

Animal Care



Quick Guide to Body Condition Scoring

Body Condition Score (BCS) is a tool for determining if an animal is too thin, too fat or in ideal condition. BCS charts range from 1 (emaciated) to 5 (fat).

- ❖ Assess body condition of the animal to determine if the animal is:
 - Too thin or requires corrective action (BCS ≤ 2)
 - Acceptable (BCS >2)
- ❖ Two resources:
 - BCS Flowchart in Figure 1. The grey cells highlight the parameter that has changed between scores
 - Body Condition Scoring Chart in Figure 2

Figure 1: BCS Flowchart

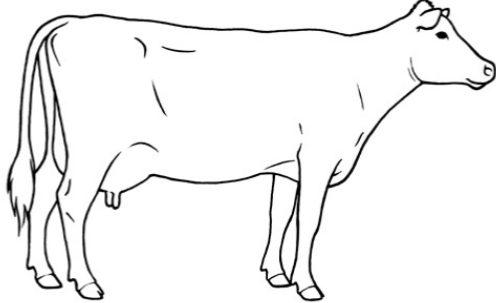
| | ← Acceptable → | | | | ← Requires corrective action → | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|--|--|
| BCS | 3.0 | 2.75 | 2.5 | 2.25 | 2.0 | < 2.0 |
| Pelvic area | V | V | V | V | V | V |
| Hook bones | rounded | angular | angular | angular | angular | angular |
| Pin bones | padded | padded | angular, fat palpable | angular, no fat palpable | angular, no fat palpable | angular, no fat palpable |
| Ribs | corrugations non visible | corrugations non visible | corrugations non visible | corrugations visible 1/2 way between tips and short ribs | corrugations visible 3/4 way between tips and short ribs | corrugations visible 3/4 way between tips and short ribs |
| | | | | | thurl non prominent | thurl prominent |

Source: Vasseur E., J. Gibbons, J. Rushen, A. M. de Passillé, 2014. *Development and implementation of a training program to ensure high repeatability of body condition score of dairy cows.* J. Dairy Sci. 96:4725-4737.

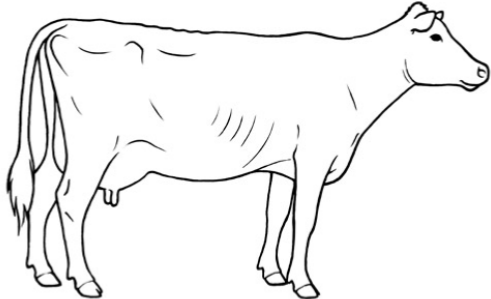
Figure 2: Body Condition Scoring Chart – only showing Scores 2 and 3

Note: for a description of all 5 Body Condition Scores, please refer to Appendix E of the Code of Practice or to Appendix II of the proAction[®] Reference Manual.

Acceptable

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>BCS 3</p> <p>SHORT RIBS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ends can be felt with moderate pressure • Ribs appear smooth without noticeable scalloping • Overhanging shelf effect much less apparent <p>BACKBONE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertebrae in chine, loin and rump area appear rounded • Backbone visible, but individual vertebrae not distinct <p>HOOK AND PIN BONES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible, but smooth, with rounded appearance • Fat pad palpable <p>THURL (area over pelvis):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms “U shaped” depression <p>TAIL HEAD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both sides of tail head somewhat hollow, but skin folds not distinct • Ligaments connecting pin bones to spine are rounded in appearance |  |
|---|---|

Requires corrective action

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>BCS 2</p> <p>SHORT RIBS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ends not as prominent as BCS 1, but can be felt • Edges easily felt, with slight fat cover, and slightly more rounded appearance • Overhanging shelf effect less apparent <p>BACKBONE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertebrae in chine, loin and rump area, less visually distinct • Easily feel individual vertebrae <p>HOOK AND PIN BONES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bones still prominent, angular • No fat pad palpable <p>THURL (area over pelvis):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less severe “V shaped” depression • Little tissue cover <p>TAIL HEAD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both sides of the tail head are sunken and hollow • Sharply defined ligaments connecting pin bones to spine |  |
|---|--|

Source: excerpt from Appendix E of the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle, 2009.