



Stable Weight:

Scales are an Integral Component of Equine Health

Dr. Abigail Mickelson, DVM, and Dr. Ed Metcalf, DVM, rely on a recently installed Rice Lake animal scale and digital weight indicator to weigh equine patients.

Medically evaluating and caring for horses is a challenging profession. Veterinarians must rely on training, experience, intuition and experience to correctly monitor, diagnose and treat horses of all breeds and ages. Although a variety of physical equipment is also utilized, one device is of the utmost importance: an accurate weighing system. However, it is often overlooked in the industry. At Leading Edge Veterinary Services in Springbrook, Wisconsin, large animal veterinarians Dr. Abigail Mickelson, DVM, and Dr. Ed Metcalf, DVM, rely on a recently installed Rice Lake animal scale and digital weight indicator to weigh equine patients.

Dr. Mickelson explains the importance of weight as it relates to animal wellness. "There are a number of health issues associated with obesity in horses, aside from the typical orthopedic problems. One of the major diseases that has a direct correlation to obesity is equine metabolic syndrome [EMS]. When EMS is present, horses will have excessive fat deposits which are not stagnant. Rather, these deposits are metabolically active and eventually lead to laminitis. The worst part is the pain factor for these horses. Unlike humans, we cannot put them in a wheelchair. Laminitis is typically and unfortunately the end of the line."

HEADQUARTERS

230 West Coleman Street
Rice Lake, Wisconsin 54868 - USA
Tel: (715) 234 9171 | Fax: (715) 234 6967
www.ricelake.com

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Dr. Abigail Mickelson, DVM, Leading Edge Veterinary Services



Weight gain is typically gradual and can go unnoticed by horse owners. Therefore, it is important to maintain regular veterinary checkups because a doctor who is familiar with an animal will recognize changes in weight. “I notice it,” says Dr. Mickelson. “The owner might think their horse looks great or sometimes they use other horses on the farm, who are also overweight, as a comparison. In these scenarios, they are often shocked when I show them the scale readout and it is 20-30% higher than their estimation. This is why an accurate equine scale, because it is objective and scientific, is essential to confirm weight gain and convince owners to take action.”

For hospitalized animals, leveraging the advantages of a scale is equally if not more important than regular weight monitoring. To properly determine medication dosage, an accurate weight is essential. In critical settings when an IV is

needed, calculating equine prescriptions is based on the horse’s weight. A scale with greater than one-pound precision is recommended for these applications.

Durability and repeatability are additional factors that should be considered when choosing an equine scale. A weighing system may be accurate when initially installed but fall out of tolerance as it is used. After all, horses are not always well-behaved during the weighing process—especially when they are not feeling well. Selecting a scale that can handle reluctant patients’ antics, including hoof stomps, and still deliver consistent, stable weights is key for long-term use. Hermetically sealed load cells are ideal so the system can be washed down without damage. Regular inspections and calibrations should also be performed by a local, authorized scale service technician.

For Leading Edge Veterinary Services, Rice Lake’s RoughDeck® EQ equine scale perfectly complements their recently built cutting-edge facility. Prior to 2020, they focused on ambulatory care and worked primarily from a farm. Having a centralized building rather than performing the bulk of services in the field allows their doctors to deliver a higher quality of care for animals throughout northwest Wisconsin. In addition to a veterinary center, the location is home to stables and an arena for equine events.

With all these services onsite, Leading Edge Veterinary Services has separated themselves from the pack in terms of premier animal care and services. By implementing the latest technology, they have ensured the company will be a front-runner for years to come.