

# Body Condition Scoring Your Equine

## How to Meet the Code of Practice Requirements

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Body condition scoring (BCS) is a way to assess the amount of fat on an animal's body. For horses and other equines, a scale of 1 (emaciated) to 9 (obese) is commonly used.

According to Canada's Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines, an ideal BCS of 4 - 6 is recommended for horses, miniature horses and ponies. **The Code requires that corrective action must be taken when equines are too thin (BCS of 3 or lower) or too fat (BCS of 8 or higher).** If animals do not respond to the corrective action, veterinary advice must be obtained. See complete Code Requirements on body condition on page 2 below.

### HOW OFTEN SHOULD I BODY CONDITION SCORE MY HORSES?

The equine Code of Practice recommends that horses be regularly assessed using the scoring systems provided with this factsheet (page 3). Many horse owners assess their animals' body condition on a monthly basis and also at key times of the year (*e.g.* before and after the breeding season).

If your horse is too thin (3 or lower) or too fat (8 or higher), body condition scoring should be performed at least weekly or as directed by a veterinarian or other expert you are working with.

### HOW TO BODY CONDITION SCORE YOUR HORSES

#### Step 1 - Visually assess the horse's body condition

Stand so you are facing the side of the horse. Take an overall look at the horse, including the ribs – if you can see the ribs the horse is likely at a BCS less than 5; if you cannot see the ribs, the BCS is likely above 5. See page 3 for more details on the BCS scale.

#### Step 2 - Palpate (touch) sites on the horse that are responsive to changes in fat

It is essential to examine a horse's body condition by touch as a very thin horse can be hidden by a heavy winter coat. A cold horse will also have a raised hair coat, making it appear fatter. Using the information in the scoring systems provided with this factsheet, begin with the **neck** and feel for fat deposits. Fat in the neck area will feel firm. Then move on to the **withers**, feeling for fat or bony structures. Then feel for fat just behind the **shoulder** (fat in this area will feel softer). Next move to the **ribs**, feeling along the ribs towards the point of the hip. Generally, a horse in ideal BCS will have ribs that can be easily felt with palpation but not seen. Then feel down the **back** - a pointed backbone may mean a BCS of less than 5; a crease means a BCS of 7 or higher. Lastly palpate the **tail head** area.

#### Step 3 - Keep records!

Keeping a record for individual horses will help you track changes over time and, if applicable, determine whether the corrective actions you've implemented are working. Once you are experienced with body condition scoring, it should take less than a minute to assess each horse.

### CAUSES OF LOW BODY CONDITION IN HORSES

- Underfeeding or poor quality feed
- Poor feed access for horses low on the herd pecking order
- Illness or parasites
- Dental problems

**Keeping warm requires energy** – horses exposed to temperatures below 5°C need more feed or they will lose fat and body condition. Increasing the quantity of forage in the diet is generally all that is needed to ensure horses do not lose body condition over the winter. Some horses may need to be fed a more readily digestible and higher nutritive value diet.

#### **CORRECTIVE ACTIONS TO IMPROVE BODY CONDITION OF THIN HORSES**

- ☑ **Arrange for a veterinarian to examine the horse** – The veterinarian can conduct a dental examination or other tests to rule out health conditions that may be associated with weight loss.
- ☑ **Work with a nutritionist or veterinarian to develop a feeding program** – Any changes made to the type or quantity of feed should be conducted gradually over several days to avoid upset.
- ☑ **Ensure you're providing enough feed** – The average mature horse consumes 1.5 - 2% of its body weight in feed per day. The amount of feed horses need will increase with their biological needs (*e.g.* growing, pregnant, lactating, *etc.*) and how active they are (*e.g.* work, exercise, *etc.*).
- ☑ **Ensure horses have sufficient access to feed** – Young or old horses or those that feed with more dominant horses may not compete well for feed. Strategies include isolating horses in poor condition when feeding, rearranging groups so that competition is minimized, and increasing the number of feed locations or amount of feed space.
- ☑ **Monitor body condition** – To determine if your corrective actions are working, continue monitoring your horse's BCS and keep records.

#### **RELEVANT REQUIREMENTS FROM THE CANADIAN CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF EQUINES**

*For horses and ponies: corrective action must be taken at a BCS of 3 or lower and at a BCS of 8 or higher (on the 1-9 scale). \* Veterinary advice must be obtained if animals do not respond to the corrective action.*

*For donkeys and mules: corrective action must be taken at a BCS of 2 or lower and at a BCS of 4 or higher (on the 1-5 scale). Veterinary advice must be obtained if animals do not respond to the corrective action.*

*Veterinary advice must be obtained for geriatric equines that are emaciated (i.e., BCS of 1 or 2 out of 9 for horses and ponies; BCS of 1 out of 5 for donkeys and mules).*

*Equines must not be starved or prevented from eating for prolonged periods in order to reduce BCS - the change in feed to reduce BCS must be gradual.*

*\*With the exception of horses in feedlots that are free from health conditions associated with obesity.*

**Read the full version of the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines at  
[nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/equine](http://nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/equine)**

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## Body Condition Scoring System

See Appendix D of the Code of Practice for a labeled illustration of the horse along with images of horses at each body condition score.

	<b>Whole body</b>	<b>Neck</b>	<b>Withers</b>	<b>Back</b>	<b>Tail head</b>	<b>Ribs</b>	<b>Shoulder</b>
<b>BC S 1</b>	- Poor condition - Extremely emaciated - No fat tissue felt	Bone structure visible	Bone structure easily visible	Spinous processes project prominently	Tail head, point of the buttocks and point of the hip project prominently	Project prominently	Bone structure easily noticeable
<b>BC S 2</b>	Very thin, emaciated	Bone faintly discernible	Bone structure faintly noticeable	- Spinous processes prominent - Slight fat covering over base of spinous processes - Transverse processes of lumbar vertebrae feel rounded	Prominent	Prominent	Faintly discernible
<b>BC S 3</b>	Thin	Accentuated	Accentuated	- Fat build up halfway on spinous processes, but easily discernible - Can't feel transverse processes	- Prominent but individual vertebrae can't be visually identified - Point of the hip rounded, but easily discernible - Point of the buttocks not distinguishable	Slight fat cover, individual ribs discernible	Accentuated
<b>BC S 4</b>	Moderately thin	Not obviously thin	Not obviously thin	Negative crease along back	Fat palpable; Point of the hip not discernible	Faint outline discernible	Not obviously thin
<b>BC S 5</b>	Moderate condition	Blends smoothly into body	Rounded over spinous processes	Back is level	Fat at tail head beginning to feel spongy	Ribs can be felt but not visually distinguished	Blends smoothly into body
<b>BC S 6</b>	Moderately fleshy	Fat beginning to be deposited	Fat beginning to be deposited	May have slight positive crease down back	Fat around tail head feels soft	Fat over ribs feels spongy	Fat beginning to be deposited; Point-of-shoulder not discernible
<b>BC S 7</b>	Fleshy	Fat deposited along neck	Fat deposited along withers	May have positive crease down back	Fat around tail head is soft	Individual ribs can be felt; Noticeable fat between ribs	Fat deposited behind shoulder
<b>BC S 8</b>	Fat; fat deposited along inner buttocks	Noticeable thickening of neck	Area along withers filled with fat	Positive crease down back	Tail head fat very soft	Difficult to feel individual ribs	Area behind shoulder filled in/flush with body
<b>BC S 9</b>	Extremely fat; fat along inner buttocks may rub together; flank filled in flush	Bulging fat	Bulging fat	Obvious positive crease down back	Building fat <b>around</b> tail head	Patchy fat appearing over ribs	Bulging fat

*Adapted from What's the Score? Body Condition Scoring for Livestock (Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development)*

# Caring for Geriatric Horses

## Key points from Canada's Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equine

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The [Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines](#) defines a geriatric horse as any ageing horse that needs specialized care; horses are **generally** considered to be geriatric when they are 15-20 years of age or older.

### KEY ASPECTS OF CARING FOR GERIATRIC HORSES

- Maintain the horse at an ideal body condition score
- Keep the horse healthy with preventative medicine
- Address dental problems without delay
- Plan for euthanasia

### MAINTAIN AN IDEAL BODY CONDITION SCORE

The Code recommends a [body condition score](#) of 4 - 6 (out of 9) for most horses. **As a rule of thumb, you should be able to feel your horse's ribs but not see them.**

As your horse ages, you may notice **a change in body shape** but weight loss that is significant or that happens quickly is not normal. **As stated in the Code of Practice, old age is not itself a cause for weight loss. Owners need to make an effort to determine the cause of the weight loss and take corrective actions.**

Causes of weight loss in geriatrics:

- Underfeeding, giving feeds of insufficient nutritional content, or feeds too coarse for geriatrics
- Reduced feed intake (e.g. due to competition for feed)
- Inability to eat (e.g. due to dental conditions)
- Lack of appetite due to health conditions
- Increased nutrient requirements (e.g. due to health conditions)
- Parasitism (an infection with parasites)

Corrective actions for thin horses:

- Have a veterinarian do a full physical examination of the horse.
- Consult a nutritionist or veterinarian to develop a feed plan suitable for older horses.
- Increase the quantity of feed – provide forage containing high digestible energy and additional energy in the form of processed feeds that are easier to chew and digest
- Ensure geriatrics have good access to feed (they may not compete well if fed with younger, more aggressive horses)
  - Increase the number of feed locations
  - Increase the amount of feed space at any single feed location
  - Feed geriatrics separately or re-arrange the groups to minimize competition

Other tips:

- Regularly monitor the weight or body condition of your horses so corrections can be made before horses become too thin.
- Provide thin geriatrics with indoor shelter and/or extra bedding during cold temperatures (below 5°C). Geriatrics are more vulnerable to cold, damp weather especially if they are thin.

- ☑ During cold temperatures, horses need more feed (more forage or additional feeds such as concentrates).

### Relevant Requirements from the Equine Code of Practice

***Geriatric horses must receive a diet that is adequate for maintaining health and vigour.***

***For horses and ponies: corrective action must be taken at a BCS of 3 or lower and at a BCS of 8 or higher (on the 1-9 scale). \* Veterinary advice must be obtained if animals do not respond to the corrective action.***

***Veterinary advice must be obtained for geriatric equines that are emaciated (i.e. BCS of 1 or 2 out of 9 for horses; BCS of 1 out of 5 for donkeys and mules).***

***\*With the exception of horses in feedlots that are free from health conditions associated with obesity.***

### KEEP THE HORSE HEALTHY

As horses age, their immune system may become weaker making them more vulnerable to illness.

Preventing illness:

- ☑ Schedule regular preventative care veterinary visits.
- ☑ Ensure the horse is vaccinated and treated for parasites.
- ☑ Prevent disease by implementing biosecurity protocols that reduce the risk of introducing or spreading disease on the farm. A [brochure on biosecurity](#) is available from Horse Council British Columbia.

As horses age, they may have stiff or sore joints and will benefit from having a comfortable area to lie down with ample bedding. If you notice your horse is slower to rise in the stall:

- ☑ Ensure the footing offers good traction to assist the horse in rising.
- ☑ Ensure the horse has lots of room in the stall so they can get up with ease.

Geriatric horses may also lose muscle mass and be less able to do work they once did with ease. Despite these changes, it is important to ensure older horses have ample turnout time or opportunities for steady work or exercise **they are capable of doing**.

- ☑ Avoid strenuous or infrequent exercise or work – older horses are at higher risk of injury.
- ☑ A warm up and cool down period is also essential for geriatrics.

### Relevant Requirements from the Equine Code of Practice

***A parasite control program to prevent parasite related disease must be in place. This Requirement applies to internal and external parasites.***

***Lameness must be addressed either through specific therapies or changes in management or workload.***

***Horses that are sick, injured or in pain must receive appropriate treatment without delay or be euthanized without delay.***

***For sick, injured or compromised horses that are not showing improvement, horse owners or caregivers must, without delay, obtain veterinary advice on appropriate care and treatment or make arrangements for euthanasia.***

***Records or receipts for treatments provided must be available.***

## ADDRESS DENTAL PROBLEMS WITHOUT DELAY

Dental disease is more common in geriatric horses. Horse owners should routinely observe their older horses for signs of dental problems and ensure the horse is examined by a veterinarian at least once a year for dental problems.

Signs of dental problems in horses:

- Unexplained weight loss
- Reluctant or slow to eat
- Resistance to the bit or bridle due to pain
- Unusually high amounts of long fibres in the manure
- Unusual tilting of the head while chewing
- Quidding (dropping feed while chewing)
- Excessive drooling or slobbering
- Swelling in the cheeks or the upper or lower jaw
- Unpleasant odour from the mouth or nostrils

## Relevant Requirements from the Equine Code of Practice

***Horses showing signs of dental problems must be examined and treated.***

***Dental care procedures must only be performed by a veterinarian or competent individual working under direct veterinary supervision.***

## PLAN FOR EUTHANASIA

Discuss euthanasia with a veterinarian when a geriatric horse:

- Is enduring continuous or unmanageable pain from a condition that is chronic and incurable
- Has a disease or condition and the cost of treatment is prohibitive
- Cannot maintain a body condition score of 3 (out of 9) despite corrective action

**It is not acceptable to delay euthanasia for reasons of convenience or cost. When euthanasia is deemed necessary, it must be performed without delay, particularly in the case of a severe, traumatic injury. Leaving a suffering animal to die of natural causes (what is known as “letting nature take its course”) is not acceptable. It is also unwise to sell or give away a geriatric horse with specialised health care and dietary needs. These animals are at great risk of poor welfare .**

According to the Code of Practice, the following are the only acceptable methods for euthanasia of equines:

- Lethal injection administered by a veterinarian
- Free bullet deployed by a skilled individual
- Penetrating captive bolt deployed by a skilled individual (depending on the model used, a secondary step will be required).

## RELEVANT REQUIREMENTS FROM THE EQUINE CODE OF PRACTICE

***An acceptable method of euthanasia must be used.***

***Euthanasia must be performed by persons knowledgeable in the method used for equines.***

***Confirm unconsciousness immediately when it is safe to do so.***

***Have a secondary euthanasia step or method available.***

***Confirm death before moving or leaving the animal.***

***Consult Section 10 of the Code of Practice for other important information about euthanasia.***

# Horses Need Regular Hoof Care

## Key points from Canada's Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines

### STRATEGIES TO MAINTAIN THE HOOF HEALTH OF HORSES

Horses need regular trimming or shoeing as their hooves grow continuously (normal hoof growth in the adult horse is approximately 3/8 inch per month).



- ☑ Keep corrals clean, dry and free from mud
- ☑ Provide adequate nutrition and exercise
- ☑ Avoid extended use of hoof polishes
- ☑ Use hoof moisturizers or hoof hardeners as needed
- ☑ Clean out hooves regularly, ideally on a daily basis, and before exercise or riding
- ☑ Keep hooves free of defects through regular trimming and/or shoeing.

**The Code of Practice recommends that trimming or shoeing (which includes trimming and resetting) is done every 5-8 weeks or as needed for individual equines.**

Not all horses will need shoes – shoes are necessary when wear exceeds growth, or for correction of conformation or gait. While hoof trimming is often done by a farrier, all horse owners should have basic tools such as a hoof pick and a small, stiff brush to keep hooves clean.

### FINDING A FARRIER

Veterinarians or local horse associations may have suggestions regarding skilled farriers in your region. The Western Canadian Farrier's Association ([www.wcfa.ca](http://www.wcfa.ca)) provides a directory of farriers in any given region.

**Horse owners should make every effort to ensure their farrier is skilled and uses recognized techniques. Ask for references and look into their qualifications.**

Horse owners should budget for regular farrier care. **Remember: while there are costs associated with regular hoof care, these costs are far lower than the cost of addressing the problems that arise from neglected hooves. These problems include lameness, infection, injury, and reduced performance.**

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## FOOT PROBLEMS THAT AFFECT HORSES

Many foot problems affecting horses can be prevented through routine hoof care and ensuring horses have access to well-drained pasture and/or dry indoor footing.



**NOT COMPLIANT** with the Code of Practice – these hooves are **TOO LONG**. Hooves must be trimmed and/or shod as often as is necessary to maintain hooves in functional condition. Whether shod or unshod, hooves must not be allowed to grow to excessive lengths causing injury or discomfort to the horse.

Overgrown hooves can lead to lameness and cause the horse to be unbalanced which puts strain on their limbs. Overgrown hooves may also split, crack or chip. These can be significant issues for horse welfare – it takes a year to completely re-grow a damaged hoof.

### LAMINITIS (FOUNDER)

**What is it?** Laminitis is a serious condition that causes inflammation in the foot that may result in severe pain, abnormal foot growth and lameness. If untreated or if treatment is unsuccessful, laminitis can lead to permanent structural changes in the foot, gait abnormalities and continual or recurrent bouts of foot pain.

**The pain from laminitis can become severe enough to necessitate euthanasia on humane grounds.**

#### Signs of acute laminitis:

- lameness (including a cautious, stilted gait)
- increased heat in the feet and/or a bounding pulse in the feet (felt at the pastern or fetlock)
- shifting weight to the hind end and front feet stretched out
- reluctance to pick up the feet.

#### Prevention – the following strategies will reduce the risk of laminitis

- do not let horses get too fat - ensure they are at an ideal body condition score and are not overfed relative to their energy needs
- ensure any changes to the diet are gradual
- restrict at-risk horses from grazing on lush pasture (i.e. plentiful, bright green grass in spring or fall)
- store grains securely such that horses cannot gain access.

*Photo Credit:* Reprinted with permission from Dr. Grant Miller and the Center for Equine Health, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of California, Davis.



## **Treatment**

- ☑ Laminitis is a serious, life threatening disease that requires a variety of treatments, including pain control. Consult your veterinarian and farrier immediately if you think your horse has laminitis.

## **THRUSH**

**What is it?** A fungal infection of the hoof.

**Signs of thrush:** A foul odour and a black putty-like appearance of the frog (the frog is located at the heel of the foot and forms a “V” into the centre).

### **Prevention**

- ☑ Regularly clean the hooves (this prevents thrush by aerating the exposed area).
- ☑ Keep horses on well-drained pasture or paddocks/corrals
- ☑ Ensure horses in indoor facilities have dry footing, including dry, clean bedding – in particular, ensure urine and manure is removed regularly

### **Treatment**

- ☑ Ensure feet are cleaned and are allowed to dry daily.
- ☑ Apply a prepared thrush treatment (e.g. Kopper Kare) to the affected areas daily.
- ☑ Consult a farrier or veterinarian for advice in severe cases.

## **SOLE/HOOF ABSCESSSES**

**What are they?** An abscess is a localized infection in the horse’s hoof. Abscesses are a common problem in horses living in wet climates. Even a relative minor abscess is painful to the horse and can render a horse unable to walk.

**Signs:** Lameness, which may be sudden or severe. Horse owners or farriers might also notice a black spot on the sole where a crack or puncture is contaminated with muck. Clinical signs may include swelling of the lower leg, heat in the foot, and pus (the pus might be grey or black) draining from the coronary band or the sole.

### **Prevention:**

- ☑ Be proactive – practice good routine hoof care and management
- ☑ Keep horses on well-drained pasture or paddocks/corrals
- ☑ Ensure horses in indoor facilities have dry footing, including dry, clean bedding

### **Treatment**

- ☑ Apply a poultice or soak the foot in an Epsom salt or iodine solution to the foot to encourage abscess drainage.
- ☑ If the abscess is open and draining, ensure the hoof stays clean and dry and/or provide a protective bandage.
- ☑ Consult your farrier and/or your veterinarian.

## **WHITE LINE DISEASE**

**What is it?** This disease refers to hoof wall separation within the hoof’s non-pigmented layer. The cause of white line disease is poorly understood. The condition is more common in wet climates although it is also commonly seen when there is a change in moisture. Moisture (or lack of it) causes weakening of the hoof wall and this can cause the wall to break apart or separate. The crevice that forms allows bacteria or fungi to invade.

**Signs:** Early clinical signs include cracks visible in the hoof wall and a white or grey crumbly/powdery area along the junction between the hoof wall and sole. Early on, the horse might remain sound and show no discomfort. As the condition progresses, the horse may become lame and the hoof wall will be separated from the foot.

**Prevention:**

- ☑ Keep the horses feet as dry as possible
- ☑ Ensure your horse's feet are trimmed or shoes are reset regularly

**Treatment:**

- ☑ Consult a veterinarian or farrier skilled in addressing white line disease

**RELEVANT REQUIREMENTS FROM THE EQUINE CODE OF PRACTICE**

*Hooves must be trimmed and/or shod as often as is necessary to maintain hooves in functional condition. Whether shod or unshod, hooves must not be allowed to grow to excessive lengths causing injury or discomfort to the horse.*

*Lameness must be addressed either through specific therapies or changes in management or workload.*

*Horses with laminitis must receive appropriate lifelong management and treatment, which may include medications, dietary management and hoof care.*

*In muddy conditions horses must, at a minimum, have access to a mud-free, well-drained area in the pasture/yard on which to stand and lie down.*

*Ensure stalls are kept clean. Horses must be provided with a dry lying area. The area must also be of a design or texture that will not bruise, cut or otherwise injure the horse. Concrete or hard rubber mats without bedding are not acceptable surfaces.*

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# Skin Conditions that Affect Horses

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There are several skin conditions that affect horses – this factsheet focuses on skin conditions that affect horses in B.C.'s wet climate. The information provided in this factsheet is consistent with Canada's [Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines](#).

## PASTERN DERMATITIS (MUD FEVER, SCRATCHES, GREASE HEEL)

**What is it?** Pastern dermatitis is a painful condition that can spread quickly and lead to other problems such as lameness and swelling. Pastern Dermatitis is caused by a bacterial infection and/or fungi. In Draft horses, it can also be caused by parasites.

**Signs of pastern dermatitis:** Affected horses have reddened areas with scabbing and crusting in the pastern area of the leg (between the fetlock and top of the hoof). In more advanced cases, the infection can spread to include other areas of the lower leg. Signs of mud fever include lameness, swollen limbs and fever.

### Prevention

- Provide your horses with clean, dry footing
- During seasonal wet, muddy conditions, it is **essential** that horses have daily access to a dry area

### Treatment:

- Move the horse to a drier environment
- Consult a veterinarian promptly to get an accurate diagnosis
- Treat promptly according to the veterinarian's advice (this may include clipping, topical treatments, antibiotics and bandaging)
- The condition can spread to unaffected legs– be careful to dispose of contaminated cleaning materials
- Keep the affected area clean and dry
- Regularly check the other feet and legs to monitor for the spread of the disease

## RAIN SCALD (ALSO CALLED RAIN ROT)

**What is it?** Rain scald is a bacterial infection that enters the horse's skin through a cut or through water soaked skin. It is a very common skin condition in horses especially in wet conditions. Rain scald can also develop under blankets if there are leaks in the blanket or if the horse is sweating under the blanket. Although most often associated with wet conditions, the infections can start anytime there is damage to the outer layer of the horse's skin caused by barbed wire, insect bites, tack abrasion etc.

**Signs of rain scald:** In horses with this condition, you will see 'paint brush' tufts of hair loss and scabs that can appear anywhere on the horse. The raised hard crusts that appear on affected areas can be very painful to remove.

**Other key points to be aware of:** In severe cases, rain scald can lead to other infections. Rain scald can also make a horse more susceptible to wet and cold conditions – the loss of hair affects their ability to stay warm. In horses that are too thin (a body condition score of less than 4 out of 9) and in wet conditions, rain scald can have serious consequences for heat conservation and should be addressed without delay.

## Prevention:

- ☑ In wet conditions, provide horses with a dry (no mud), well-bedded shelter
- ☑ Maintain horses in good health and good body condition. According to the Code of Practice, a body condition score of 4 out of 9 is recommended for most horses.
- ☑ Ensure all facilities are free of protrusions or dangerous objects that may injure horses
- ☑ Ensure tack and equipment is maintained in good repair and fits the horse correctly –ill fitting equipment can cause skin sores or abrasions that can make horses vulnerable to skin infections

## Treatment

- ☑ Move the horse to a dry environment with overhead shelter, ample bedding and no mud
  - ☑ Remove crusts by gentle grooming and apply a topical antibacterial solution (e.g. Betadine)
- Consult a veterinarian – in severe cases, other treatments may be needed

## GROOMING IS IMPORTANT!

As stated in the equine Code of Practice, grooming is a good opportunity to inspect horses for injuries. Grooming also loosens dirt and mud, which can cause skin irritation and infections. If allowed to accumulate, dirt and mud can reduce the insulating effect of the hair coat in cold environments. Burdocks can cause significant discomfort or injury if left in the forelock, mane or tail and must be removed promptly. Debris (e.g. mud, burdocks) on the horse where the saddle and harness are placed or on the tack itself can cause injury and discomfort.

It is also important to inspect your horses for external parasites (e.g. lice and ticks) on a regular basis. Lice infestations are more common in geriatric horses and/or any horse with a weak immune system.

## RELEVANT REQUIREMENTS FROM THE EQUINE CODE OF PRACTICE

Following the requirements below will help you be compliant with Canada's equine Code of Practice and help prevent a number of skin conditions described in this factsheet.

***A parasite control program to prevent parasite related disease must be in place. This Requirement applies to internal and external parasites.***

***Horses must be free of debris where the saddle and harness are placed. The tack must also be free from debris before being placed on the horse.***

***Burdocks causing discomfort or injury must be removed without delay.***

***In muddy conditions, horses must, at a minimum, have access to a mud-free, well-drained area in the pasture/yard on which to stand and lie down.***

***If blankets are used, the condition of the horse beneath the blankets must be examined at least weekly.***

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