Body Condition Scoring

Ag 240
Beef Cattle

Body condition Score (BCS)

- A practical method for assessing the effectiveness of existing feeding programs

- Want replacement heifers to be 65% of mature weight at breeding
BCS

- Scale is 1 to 9 (emaciated to obese)
- Determined by observation and touch and should be recorded twice per year
  - Calving
  - Pregnancy checking in the fall
Ideal BCS:

- 1st calf heifers 5.5 - 6 at calving
- Mature cows 5- 6 at calving
Body Condition Scoring of Beef Cattle
1. ..........................  
2. ..........................  
3. ..........................  
4. ..........................  
5. ..........................  
6. ..........................  
7. ..........................  
8. ..........................  
9. ..........................  
emaciated  
very thin  
thin  
borderline  
moderate  
good  
fleshy  
fat  
extremely fat
HIGHER SCORE \[=\] FATTER COW

- Short Rib
- Tail Head
- Fat Cover
- Hide
- Spine
- Short Ribs
- Eye Muscle
- Thumb Pressure
Effect of Condition Score on Body Fat, lbs

Cow Condition Score

3: 67
5: 157
7: 275
Relationship between Condition Score and Calving Interval

Calving Interval

Condition Score

Ideal Target?

365 day Interval
Body Condition Scoring

1 = Emaciated
2 = Poor
3 = Thin

4 = Borderline
5 = Moderate
6 = Good
7 = Very Good

8 = Fat
9 = Obese

Thin
Ideal
Fat
Condition Scores

3  5  7
BCS 7
Sheep
Body Condition Scoring

- Range from 1 - 5
  - Extremely emaciated to Extremely fat
BCS 1

- Backbone is prominent and sharp
- Shortrib ends are sharp and easy to press between, over and around

Source: Agriculture Western Australia web site
www.agric.gov.wa.au
BCS 2

- Backbone is prominent but smooth
- Shortribs are smooth well-rounded ends - can feel between, over and around each smoothly

Source: Agriculture Western Australia web site
www.agric.gov.wa.au
BCS 3

- Backbone can be felt but smooth and rounded
- Shortrib ends are smooth and well covered - firm pressure necessary to feel under and between short ribs

Source: Agriculture Western Australia web site
www.agric.gov.wa.au
• Backbone is detectable with pressure on the thumb
• Individual short ribs can only be felt with firm pressure

Source: Agriculture Western Australia web site
www.agric.gov.wa.au
BCS 5

- Backbone can be felt with firm pressure
- Shortribs cannot be felt even with firm pressure

Source: Agriculture Western Australia web site
www.agric.gov.wa.au
Body Condition Scoring

- Can also monitor weight
  - Ewe should lose 5-7% of her body weight during lactation
  - Recover it after weaning and then gain weight during gestation
Horses

Body Condition Scoring

- Range from 1 - 9
  - Extremely emaciated to Extremely fat
BCS 1

- **Emaciated**
- Bony structures of neck, shoulders and withers easily noticeable
- No fatty tissue can be felt.

BCS 2

- Very Thin
- Bony structures of the neck, shoulders and withers are faintly discernible.
- Spinous processes, ribs, topline, point of hip and buttock are prominent.
- Noticeable space between inner buttocks.

BCS 3

- Thin
- Neck, withers and shoulder are accentuated, but not obviously thin.
- Tailhead is prominent. Slight fat cover over ribs, but still easily discernible.
- Twist is filled in, but without noticeable deposition of fatty tissue

BCS 6

- Moderately Fleshy
- Fat beginning to be deposited along the neck, withers and shoulders.
- Fat over the ribs beginning to feel spongy, ribs cannot easily be felt.
- Noticeable fat deposition between buttocks

BCS 8

- **Fat**
  - Area along withers is filled with fat, area behind shoulder is filled in flush with body.
  - Ribs cannot be felt
  - Significant fat deposited along inner buttocks.

BCS 9

- Extremely Fat
- Bulging fat along neck, shoulders and withers. Flank is filled in flush. Patchy fat appearing over ribs, obvious positive crease down back.
- Obvious fat deposited along inner buttocks.

Web source for Body Condition Scoring Information for all species

- http://vetgate.ac.uk/browse/cabi/detail/70bbf1fed14af3d881391cbac69ed77.html