

CONDITION SCORING AND WEIGHT ESTIMATION OF THE DONKEY

Keeping a regular record of your donkey's condition scores and estimated weight measurements can be very useful for monitoring their health and management.

For donkeys over 2 years of age their weight can be estimated using The Donkey Sanctuary's weight estimator. For donkeys less than 2 years of age, height cannot be used to help estimate the donkey's weight but the table at the bottom of the following page can be used instead. Please note that the estimator is not accurate for miniature or mammoth donkeys. In order to estimate your donkey's weight you will need to know their height and heart girth measurements (in centimetres).

MEASURING YOUR DONKEY

To measure your donkey's height, stand him/her on a hard level surface and measure from the ground up to the highest point of their withers. Once a donkey is over four years of age this measurement will only be required once and the same measurement can be used in future weight estimations. A height measuring stick is ideal but a broom handle marked at the height of the donkey's withers can be measured to give an accurate reading.

The heart girth measurement can be taken using an ordinary tailor's tape measure. The tape measure should pass around the bottom of the donkey's chest as far forward as possible and as close to the front legs as possible. The tape measure should cross the top of the donkeys back approximately 10 centimetres (a hands width) back from the withers. The front of the cross can be quite a good guide to the position of the withers. The tape should be pulled firmly but carefully around the donkey and the reading taken in centimetres.

The heart girth measurement should always be taken in the same location preferably by the same person to ensure a continuity of the measurements taken. Both height and heart girth measurements can then be marked on the weight estimation chart and the donkey's weight read off the centre scale by drawing a line between the two measurements.



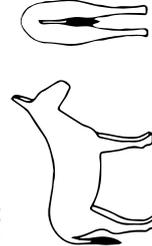
Measuring height (cm)



Measuring girth (cm)

DONKEY BODY CONDITION SCORE CHART

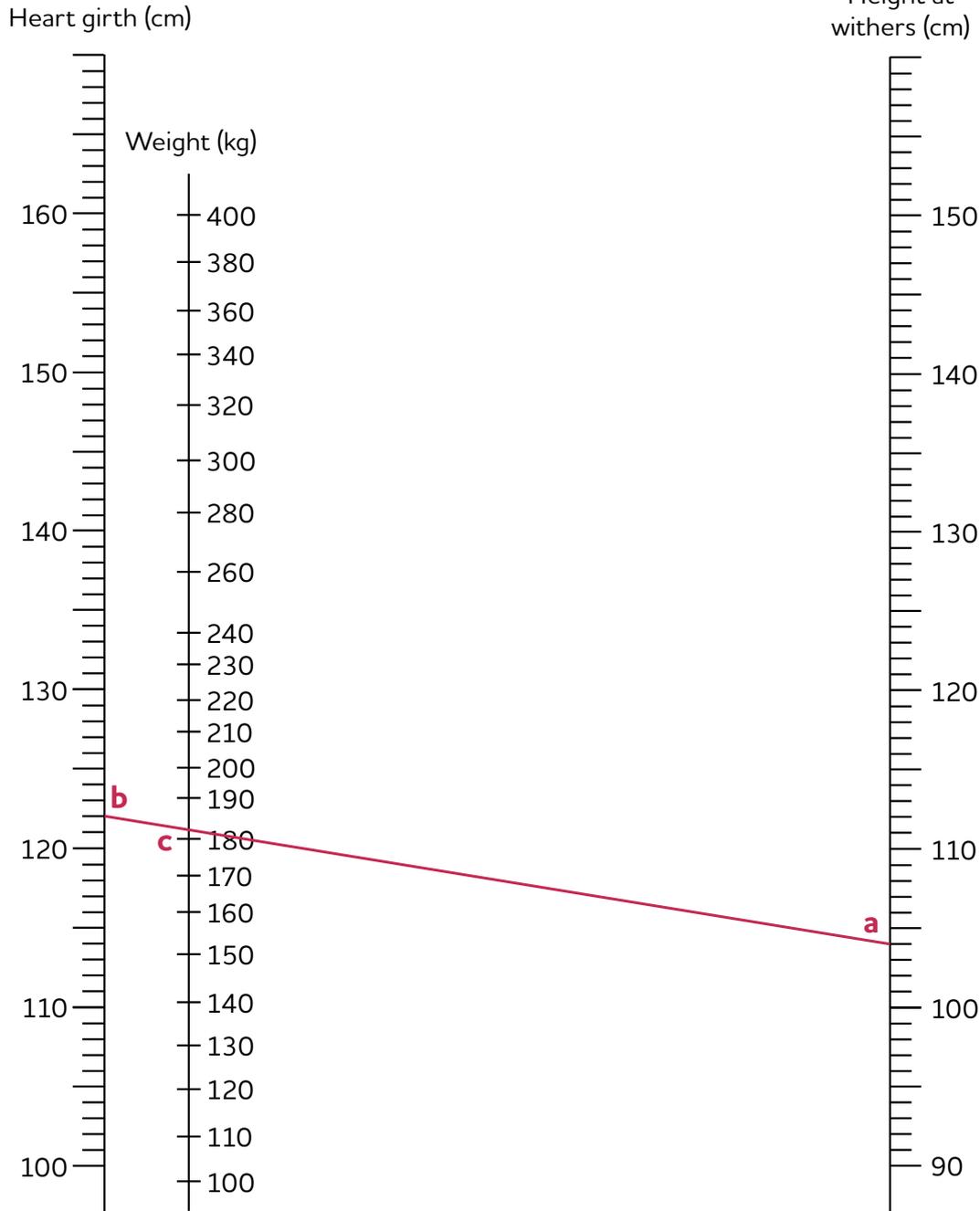
Accurate Body condition scoring is a hands-on process for feeling the amount of muscle and fat that are covering the donkey's bones. Using this chart as a guide, feel the coverage over the bones in five specific areas listed below. Fat deposits may be unevenly distributed especially over the neck and hindquarters. Some resistant fat deposits may be retained in the event of weight loss or may calcify (harden). Careful assessment of all areas should be made and combined, to give an overall score. When deciding on the correct course of action following condition scoring, you might have to take into consideration the age of the donkey and any veterinary conditions they have. Aged donkeys can be hard to condition score due to lack of muscle bulk and tone giving thin appearance dorsally with dropped belly ventrally, while overall condition may be reasonable. If in doubt, get advice from your vet.

Condition score	Neck and shoulders	Withers	Ribs and belly	Back and loins	Hindquarters
1. Poor (very thin) 	Neck thin, all bones easily felt. Neck meets shoulder abruptly, shoulder bones felt easily, angular.	Dorsal spine and withers prominent and easily felt.	Ribs can be seen from a distance and felt with ease. Belly tucked up.	Backbone prominent, can feel dorsal and transverse processes easily.	Hip bones visible and felt easily (dock and pin bones). Little muscle cover. May be cavity under tail.
2. Moderate (underweight) 	Some muscle development overlying bones. Slight step where neck meets shoulders.	Some cover over dorsal withers, spinous processes felt but not prominent.	Ribs not visible but can be felt with ease.	Dorsal and transverse processes felt with light pressure. Poor muscle development either side of midline.	Poor muscle cover on hindquarters, hip bones felt with ease.
3. Ideal 	Good muscle development, bones felt under light cover of muscle/fat. Neck flows smoothly into shoulder, which is rounded.	Good cover of muscle/ fat over dorsal spinous processes, withers flow smoothly into back.	Ribs just covered by light layer of fat/muscle, ribs can be felt with light pressure. Belly firm with good muscle tone and flattish outline.	Can feel individual spinous or transverse processes with pressure. Muscle development either side of midline is good.	Good muscle cover over hindquarters, hip bones rounded in appearance, can be felt with light pressure.
4. Overweight (fat) 	Neck thick, crest hard, shoulder covered in even fat layer.	Withers broad, bones felt with firm pressure.	Ribs dorsally only felt with firm pressure, ventral ribs may be felt more easily. Belly over developed.	Can only feel dorsal and transverse processes with firm pressure. May have slight crease along midline.	Hindquarters rounded, bones felt only with pressure. Fat deposits evenly placed.
5. Obese (very fat) 	Neck thick, crest bulging with fat and may fall to one side. Shoulder rounded and bulging with fat.	Withers broad, bones felt with firm pressure.	Large, often uneven fat deposits covering dorsal and possibly ventral aspect of ribs. Ribs not palpable dorsally. Belly pendulous in depth and width.	Back broad, difficult to feel individual spinous or transverse processes. More prominent crease along mid line fat pads on either side. Crease along midline bulging fat either side.	Cannot feel hip bones, fat may overhang either side of tail head, fat often uneven and bulging.

DONKEY WEIGHT ESTIMATOR

To estimate a donkey's weight using the diagram below mark the height and heart girth measurements on the correct axis. Then draw a line between the two. The donkey's weight is indicated by where the line crosses the weight axis. For example, a donkey 104cm tall (a) and with a heart girth 122cm (b) should weigh 181kg (c).

DONKEY WEIGHT ESTIMATOR



Whilst the weight estimator is an effective tool to estimate weight it's accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

Weight estimation table for donkeys under 2 years

Heart Girth (cm)	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
Weight (kg)	46	47	49	51	53	55	57	59	61	63	65	67	69	71	74	76	78	81	83	86	88	91	94	96	99	102