

The AAEP Lameness Scale

Assessing lameness is very challenging and requires the correct tools and training so a veterinarian can make a diagnosis. It is not up to the groom to even attempt to diagnose lameness, but rather to recognize when the horse is not moving normally and then report this to your veterinarian.

The American Association of Equine Practitioners has developed a “Lameness Scale” to help describe lameness, as follows:

- 0 – Lameness is not perceptible under any circumstances.
- 1 – Lameness is difficult to observe and is not consistently apparent, regardless of circumstances (e.g., weight carrying, circling, inclines, hard surface, etc.).
- 2 – Lameness is difficult to observe at a walk or when trotting in a straight line but consistently apparent under certain circumstances (e.g., weight carrying, circling, inclines, hard surface, etc.).
- 3 – Lameness is consistently observable at a trot under all circumstances.
- 4 – Lameness is obvious at a walk
- 5 – Lameness produces minimal weight bearing in motion and/or at rest or a complete inability to move.

If you are asked to assist the veterinarian, listen carefully and watch, as this is an opportunity to learn more. The veterinarian may ask you to trot the horse down the path or aisle, then turn and trot back as part of the assessment. The veterinarian may also need your assistance to hold the horse safely while the diagnostic procedures are being used. Be prepared to help as requested by the owner of the horse, your mentor and/or the attending veterinarian.