

Rumen fill score card

How to use the rumen fill score card

- Assess the left hand side of the cow
- Look at the area which is shaded red. The boundaries are behind the last rib, beneath the transverse processes of the spine (sometimes called the 'short ribs'), and in front of a fold of skin and muscle which runs down from the hook bone
- The score is a visual assessment, but it can help to feel the firmness of the rumen too: it should be possible to feel a firm fibre mat in the rumen in this region, sometimes with a small cap of gas on top (softer area)
- The rumen fill score reflects intakes in the past 2–6 hours
- Check at different times of the day as scores may alter depending on the routine of the herd
- Scores should not be more than half a score below the target at any time
- A wide variation in scores throughout a group might indicate a problem, for example overcrowding, insufficient feed space or lameness

Targets are different for cows at different stages at lactation/dry period

- Pre-calvers should all be scored daily; the target score for these cows is at least 4 because the pregnant uterus occupies a large space
- The milkers' group should be checked daily for any cow which is score 2 or below as this indicates she is not eating and she may be sick, lame or injured

Examples

Tally up the proportion of cows in any given group which are within target Use a target of 85% as an intervention threshold.

20 cows in last month of pregnancy

6 are score 3 or below, 14 are within target = 70%. Intervene.

34 milking cows

4 are less than score 3, 31 are OK = 91%. No need to intervene.

Important

This is a herd level monitoring tool. However, check individuals which are two or more points below target. For example, score 1s and 2s for pre-calvers and score 1s for milkers.



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Score 1		<p>Deep dip in left flank, more than one hand width deep after last rib. Skin curves under lumbar vertebrae one hand's width. Skin fold from hook bone falls vertically, so hollow shape looks rectangular.</p> <p>This cow has eaten nothing in the last 24 hours.</p>	
Score 2		<p>Dip in left flank, one hand with deep after last rib. Skin curves under lumbar vertebrae, half a hand's width. Skin fold from hook bone runs diagonally, so hollow shape looks like a triangle. Not unusual in 1st week after calving, but after that it signifies a problem/too little intake.</p> <p>The 'danger triangle'.</p>	
Score 3		<p>Slight dip visible in left flank, after last rib. Skin under lumbar vertebrae runs vertically down for one hand's width before bulging out slightly. Skin fold from hook bone is hardly visible.</p> <p>This is the desired score for milking cows having sufficient intakes.</p>	
Score 4		<p>No dip is visible in left flank, after last rib. Skin under lumbar vertebrae curves outwards. Skin fold from hook bone is not visible.</p> <p>This is the correct score for milking cows at the end of lactation and through the dry period. It is the target minimum score for pre-calvers.</p>	
Score 5		<p>Skin is flat, or slightly bulging, on the left flank, after last rib. Skin under lumbar vertebrae curves outwards, so that bones are not visible. The skin over the whole belly is quite tight, and there is no visible transition between the flank and the ribs.</p> <p>This score is often seen in dry cows.</p>	