

Body Condition Scoring the Donkey



IDEAL BODY CONDITION (3)

Body condition scoring (BCS) is important as it provides an early indication of under or over nourished donkeys.

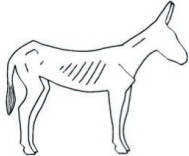

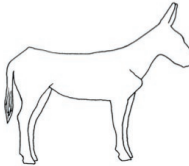

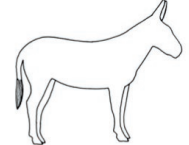

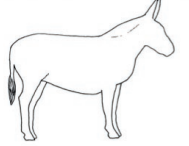



Condition scoring in the donkey is different to their close relatives, the horse, because fat is stored in different locations on the body.

Visual appearance can be deceptive and therefore a more hands-on approach is required, it is also important to be aware that woolly coats can mask the true BCS.

Donkey BCS chart

This involves feeling over the bony prominences and regions of fat deposition and matching up with the images and descriptions.

A more detailed description can be obtained at www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/donkey-health-and-welfare.

1. POOR		
2. MODERATE		
3. IDEAL		
4. FAT		
5. OBESE		



BCS 5 – OBESE WITH FAT DEPOSITS IN CREST AND ALONG BACK

KEY POINTS:

- donkey BCS system different to the one used in horses;
- visual inspection AND manual palpation required;
- use BCS to adjust diet accordingly;
- under or over nourishment can lead to serious illness, so condition scoring is essential;
- BCS should be performed regularly (monthly).

The importance of BCS

BCS gives an indication of whether the level of feeding is appropriate for a particular donkey, because excess energy from food is stored as fat.

- Donkeys have evolved to survive on a highly fibrous diet, and they are more efficient at digesting food than horses, so thrive on less forage than a similarly sized pony.
- The ideal donkey BCS is 3.
- Donkeys living in the UK are more likely to be overweight (BCS 4/5) than underweight. The donkey evolved in a desert environment, but in the UK, with good grazing donkeys readily become very overweight.

Donkeys with higher energy needs

In underweight donkeys (BCS 1/2) the proportion of hay in the diet may need to be increased and supplementary feeding may be necessary.

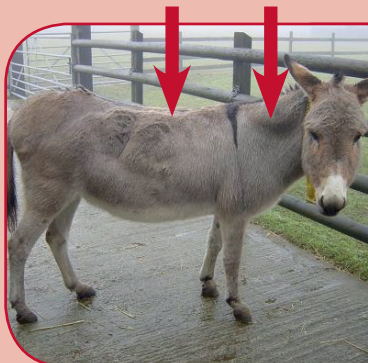
Donkeys that are growing, pregnant or lactating have additional energy requirements and may require extra feeding to ensure their BCS does not fall below the optimal level 3.



THE OVERWEIGHT DONKEY

In overweight donkeys (BCS 4/5) grazing may need to be restricted, allowing access to straw to provide fibre with a lower calorific density.

Overfeeding can result in death; however care must also be taken to ensure any weight loss in overweight donkeys is gradual. Rapid weight loss can trigger hyperlipaemia, a common life threatening metabolic disease in donkeys and ponies.



AN OBESE DONKEY (BCS 5) PRIOR TO DIETARY MANAGEMENT (RED ARROWS – PROMINENT FAT PADS)



THE SAME DONKEY 12 MONTHS AFTER A CAREFULLY CONTROLLED DIET, WITH SMALLER CREST AND FAT PADS (ARROWS) ALONG THE BACK (BCS 3.5)

Many XLEquine practices regularly liaise with The Donkey Sanctuary with regard to treatment and management of donkeys. XLEquine would like to acknowledge the work they do to transform the quality of life of donkeys in the UK and abroad. The Donkey Sanctuary is a charity that will never turn away from a donkey in need. They rely on donations to continue providing for donkeys and mules worldwide.

www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk



XLEquine is a novel and exciting initiative conceived from within the veterinary profession made up of independently owned, progressive veterinary practices located throughout the United Kingdom, members of XLEquine are committed to working together for the benefit of all their clients.
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