

# Healthy Horse



## Record Breaking Winter!

BY DR. ANNA WILDGRUBE, DVM

Record breaking winter is an easy headline. As everyone knows, -36 degrees Fahrenheit isn't fun and 2018–2019 will certainly be one for the record books. I am certainly looking forward to warmer spring weather.

This year, we once again are expanding our services with new diagnostics and equipment. We have added **on-the-farm lactate readers** to our colic diagnostics. Read more about lactate and what it can do for your horse in the unfortunate event of an emergency.

We are moving towards **billing at the time of service** and will not be routinely mailing bills out at the end of the month. Please expect to pay your bill at the time of your farm call. We have a number of clients that have put us on an auto pay with their local bank year-round and that allows a credit to accumulate on their account. As a result, the spring vaccinations and health checks are much more affordable. If you are interested in learning more about this option, just give us a call!

Look for our **Regional Call Days** schedule inside this newsletter. It's a great way to save some money on a farm call. Additionally, we encourage teaming up with fellow horse neighbor to split farm call charges. It's a great way for you to save some money and helps Dr. Anna Wildgrube and Helen be much more efficient.

Be sure to check out our **Facebook** page and watch your email inbox for great event announcements and information that is up to date. As issues pop-up in the horse world, it's a great way that we can work to keep you informed.

We hope to see you all at our **Pizza and Ponies seminar on March 19th**. Our topic is *Colic: The things you NEED to know*. Check out the information inside our newsletter. This is open to all horse community members, so bring a friend and neighbor.

Helen and I are looking forward to visiting with you and your horses soon!

### Owatonna

1220 Frontage Road East  
507-214-7387  
(fax) 507-214-2713

### CLINIC HOURS

#### OWATONNA

Wednesday, Thursday  
8:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m.

Monday, Tuesday, Friday  
8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.



# OVERWEIGHT: Not Just a Body Style

We all can think of one horse that we know (or that perhaps lives with us) that is “fluffy”, “round”, or “an easy keeper”. All of the previous terms are various ways to describe one thing: *an obese horse*.

Obesity in horses is very common as the domestic horse has a limited amount of area to walk around, exercise is provided via riding or training activities, and the majority of food is directly delivered to the horse. It's often a 200 foot or less walk to the water trough—and that is the daily activity for most horses. Add in challenging weather conditions such as icy footing or record-breaking cold, and a rider that doesn't ride in adverse weather conditions and most domestic horses don't move far in the winter.

I admit that I am one of the obese horse owners. I can make a variety of

excuses for the weight of my horse: he's the top horse and has the most access to food, he's a very easy keeper, the others are older and need more hay, and he lives on air. The reality is that he's fat and that is my doing.

The reason that horses are overweight is simple. Horses are consuming too many calories and not expending enough calories through exercise. Pretty simple. The challenge is that in order to lose weight, calories in must be less than calories expended. Simply put: *your horse must eat less and exercise more*.

## Equine Metabolic Syndrome?

The first step is to rule out equine metabolic syndrome. This is a serious medical condition that can be diagnosed with a blood test. A diagnosis of equine metabolic syndrome (EMS) means that your horse is insulin-resistant and unable to process sugars

correctly. Most EMS horses need a very carefully controlled diet, structured exercise, and potentially medications to help with the sensitivity to insulin.

## Calorie Control

With EMS ruled in or out, the next step is calorie control. The best investment is a scale for weighing flakes of hay. It is going to be very, very important to weigh hay so that your overweight horse is being fed 1.5% of their body weight per day for about one month, before reducing it to 1% of their body weight. For a 1000 lb horse, that 15 lbs of hay for one month that is reduced to 10 lbs of hay daily. The problem with this small amount of hay is that horses become bored and start chewing things that you don't want them to chew.

Slow feeding hay nets, slow feeding feeders, and grazing muzzles can be tools to combat the boredom. These allow a small amount of hay to be delivered over the course of many hours as a horse has to work to get the hay out of the feeder. When first introducing a slow feeding device, be sure to check your horse's gums on a regular basis as some aggressive eaters will create sores.

## Don't Forget the Vitamins and Minerals

Some horse owners might be tempted to feed overweight horses lower-quality grass hay. While grass hay can be a great choice, this strategy is going to short your horse on essential vitamins and minerals.

Micro minerals, such as copper, manganese, zinc, selenium and iodine are essential to metabolism. There are both supplements and diet balancers that can fit the needs of your horse. These are not a “grain” but rather vitamins and minerals in a pelleted form.

Obese horses do not need, nor should they be fed “grain”, such as sweet feed, 12%, and senior feed. These types of feed, even at small handful amounts, simply have too many calories and too much sugar for obese horses.

## Exercise

Exercise is a huge component of weight management. If your horse does not have lameness issues, 30 minutes of exercise provided daily is the goal. The exercise does not need to be riding exercise, although that certainly counts. Think outside the box with your horse and try hand-walking, lounging, free jumping, obstacles, desensitization training, hill work, cavetti's and ponying. As with any exercise program, start slowly and train appropriately. Your couch potato is not ready to run a 5K on the first day of spring.

Getting control of your horse's weight can take some tough love. It's not an easy process to say no to those big brown eyes or that neigh. It can mean the difference between having a healthy trail partner for years or watching your horse suffer through laminitis that causes sore feet. A few small changes go a long way.

## There is an App for That!

Body condition scoring is a vital part about knowing if your horse is overweight. Purdue University has developed an app for body condition scoring horses. Check it out! <https://ianr.unl.edu/horse-bcs-app>

## Body Condition Score Chart

The Henneke scale is the universally recognized body condition score chart for horses. This scale objectively scores horses on their body fat. Check the chart to the right to see how your horse "measures up."



## GREAT TIP!

Goldfish can help keep your stock tank cleaner! Add a few inexpensive goldfish to the stock tank to eat the algae and debris in the tank.

You will be able to reduce the amount of cleaning the tank takes as goldfish are in the carp family and enjoy cleaning up the bottom of the tank.

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Kentucky Equine Research, 3910 Delaney Ferry Rd., Versailles, KY 40383, 859-873-1988, www.ker.com

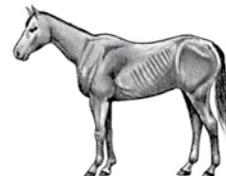
## Areas of emphasis for body condition scoring:

- Thickening of the neck
- Fat covering the withers
- Fat deposits along backbone
- Fat deposits on flanks
- Fat deposits on inner thighs
- Fat deposits around tail head
- Fat deposits behind shoulders
- Fat covering ribs
- Shoulder blends into neck.

1

### Poor

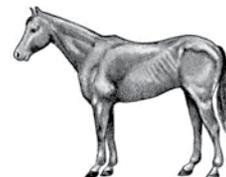
Animal extremely emaciated, spine, ribs, tailhead, points of hip and buttock projecting prominently; bone structure of withers, shoulders, and neck easily noticeable; no fatty tissue can be felt.



2

### Very Thin

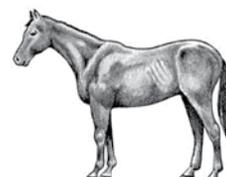
Animal emaciated; slight fat covering over base of spine; ribs, tailhead, points of hip and buttock prominent; withers, shoulders, and neck structure faintly discernible.



3

### Thin

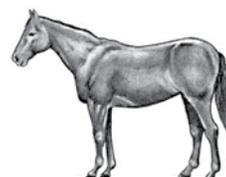
Fat buildup about halfway on spine; slight fat cover over ribs; spine and ribs easily discernible; tailhead prominent, but individual vertebrae cannot be identified visually; points of hip appear rounded but easily discernible; points of buttock not distinguishable; withers, shoulders, and neck accentuated.



4

### Moderately Thin

Slight ridge along back; faint outline of ribs discernible; tailhead prominence depends on conformation, fat can be felt around it; points of hip not discernible; withers, shoulders, and neck not obviously thin.



5

### Moderate

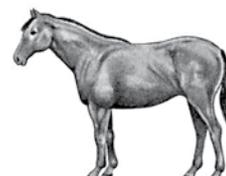
Back is flat (no crease or ridge); ribs not visually distinguishable but easily felt; fat around tailhead beginning to feel spongy; withers appear rounded over spine; shoulders and neck blend smoothly into body.



6

### Moderately Fleshy

May have slight crease down back; fat over ribs fleshy/spongy; fat around tailhead soft; fat beginning to be deposited along sides of withers, behind shoulders, and long sides of neck.



7

### Fleshy

May have crease down back; individual ribs can be felt, but noticeable filling between ribs with fat; fat around tailhead soft, fat deposited along withers, behind shoulders, and along back.



8

### Fat

Crease down back; difficult to feel ribs; fat around tailhead very soft; area along withers filled with fat; area behind shoulders filled with fat; noticeable thickening of neck; fat deposited along inner thighs.



9

### Extremely Fat

Obvious crease down back; patchy fat appearing.



# How old is my horse?

We all know that animals age faster than humans.

## How fast do horses age?

Horse Age	Human Age
1	6.5
2	13
3	18
4	20
5	25
7	28
10	34
13	43
17	53
20	60
24	70
27	78
30	85
33	93

Source: *The Horse*, Vol XXXIII #8

# Pizza & Ponies

Join us!



**March 19 ↑**  
**6:30 p.m.**

1220 East Frontage Road  
Owatonna

**Learn ↓**

*Things You Need to Know About Colic*

RSVP by March 19  
**(507) 214-7387**



# Understanding Your Horse Insurance Responsibilities

Whether a horse is purchased for personal or business reasons, ownership represents a significant investment of time, money and resources. While no one likes to think about the potential for tragedy, horses seem to be prone to illness, accidents and injury. Should some peril befall your horse, nothing may ease the emotional burden, but wise planning can help reduce the economic impact.

Insurance policies are legal contracts between the underwriter (the company) and the insured (horse owner). While individual policies vary so much from company to company and circumstance to circumstance, it is important to note that each policy has its own terms, conditions and requirements, which may necessitate action from you, your veterinarian and your insurance company.

**To better safeguard yourself and your horse, follow these guidelines from the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP):**

- Read the contract thoroughly before you apply for coverage.
- Ask the insurance representative to explain any words, phrases or provisions you do not understand completely.
- Know your responsibilities. What is required should your horse fall ill, become injured or die?
- Understand any specific guidelines for emergency situations. A crisis is not the time to be trying to interpret your policy's fine print or to look for contact phone numbers.
- If euthanasia is recommended, know what steps must be taken for a claim to be valid.
- Make a list of questions to ask your insurance agent or company.
- Define your needs. Do you want major medical coverage or death only?
- Comparison shop. Besides cost, buyers should look at the longevity and reputation of both the agency and the insurance carrier.



**Common types of coverage available for horses include but are not limited to:**

- **Mortality:** Paid if the horse dies.
- **Loss of Use:** Paid on a percentage basis if horse is permanently incapacitated for its intended use or purpose.
- **Major Medical:** Like health insurance, offsets costs of veterinary care for catastrophic conditions.
- **Surgical:** Policies that cover only specific procedures such as colic surgery.
- **Breeding Infertility:** Covers stallions or mares for reproductive failure.
- **Specified Perils:** Includes any number of things such as lightning, fire or transportation.



Source cited: AAEP 2/2019



## Regional **Farm Call Days**



Here at Heartland Animal Hospital, we offer **Regional Farm Call Days**. These Regional Farm Calls are a cost effective option to make sure you get the personal attention your horse requires, a complete physical examination, spring vaccinations, and fecal egg counts for your whole herd.

**April 1-5**  
Faribault, Medford

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**April 8-12**  
Ellendale, Owatonna, Blooming Prairie

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**April 15-19**  
Northfield, Lonsdale, Nerstrand

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**April 22-26**  
Morristown Waseca, Kilkenny

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**April 29-May 3**  
Kenyon-West Concord Area

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Call **(507) 214-7387** to schedule YOUR farm call!