

Fit and fat; a horse carer's perspective



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Introduction

- Equine obesity is an increasing problem
- Obesity is linked to many health problems, including laminitis (*Vick et al., 2007*)
- Horse carer is responsible for management regime of the horse.
- To change management we need to start with how horse carer's perceive, and gain knowledge



Aim

To examine the condition score and fitness levels of horses and ponies when diagnosed with laminitis, as reported by the horse carer.



Materials and Methods

- Online questionnaire
- Participants had to be familiar with animal diagnosed with laminitis in previous year.
- Condition score assessed using Carroll and Huntingdon's (1988) method.
- Fitness levels and work were categorised using detailed descriptions



Results

Condition Score	Unfit	Hacking fit	Fit for light competition	Very fit	Total
0 = very poor	2	1	0	2	5
1 = poor	5	5	4	3	17
2 = moderate	28	31	13	13	85
3 = good	57	116	54	35	262
4 = fat	62	72	16	14	164
5 = very fat	13	7	2	14	36
Total	167	232	89	81	569

- 34 % reported as fat or very fat
- 29% appeared to have fitness inconsistent with work
- Horses were both very fit and very fat!



Conclusions

- Horses were categorised as very fit and very fat.
- There was a mismatch of work and fitness rating, even with a detailed description.
- The horse carer's perceptions is an under-explored area
 - How is information transmitted?
 - How do people measure fitness?