

How to estimate your horse's weight

Knowing your horse's weight can be very helpful, for instance, to calculate feed rations or to know how much of a treatment or anthelmintic wormer to administer. Regular weight estimation will help you to keep your horse or pony at the correct weight and alert you if his weight begins to creep up. There are several ways of calculating a horse's approximate weight.

Weigh tapes

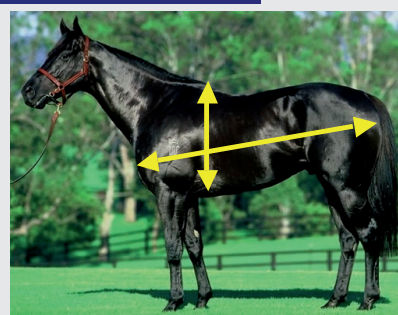
Probably the most common method people use to estimate horse's weight is to use a height/weight tape. To use one of these tapes you simply put the tape around the horse's girth and read the estimated weight on the tape. Weigh tapes offer a simple and practical solution. They are about 90% accurate, although you can get great variation on the reading, depending on where you place the tape and how the horse is standing. It is important to make sure that your horse is standing square and on a level surface. His head should be in a normal position and he should be relaxed. The tape should be dropped over the lowest part of your horse's withers and should pass underneath him as close to his front legs as possible. It should naturally follow a slightly angled line. The tape should be firm but not so tight that it causes an indent in the horse's flesh. The height of the horse is also an important variable. Weigh tapes that are calibrated to take into account the horse's height provide an improved estimate of equine bodyweight.

Calculation

• First method

The first possible way to estimate a horse's weight is to use a «regular» tape measure, to measure a horse's girth and length.

- Measure horse from point of shoulder to point of croup (length of horse).
- Measure horse's circumference or heartgirth : starting about 4 inches (10 cm) behind his front leg at the girth area, up over the highest point of his withers and around his barrel.
- Calculate weight by the following:
 - Measurement in inches : **Weight (pounds) = [(heartgirth)² x length/300] + 50**
 - Measurement in centimetres : **Weight (kg) = [(heartgirth)² x length] x 1/11 877**



• Second method (INRA, France)

The second way to estimate a horse's weight is to use a tape measure and a height gauge to make measurements in centimetres, with a horse standing square and on a level surface. It gives the weight at +/- 25 kg.

Breeds types	Horses categories	a	b	c	Calculations
Light horse	Broodmare	5,2	2,6	-855	5,2 HG + 2,6 WH - 855
Light horse	Trained horse	4,3	3	-785	4,3 HG + 3 WH - 785
Draft horse	Mare and stallion	7,3	0	-800	7,3 HG - 800
Every horse	Growing horse (6months-4 years)	4,5	0	-370	4,5 HG - 370

- Measure the horse's withers height (WH) with the height gauge
- Measure horse's circumference or heartgirth (HG) : starting about 4 inches (10 cm) behind his front leg at the girth area, up over the highest point of his withers and around his barrel.
- Calculate weight by the following : **Weight (kg) = a x HG + b x WH + c**

For the foals, another calculation is more precise, with A = age in days :

- Males : **Weight (kg) = 0,2 A + 2,15 HG + 1,72 WH - 327**
- Females : **Weight (kg) = 0,21 A + 2,01 HG + 1,85 WH - 330,2**

Weighing platforms

The use of weighing platforms is the only true means of obtaining a horse's accurate weight. There are many types of weighing platforms commercially available, with varying degrees of accuracy and cost. Most weighing platforms have been designed for weighing cattle and will need some modification for use with horses. Adequate safeguards should be taken with weighing platforms to ensure the safety of horses. Sharp edges, and areas where feet and legs may get caught, should be eliminated. The noise level of metal platforms often causes problems with horses. This can be overcome by laying rubber matting over the platform.