

HORSE BITS

EQUINE NEWS FOR WHARTON COUNTY & BEYOND



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2023



TO BLANKET OR NOT TO BLANKET?

WRITTEN BY JILLIAN LAITKEP

As our winter season is soon arriving, it's time to get out our horses' blankets and prepare them for use. The use of blankets on horses is a personal choice. Some owners insist on it, while others prefer to get their horse through winter by letting their horses' hair coat naturally protect them. So, is there a true benefit to blanketing horses?

In 2020, students at the University of Wisconsin River Falls conducted experiments to test if there was a cost benefit to blanketing horses and if blanketing had any influence on hair length. The students tested a herd primarily made up of quarter horses during the winter season. The herd was split into two groups with one group never receiving a blanket to wear and the other group receiving blankets when temperatures dropped below 40°F.

Continued on pg. 2

PUMPKIN OATMEAL HORSE COOKIES RECIPE

Recipe by: HorseGirl Blog

- 4 cups whole oats
- 1 can pumpkin
- 2 cups water
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 3/4 cup whole wheat flour
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp nutmeg
- 1 tbsp honey or molasses

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Thoroughly mix the pumpkin and water together. Add the flour, oats, and the spices. Add in the honey or molasses and mix well.

Divide dough into tablespoon sized pieces and roll them out into a ball. Flatten each ball slightly. Place onto a greased cookie sheet. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until done.

Cool and store them in an airtight container in the refrigerator. Use within 2 weeks.

I tested these treats, and they were a hit! Your horses will LOVE them.

They found that the horses that were blanketed consumed 0.2% of their body weight less than the non-blanketed horses. This equals two pounds of forage per day for the average 1,000-pound horse. Our area of southeast Texas typically sees 5-10 days each winter where the temperatures stay below 40°F. For each horse this would equal about half a bale of hay or \$5. When you consider that the cost of a blanket can range from \$60-\$200, you can see that for our particular area, there is really no cost benefit to blanketing unless you had a larger heard of horses.

The second topic tested was if blanketing had any effect on hair length. We know for a fact that a horse's winter coat growth is regulated by the length of daylight hours. Winter coat growth usually starts after the summer solstice and will continue until the winter solstice. But is daylight the only thing that determines hair growth? During their research, the students at the university actually tested to see if temperature had any effect on hair growth by collecting hair samples from the horses and measuring them. They found that the unblanketed horses did have longer winter coats. This proves that temperature does play a part in growing a longer winter coat.

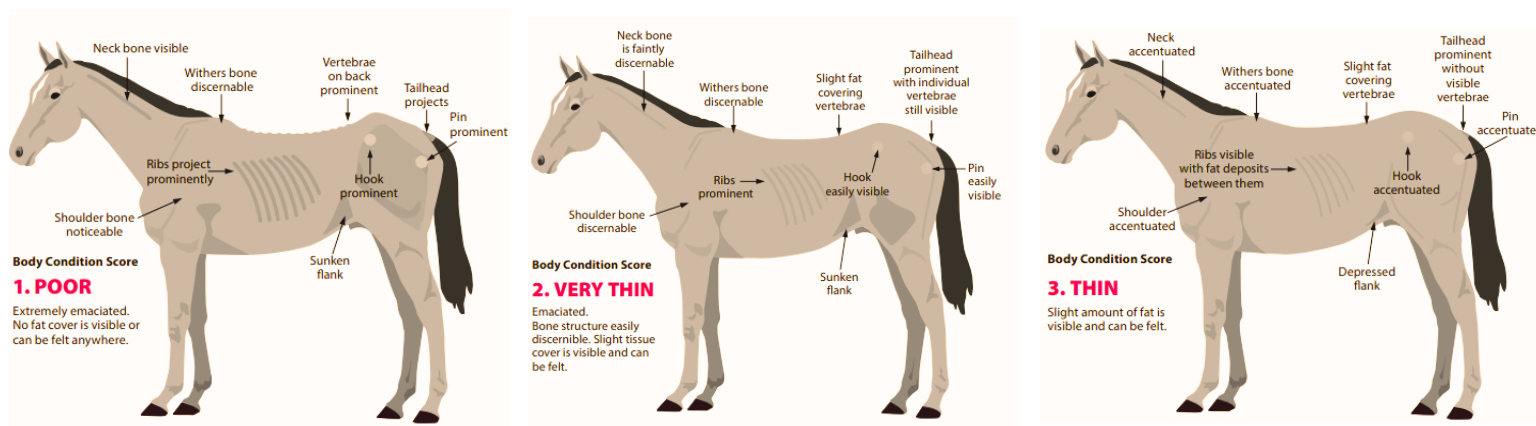
All things considered, in our area of Texas blanketing your horses it still a personal choice. It may not be necessary for their well-being, but it definitely can make them more comfortable. Here are some recommendations for blanketing.

1. Should you choose to use them, make sure that you have the correct blanket. Measure your horse and buy the right size and weight blanket for the temperature range.
2. Make sure that you use it correctly. Only use it during temperatures less the 40°. Take it off as soon as temperatures warm up. **Your horse should never be sweating beneath their blanket.**
3. If you have a hard keeper, a blanket can actually help them to improve their body score by saving them from using their energy to stay warm.
4. If you have a larger horse who tends to be overweight, you can help them to lose weight and lower their body condition score if you do NOT blanket them. This forces them to use stored energy to keep them warm instead of relying on a blanket.

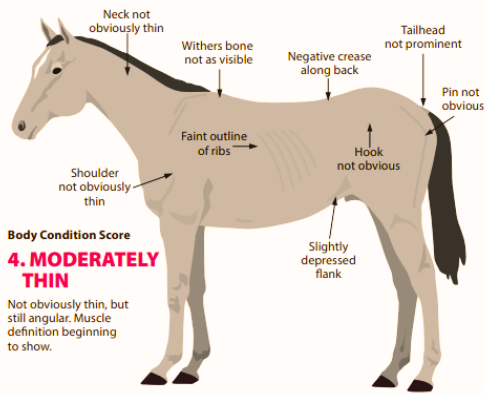
BODY CONDITION SCORING

Body condition scoring is an easy way for horse owners to monitor the health of their horses. It is based on the amounts of fat covering specific areas of a horse's body, To score your horse, use the images and descriptions below to find the body score number that best matches your horse's current condition.

Body condition scoring is a great way to monitor the process of improving your horse's health. Be sure to keep a record of your horse's progress by taking pictures as you gradually make changes.

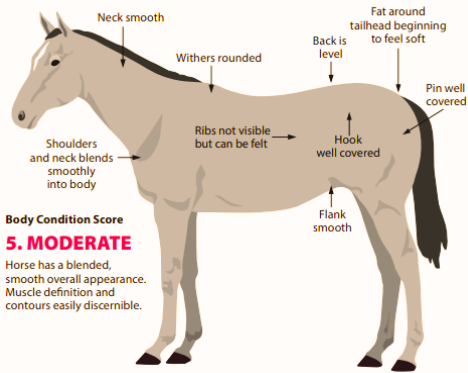


Images courtesy of Kentucky Performance Products



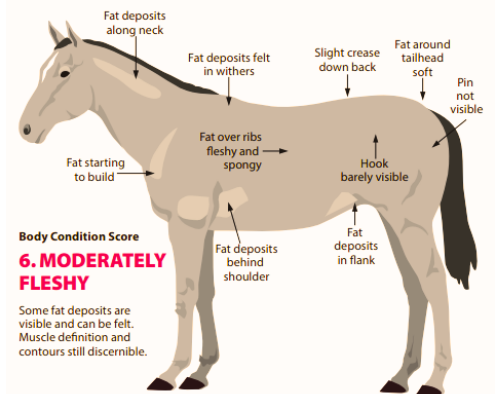
Body Condition Score
4. MODERATELY THIN

Not obviously thin, but still angular. Muscle definition beginning to show.



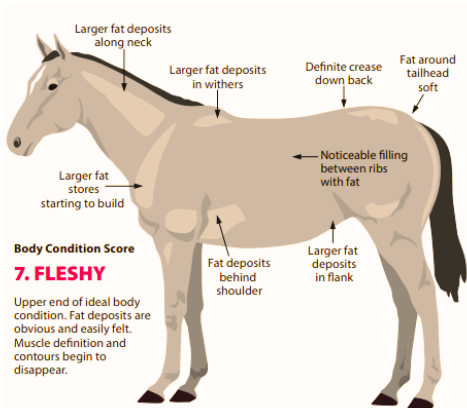
Body Condition Score
5. MODERATE

Horse has a blended, smooth overall appearance. Muscle definition and contours easily discernible.



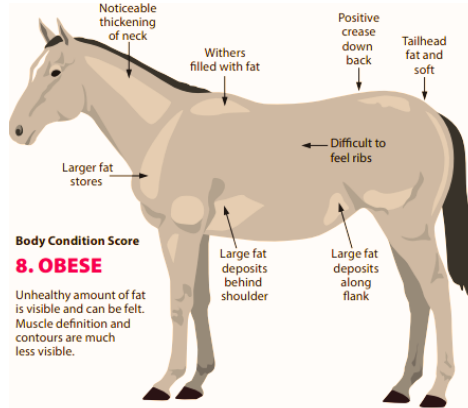
Body Condition Score
6. MODERATELY FLESHY

Some fat deposits are visible and can be felt. Muscle definition and contours still discernible.



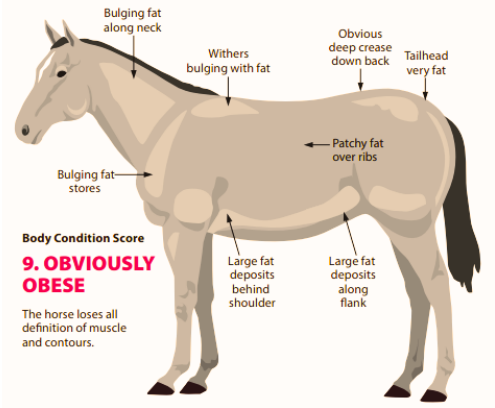
Body Condition Score
7. FLESHY

Upper end of ideal body condition. Fat deposits are obvious and easily felt. Muscle definition and contours begin to disappear.



Body Condition Score
8. OBESE

Unhealthy amount of fat is visible and can be felt. Muscle definition and contours are much less visible.



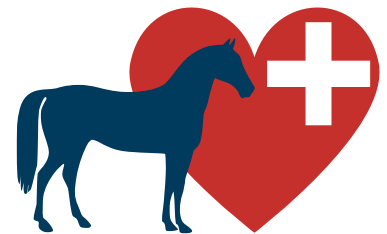
Body Condition Score
9. OBVIOUSLY OBESE

The horse loses all definition of muscle and contours.

ASK THE VET

Dr. LuAnn Groves
The Whole Horse
Central Texas Equine Veterinary Services

You are unique as a veterinarian because you specialize in osteopathy and integrative medicine. Can you please explain what osteopathy is and why it is important in treating horses?



"Equine osteopathy operates on three pillars, we do cranial sacral work because the head and the sacrum are connected by the spinal cord and strain on one end will pull on the other end as well. They must be kept in balance and as strain free as possible.

The second pillar is visceral, and we know that the nerves that leave the spinal cord innervate the organs underneath them. The autonomic nervous system dictates what is going on in the back, and if we find two or more vertebrae restricted in the same direction, we know that the organ being innervated by that spinal segment could be the problem, rather than the muscles or nerves. We need to release the strain on the viscera or treat the viscera and restore its mobility in order to make sure that the spinal vertebra remain mobile.

The third pillar is parietal, and this has to do with the fascia, muscles, bones and ligaments which also must be mobile."

For more information on Dr. Groves, her practice, and the services that she provides, please visit her website at thewholehorse.com.



REFERENCES

1. Hiney, Kris and Deboer, Michelle, hosts. "Blanket Science: The story of really knowing if they work!" Tack Box Talk, season 5, episode 114, Oklahoma State University Extension, Feb. 26, 2023, extension.okstate.edu
2. Horse Girl Blog. "That PUMPIKIN everything time of year." Nov. 12, 2020, <https://spalding-labs.com/community/horsegirl/b/blog/archive/2020/11/12/that-pumpkin-everything-time-of-year.aspx>
3. Kentucky Performance Products. "Assessing your horse's body condition" 2017, KPPusa.com

I would like to thank the many people who have helped me make *Horse Bits Newsletter* a reality. Thank you also to the subscribers; I love sharing news and information with you just like so many people have done for me. From my family to yours, wishing you a Blessed Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas. I'll see you back in January of 2024.

Jillian

EVENT CALENDAR



Hallettsville Playday Association 2023/2024 Series

Nov. 11, Dec. 2, Jan. 6 & Feb. 10

Wilbur Baber Mem. Complex- Lavaca Expo Center
www.hallettsvilleplayday.com

Tejas Ranch Horse Show Association

Wharton County Fairgrounds

Dec. 3

www.tejasranch.org

Rogue Rodeo Productions 2023 Fall Series

O.D. Tucker Arena-Fort Bend County Fairgrounds

Nov. 5, 12, & 19, Dec. 3

www.roguerodeoproductions.com

Lucky Rose Rodeo Assoc. Winter Series

Wharton County Fairgrounds

January 13, 20, 27 and February 3

WCYF Horse Progress show and entry deadline

Jan 28 / 9:00 AM

Wharton County Fairgrounds

www.whartoncountyyouthfair.org



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