

## ***HOW MUCH DOES YOUR HORSE OR PONY WEIGH?***

With medications, correct dosage is essential. Never underdose. Cattle scales are one method for weighing your horse or the local weighbridge is another. Where these options are not available one method for estimating weight is a weight tape or by the use of an ordinary tapes measurements being placed into a formula.

Weight tapes are easy to use and if they are used in a consistent manner by the same operator they can be used effectively for monitoring purposes. They give an estimation of the weight of the horse, but depending upon a number of factors including breed, conformation, fitness etc, their accuracy can vary.

When the horse is standing square, the weigh tape should be dropped over the horses belly from the base of his withers and brought underneath him just behind his elbow and foreleg. The reading should be taken where the tape joins the tape (or in some cases from the point of arrow) and will either represent his weight in kgs or lbs. If the angle where the tape to tape joins forms a vertical line, your tape has been brought too far back producing an inaccurate reading. You want to aim for a slightly back slash angled line (/).

Weight tapes are an unsuitable method of accurate weight estimation in pregnant mares. Using a weighbridge in these circumstances may be the only suitable method to take full account of the foetus and foetal fluids. In the same way, estimating the weight of a horse with unusual conformation or one that is very fit / unfit may be extremely difficult. Weight tapes tend to be more accurate when used on a horse of average (ideal / good) condition score. If the horse has either a lower or higher condition score then it is likely that the weight tape will reflect this either by an under or over estimation. A high fibre diet, especially if it is of a poor nutritional quality, can result in an increase in the hind gut and a 'hay belly' which can lead to an increase in bodyweight, which may not be fully allowed for when using this method of weight estimation.

Using a weight formula can be even more accurate when compared to the weight tape method. As with the weight tape you must make sure that your horse is standing square and then using an ordinary measuring tape measure the girth as described. Note this reading in cms. For the formula used here the next step is to measure from the point of shoulder to the point of buttock. The tape should either follow the contours of the horses body for this measurement or simply be held taut and in place from one point to the next.

Whichever method you choose a suggestion would be to ensure that you remain regular and consistent each time you measure as recommended by a particular tape and/or weighing formula. You will be able to monitor changes in your horse by following a set procedure which, as mentioned earlier, can be used as an indicator of good or ill health. So, having decided upon your methodology, note this measurement (in cm) and insert your readings into the calculations below:

- i. Girth<sup>2</sup> (cm) (Measured on an angle as with the weigh tapes, see plate 2).
- ii. Times the answer of point i) (Girth<sup>2</sup>) by the body length from point of shoulder (pos) to point of buttock (pob) (cm) = Length.
- iii. Divide the answer of point ii) by 11,877 to achieve an accurate estimation of your horses body weight i.e.

$$\text{Weight (kg)} = \frac{(\text{Girth})^2 \times \text{Length}}{11,877}$$