







# Weighing to the Rescue for Horse Rehabilitation

After years of using a weight tape, Rice Lake's RoughDeck® EQ equine floor scale and weight indicator transformed health processes for the Maine State Society for the Protection of Animals.

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—PEG KEYSER,  
Advancement Director, MSSPA

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The Maine State Society for the Protection of Animals (MSSPA) rescues and rehabilitates abused and neglected equines. With hundreds of horses rescued, their services are integral to the equine community in Maine and beyond. Many horses arrive severely malnourished and underweight, and each horse is placed on an individualized re-feeding program to improve health. Key to this re-feeding is accurately tracking horses' weight. This was especially difficult without an accurate scale, which was the MSSPA's situation until a generous donation from Maine Scale in Auburn, Maine, USA, revolutionized their intake and



*Violet was one of the horses rehabilitating at the MSSPA farm. She recovered from malnutrition thanks to the team's careful treatment.*



health-monitoring process with Rice Lake's equine floor scale and weight indicator.

Founded in 1872 to protect working horses, which pulled carriages and fire engines for the city of Portland, Maine, the MSSPA farm sits on 124 acres in the nearby, rural town of South Windham, on the River Road. The nonprofit horse farm offers onsite veterinary care and services critical to rehabilitate horses in need.

Often, these animals are seized by Maine law enforcement (Animal Control Officers and District Humane Agents)—rescued from abusive and/or neglectful homes

and brought to the farm for healing and, hopefully, future adoption. The MSSPA is a private, nonprofit organization operated by a team of employees and dedicated volunteers, investing over 10,000 hours per year to keep the farm running strong. In order to provide the best medical care for neglected horses, however, more than hard work was needed.

"We had been using a weight tape for our intake and monitoring processes for years," explains Peg Keyser, advancement director for the MSSPA. "It's like a flexible tape measure but instead of reading

inches or centimeters, it is marked in pounds or kilograms. By wrapping it around a horse's belly, we were able to calculate weight based on the diameter." However, this process does not take into account the important factors of muscle density and body fat distribution, leading to inaccuracies up to 20%.

"We knew using the weight tape wasn't good enough for accurate veterinary care, especially when it came to medication dosing," Peg continues, "When a horse arrives here, they typically don't come with any information. They are like a puzzle, and weight is one of the biggest pieces needed to solve the puzzle. Before any training can take place, a horse's weight and optimum health needs to be in a good place."

Identifying the need for a scale, the MSSPA set about writing a grant proposal to make the purchase and Peg began researching scales. She found the RoughDeck EQ equine floor scale and, after contacting Rice Lake Weighing Systems for more information, got in touch with Maine Scale, the local scale dealer. Peg reached out to Maine Scale to figure out the cost of the scale, shipping and delivery, so she could put the grant application together.

Tom Boughter, owner of Maine Scale, took immediate interest because of the noble cause as well as a personal reason—his wife, Marcy, happens to love horses. After learning more about the MSSPA's mission, Tom felt compelled to help. "After a long conversation, where Tom asked so many good questions about the work that we do here at the farm, he said to me, 'Well, Peg, you're going to have to write that grant for something else, because Maine Scale is going to donate the scale to the MSSPA.'" Not only would he coordinate the purchase and installation, he would provide it at no cost. "I was stunned," Peg remembers. "Tom's generosity was amazing! Receiving the scale was like Christmas morning, and we put it to use immediately."



The barn staff and attending veterinary staff are thrilled with the change. With fast, accurate weights, they are now able to prescribe proper amounts of feed and, when necessary, medication. Rehabilitation progress is often tracked through healthy weight gains, some of which were too minor to be reflected on a weight tape. With the precision of a digital readout, even the most minute improvements can be identified and tracked. "I can't believe we went so long without a scale," Peg concluded. "It's been a game-changer and is one of our most essential tools. We could never go back, and we are SO grateful to Maine Scale!"

Not only are the new, accurate weight readings appreciated by the MSSPA, safety is also improved. Abused animals often get nervous when close to a new human, warranted by their history of negative experiences. Wrapping a weight tape around the horse's belly was not always accepted by the animal in a calm manner—putting the employee at risk. Walking the horse onto the scale is an easily achievable objective, much appreciated by the MSSPA's staff.

Rehabilitation can be a long process, and, once accomplished, a horse becomes eligible for adoption. "We can get really attached to these horses," Peg says. "Bringing them back from their initial condition and seeing them recover, begin to trust people again and eventually thrive...it forms a bond. When they leave for a new home, you might think it's a sad day but it's actually the best day because it means they've made it. They're going to have a good life."

With the scale in frequent use, the RoughDeck EQ has also found its home at the MSSPA. This gift from Maine Scale is not only appreciated, it makes a measurable difference in abused horses' lives and the people who care for them. As their mission continues to grow, the MSSPA's facilities are also expanding. An indoor training facility and visitor's center was constructed in 2018, and soon, they hope to build a new barn for quarantined animals—equipped with a second RoughDeck EQ scale.

## The Standard in Equine Weighing

### Challenge:

*The Maine State Society for the Protection of Animals needed to track weights when creating health plans for malnourished horses. While weight tape was used in the past, it didn't account for muscle density or body fat distribution.*

### Solution:

*Rice Lake's RoughDeck EQ equine floor scale can track even small changes in a horse's weight. Since the weight tape made horses nervous, the scale was a safer, more accurate solution that became an essential component in MSSPA's rehabilitation process.*

**RoughDeck® EQ equine floor scale**

**482 Legend® Series digital weight indicator**



For more information on the MSSPA or to become a "horse hero," scan the QR code or visit [www.msspa.org](http://www.msspa.org).

