our model, Murphy, demonstrates the correct body position when measurements are being taken.
Step 4 - 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 (make sure you follow all safety precautions when handling your horse/pony’s rear end). It may be a little tricky to find! If you are having trouble locating the point of buttock, decide on a point in this general area and always take measurements from this point.

Left: The point of buttock should be in this area.

Step 5 - Ask your helper to hold your horse/pony and to secure one end of the tape at the point of shoulder. Extend the tape around to the point of buttock, following the curve of the bottom. Make sure the tape is kept taut and is not twisted. Record your measurement.

Above: Harriett has the tape measure at the point of buttock, with Lyndsay holding it secure at the point of shoulder. When you take the measurement, your tape measure should be at a slight angle, from the point of shoulder up to the point of buttock.
**Step 6** - To take the **heart girth measurement**, place your tape measure around the girth of the horse. Ensure the tape measure is not twisted. You want to 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).

Your tape measure should be on a slight diagonal angle. Once again, make sure this is the case on both sides. Pull the tape measure snugly (especially if you have a furry mammoth!) but not so tight that it indents the skin. Line the tape measure up, ensuring your hand is not placed underneath it, wait for the horse/pony to breathe out (exhale) and record the measurement.

![Image of a horse with a tape measure around its heart girth]

**Left:** Pull the tape measure snuggly 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!

The most important thing to remember is to **be consistent**! Same person, taking the same measurements, at the same times, in the same place!
Now that you have your body length and heart girth measurements, you can enter them into your weight tracker online at www.careaboutlaminitis.org.uk, which will use a formula to calculate the estimated weight of your horse/pony! Do this on a monthly basis and watch what happens to the weight over time!

References


*A special thanks to Murphy, owner Lyndsay and helper, Harriett.*