Body Condition Record Book

What is body condition scoring?

Body condition scoring (BCS) is a management tool used to evaluate the nutritional needs of cows based on observed differences in body fat. Ultimately, it is the best indicator of an operation's ability to meet herd requirements with available resources. A scoring system of 1 (extremely thin) to 9 (obese) has been developed for U.S. beef cows. A body condition score of 5 to 6 represents optimum body condition.

Research shows a link between cow body condition and reproductive performance. To rebreed in a timely manner, mature cows should calve in a body condition of 5 or greater. The target BCS at calving for first-calf heifers is 6 because additional nutrients are required for growth.

You can judge a cow's body condition by feeling the fat cover over the ribs and spine. Learning to evaluate animals visually, without handling, allows you to score body condition anytime.

How to use this tool

Keep this booklet handy to record body condition scores throughout the year. Referring to the scoring guidelines on page 20, place a mark for each animal in the appropriate category as shown. Include the date the score was taken.

When you're done, count the marks and follow these steps to determine the average. If you prefer, you can transfer the BCS totals to the group summary sheets on pages 16-18 to help perform the calculation.

Key times to evaluate body condition are at weaning, 90 days before calving, calving, and breeding. Note changes during summer grazing to determine the best time to wean.

Date __Oct. 15__

BCS   Group ID __South Pasture__

≤ 3 ~~||||~~ $5 \times 3 = 15$

4 ~~||||~~ ~~||||~~ ~~||||~~ ~~||||~~
~~||||~~ ~~||||~~ ~~||||~~ ~~||||~~ $40 \times 4 = 160$

5 ~~||||~~ ~~||||~~ ~~||||~~
~~||||~~ ~~||||~~ ~~||||~~ ~~||||~~ $35 \times 5 = 175$

6 ~~||||~~ ~~||||~~ ~~||||~~ $15 \times 6 = 90$

≥ 7 ~~||||~~ $5 \times 7 = 35$

$15 + 160 + 175 + 90 + 35 = 475$
$475/100 \text{ cows} = 4.75 \text{ average BCS}$

Date _____

Group ID _____

≤ 3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

≥ 7 _____

Date _____

Group ID _____

≤ 3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

≥ 7 _____

Date_____

Group ID_____

≤ 3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

≥ 7 _____

Date _____

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Group ID _____

≤ 3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

≥ 7 _____

12

Date _____

Group ID _____

≤ 3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

≥ 7 _____

Date_____

Group ID_____

≤ 3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

≥ 7 _____

Date_____

Group ID_____

≤ 3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

≥ 7 _____

Calculating the Average

Referring to the tally sheets, multiply the number of animals you counted in each category by the BCS. Enter results in the group summary as shown below. Add these figures and divide the sum by the total head count. This is the average BCS for the group.

Group Summary Example

Group ID   South Pasture

Date	≤3	4	5	6	≥7	Total	Avg
10/15							
Count	5	40	35	15	5	100	
Count x BCS	15	160	175	90	35	475	4.75

Group Summary

Group ID

Date	≤3	BCS 4	5	6	≥7	Total	Avg

Group ID

Date	≤3	BCS 4	5	6	≥7	Total	Avg

Group Summary

Group ID

Date	≤3	4	5	6	≥7	Total	Avg

Group ID

Date	≤3	4	5	6	≥7	Total	Avg

Notes

Body Condition Scoring Guidelines for Cattle

	BCS	Spine	Ribs	Hooks/Pins	Tailhead	Brisket	Muscling
Thin	1	Visible	Visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	None/atrophy
	2	Visible	Visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	None/atrophy
Borderline	3	Visible	Visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	None
	4	Slightly visible	Foreribs visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	Full
Optimum Condition	5	Not visible	1 or 2 may be visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	Full
	6	Not visible	Not visible	Visible	Some fat	Some fat	Full
Over-Conditioned	7	Not visible	Not visible	Slightly visible	Some fat	Fat	Full
	8	Not visible	Not visible	Not visible	Abundant fat	Abundant fat	Full
	9	Not visible	Not visible	Not visible	Extremely fat	Extremely fat	Full

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