

# Body condition scoring (BCS)



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## How to body condition score (BSC) your herd

In general:

- Score your herd at each of the four key points: calving, 60 days post-calving, 100 days before drying off and at drying off
- Assess the angle between the hooks and pins

## Key benefits of scoring

- A practical means of assessing body fat reserves throughout lactation
- Accurately assigning BCS can help to assess the impact of negative energy balance in early lactation
- Routine scoring is key so that BCS trends can be monitored to identify problems earlier – the change in BCS is more important than the score itself
- Herd nutrition can be fine-tuned
- Provision of figures for benchmarking performance

For a more detailed description on how to accurately BCS, use the associated BCS factsheet which has labeled diagrams for extra information. Record the BCS results for your herd in this recording pad.



V – angle has a BCS less than or equal to 3.

## For a BCS less than or equal to 3

1. Standing at the rear of the cow, assess whether the hooks are rounded or angular.
2. Refine the score '2.75 or less' by evaluating the pins.
3. Feel the pins to assess the presence of a palpable fat pad (one that is not visible to the eye but can be felt) to refine the score of '2.5 or less'.
4. Evaluate the visibility of the short ribs. Look for the bony ridges of the short ribs, and estimate the distance that these ridges are easily seen from the tip of the short ribs to the spine.
5. Cows with sawtooth spine and ribs are severely underconditioned and will score less than 2.0.



U – angle has a BCS greater than 3.

## For a BCS greater than 3

1. Standing at the rear of the cow, assess whether the sacral and tailhead ligaments are fully visible.
2. Continue to assess the visibility of the ligaments.
3. Assess the visibility of the sacral ligament to determine the score of 3.75 or 4.0 or more.

# Body condition score (BCS) record

## At calving (target 2.5–3.0)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ BCS recorded by: \_\_\_\_\_

Cow ID	Previous score	1	1.25	1.5	1.75	2	2.25	2.5	2.75	3	3.25	3.5	3.75	4	4.25	4.5	4.75	5	Score	

Total  
Average  
(total ÷ number of cows scored)  
Change from previous (+/-)

## 60 days post-calving (target 2.0–2.5)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ BCS recorded by: \_\_\_\_\_

Cow ID	Previous score	1	1.25	1.5	1.75	2	2.25	2.5	2.75	3	3.25	3.5	3.75	4	4.25	4.5	4.75	5	Score	

Total  
Average  
(total ÷ number of cows scored)  
Change from previous (+/-)

# Body condition score (BCS) record

## 100 days pre-drying off (target 2.5–3.0)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ BCS recorded by: \_\_\_\_\_

Cow ID	Previous score	1	1.25	1.5	1.75	2	2.25	2.5	2.75	3	3.25	3.5	3.75	4	4.25	4.5	4.75	5	Score	

Total \_\_\_\_\_  
Average \_\_\_\_\_  
(total ÷ number of cows scored)  
Change from previous (+/-) \_\_\_\_\_

## At drying off (target 2.5–3.0)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ BCS recorded by: \_\_\_\_\_

Cow ID	Previous score	1	1.25	1.5	1.75	2	2.25	2.5	2.75	3	3.25	3.5	3.75	4	4.25	4.5	4.75	5	Score	

Total \_\_\_\_\_  
Average \_\_\_\_\_  
(total ÷ number of cows scored)  
Change from previous (+/-) \_\_\_\_\_



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