

Scoring cleanliness

Score	Clean	Flank (including tail)	Lower hind leg	Udder
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No dirt or only minor fresh or dried splashing present 			
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An area of dirtiness (ie layer or plaques of fresh or dried dirt) at least palm size (10 x 15cm) 			
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An area of dirtiness (ie layer or plaques of dried dirt) amounting to at least forearm length (40cm) in any dimension 			
Factors that may affect cleanliness		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cubicle cleanliness Cubicle comfort Amount and type of bedding Manure consistency and health of the herd 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – alley cleaning – running of automatic scrapers – cleaning of crossover alleys – cleaning of collecting yard Space allowance per cow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cubicle cleanliness Cubicle comfort Amount and type of bedding Cleanliness of alleys Amount of hair on udder Manure consistency and health of the herd



Why score cleanliness?

The cleanliness of a cow's coat is an important indicator of cow comfort. In general, given the choice, cows will choose to lie in clean, dry areas, and dirt on a cow's coat can have various causes.

Excessive layers of dried dirt provide optimal conditions for ectoparasites and can irritate the skin, increase cold stress and the risk of disease and may cause issues at or prior to slaughter. This layering of dried dirt indicates a long-term build-up and highlights weaknesses in the cleaning routine of the alleys and/or cubicles or lack of grooming facilities.

A high level of dirtiness on the legs and flank is associated with increased risk of lameness, digital dermatitis, interdigital dermatitis, slurry heel and mastitis. It can also obscure skin damage and foot lesions, preventing early detection and increasing recovery times. Dirtiness can be caused by poor slurry systems, lack of bedding, overstocking, or poached paddocks.

A high level of dirtiness on the udder is strongly associated with the development of mastitis, adds to pre-milking cleaning and increases the risk of poor milk quality. Frequent and strategic cleaning of the alleys and cubicles will reduce the amount of manure on cows and the amount of manure tracked into the cubicle.

How to score your herd

1. Scoring the entire herd is best practice. However, the table below gives guidance on the minimum number of cows you should score to get an accurate picture of your herd. For example, if you have a herd size of 125 cows, you need to score 65 cows.

Herd size	Minimum sample size
Up to 50	30 (or all cows if < 30 in herd)
50–100	50
101–200	65
201+	73

2. Visually assess the entire cow according to the following areas:
 - Flank (including tail)
 - Hind leg
 - Udder
3. Choose a time and place that will allow you to observe cows, for example, legs and udder can easily be observed in the milking parlour. Alternatively, observe

cows when doing routine management procedures such as hoof trimming, AI, PD checks, routine vaccinations, etc.

4. Tally the scores for each body part.

Using the information

- Investigate the causes of very dirty cows (score 2) in the cow's environment
- Manage necessary changes to assist with reducing the number of 'score 2' cows
- Regularly score the herd and monitor the number of very dirty cows to determine if changes have had the desired effect

Key benefits of scoring

- Use as a troubleshooting tool to measure cleanliness of your cows and as a way to assess improvements in hygiene management
- Observing cows and noting body parts that are too dirty can help identify places in the cow's environment that may need action in order to help reduce the risk of disease
- Clean cows have clean udders and are healthier
- Motivates farm staff to improve cleanliness and, therefore, overall herd health and performance
- Use to meet the recommendations or requirements of assurance schemes

Further information

Information and a short film to help understand the score system can be viewed on the AHDB Dairy website at dairy.ahdb.org.uk

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