

NEGLECT

Neglect is the failure to provide adequate levels of food, water, shelter, and veterinary care to animals causing poor physical condition. Neglect can be deliberate or unintentional.

Neglect is far and away the most common issue animal authorities handle. Neglect involves a wide scope of situations with owner ignorance leading the way. Financial setbacks, apathy, and chemical dependency are next in line.

HOW TO IDENTIFY NEGLECT

As horse owners, we all have ideas on what the ideal situation for a horse looks like. Some owners prefer stalls and blankets while others prefer shelters and pastures. The problem with identifying neglect is that, the majority of the time, someone is calling a horse neglected based on their own ideals. Therefore, it is important that the playing field be leveled and everyone uses one or two methods of determining neglect.

Probably the best way to identify a neglected horse is with the Henneke Body Conditioning Scale. The Henneke Scale is a system of evaluating fat cover on equines based on a scale of 1 to 9. A horse falling into the range of 4-7 is considered acceptable with a body condition score of 5 being ideal. Horses with body condition scores of 1 and 2 are considered emaciated and those with scores of 8 and 9 are considered obese. [Click here for more information about using the Henneke Scale.](#) If you see a horse with a body condition score that is less than 3, it warrants further investigation.

Keep in mind that a lot of older horses and some suffering from chronic illness may struggle to maintain body condition. One skinny horse in a herd of several otherwise healthy horses is typically either old or suffering from a chronic condition. But it also could be a case of owners being unaware of herd dynamics and may need to make adjustments in the distribution of feed and/or the number of feed receptacles available to the herd.

However, a herd of horses with body condition scores below 3 is very concerning and requires further investigation. Sometimes it is a matter of educating the owner how to provide better care for the animals but, in the event that the owner is unwilling or unable to improve the conditions of the animal, reporting to an animal authority is required.

Another good way to assess neglect are using other indicators such as untended wounds/injuries, untended illnesses, non-weight-bearing lameness, trapped (stuck in fence, ditch, etc), and excessively long or curled hooves.

If you suspect neglect based on the above methods, report your observations to the local animal welfare authorities.

Sources: <https://savetheworldshorses.wordpress.com/horse-abuseneglect/>