

## HEALTHY LAND HEALTHY HORSES SERIES

# POOR CONDITION

### WEEDS • PASTURES • HORSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

## POOR CONDITION

Poor condition in a horse can be caused by a number of inter-related factors. A balanced feeding, worming and exercise program will ensure your horse's good health. Chewed trees and rub marks on fences may be an indication of poor condition.

Many diseases can cause a horse to lose condition. Seek veterinary advice.

It is important to ensure your horse is grazing on good pastures and a significant part of keeping your horse healthy is learning to identify common weeds in both pastures and hays.

### Common causes

- Poor diet.
- Inadequate dental care
- A build up of intestinal parasites
- Lack of exercise.
- Plant toxicity

### Symptoms

- Lack of energy.
- Diarrhoea in some cases.
- Poverty marks in hind quarters.
- Dull coat and eyes.
- Weakness.
- Visibility of more than two ribs.

Some event horses and racehorses (or similar) need to be lean but should be energetic, have shiny coats and be in good condition.

### What to do

- Graze horses on good pasture and avoid paddocks dominated by bare patches, large grass clumps and heavy infestations of weeds. These are often referred to as 'horse-sick' pastures.
- Ensure adequate clean fresh water.
- Have manure samples tested at a veterinary laboratory for worm egg counts.
- Assess the nutritional needs of individual horses and ponies. Supplementary feeding may be necessary.
- Feed good quality hay which is green in colour and not yellow. Avoid hay with too many weeds and do not feed mouldy hay.
- If agisting, select a well managed property (brochure available).
- Develop a regular de-worming strategy suitable for your property. This may include cross-grazing (i.e. grazing other livestock after horses), manure management, isolation of new horses, chemical de-worming, slashing and improved hygiene in feeding areas. Reliance on chemical de-wormers alone is not enough.

**Seek veterinary advice if condition does not improve.**



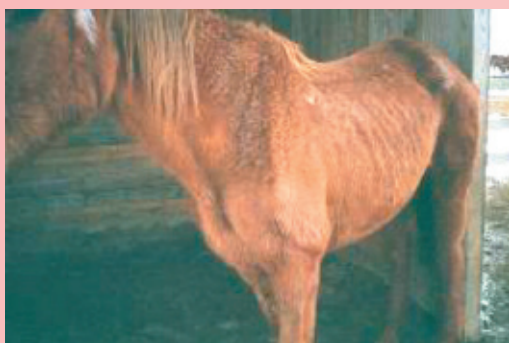
*Dull coat and loss of weight*

**A balanced diet, regular exercise and worming is the key to good condition.**

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*Poor condition*



*Good condition*

### Land Management

- Improve pasture quality (aim to have 70% grass and 30% clover):
  - soil test to determine suitable application rates of fertilizer and lime
  - lime acid soils in March – early April
  - control weeds and insect pests (seek professional advice)
  - rotationally graze paddocks (i.e. graze at 12cms and rest at 5cms)
  - do not overgraze (maintain 3cms in height and 70% ground cover at all times)
  - resow a perennial grass based pasture if necessary (seek professional advice)
- Cut hay from good pasture paddocks.
- Rest paddocks occasionally and allow grasses to set seed.

**Horse SA can assist horse owners to contact their local equine veterinarian or a specialist animal veterinarian.**

**Contact your local Animal and Plant Control Board for advice on weed problems.**

**The Mt Lofty Ranges Catchment Centre and Horse SA can advise horse owners of upcoming workshops, field days and land management courses. A range of good publications is available.**



**Mt Lofty Ranges Catchment Program**

Supported by Natural Heritage Trust

For more information, contact

**Mount Lofty Ranges Catchment Centre**

Phone (08) 8391 7500

or

**Horse SA**

Phone (08) 8294 2460



**HORSE FEDERATION  
of SOUTH AUSTRALIA**