



# FACT SHEET

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## CONDITION SCORING FOR BEEF COWS

Condition scoring of beef cattle (CS) can be used as an aid to optimise stock performance and feed planning. It is a quick and inexpensive stock monitoring tool.

### CONDITION SCORING

- Measures the tissue cover over the animal's bones
- Provides a measure of level of body reserves independent of live weight, especially gut fill and the unborn calf.
- Can be done in the paddock. However, it is more accurate when you can feel for the amount of fat cover on the animal's bones.
- By comparing the animal's CS with the target, decisions can be made about whether to alter stock feeding levels.
- The system described here is the same as that used in the dairy industry. A 1-5 CS system is also in use within the beef industry.

### TARGET CONDITION SCORES

|                | Beef Breeds |          | Beef x Dairy Cross Breeds |          |
|----------------|-------------|----------|---------------------------|----------|
|                | Heifers     | Cows     | Heifers                   | Cows     |
| <b>Calving</b> | 5+ to 6     | 5 to 6   | 5.5 to 6                  | 4.5 to 5 |
| <b>Weaning</b> | 5+ to 6     | 5.5 to 8 | 5.5                       | 4.5      |
| <b>Mating</b>  | 6           | 5 to 6   | 5.5                       | 5.5      |



## AIM TO MANAGE BREEDING COWS WITHIN THE TARGET RANGES

If breeding cows are too fat they are prone to get milk fever, can have calving difficulties and may have poor milk production. Most importantly, running beef cows at too high a CS wastes valuable feed reserves.

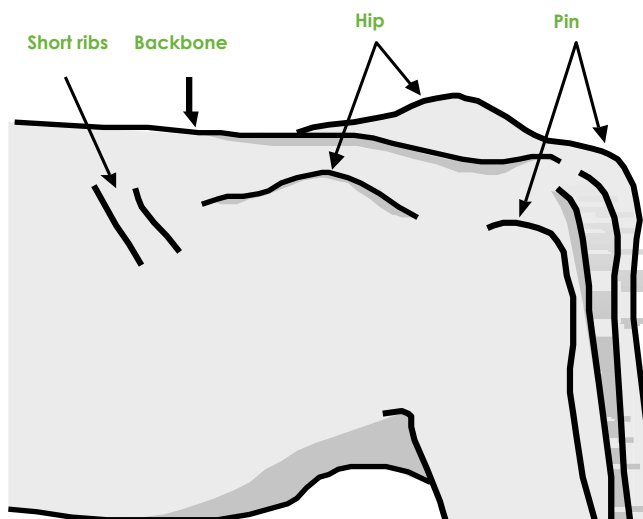
Cows with a high CS at weaning can lose a lot of weight safely in autumn and winter but excessive weight loss in late pregnancy may increase the risk of pregnancy toxaemia (ketosis), and grass tetany (staggers). Returns to first oestrus will be delayed if cows fail to reach the target CS shown above for mating.

If cows are too thin, they will suffer reduced milk production, reduced calf growth and delayed returns to oestrus.

## CONDITION SCORING BEEF ANIMALS – HOW

### WHERE TO START

It is easier to CS animals in the paddock if you have tried it on yarded animals where it is possible to feel the different levels of fat on the animal's bones.



### USING THE CHART

Start at CS 6 and move up and down the chart until you find the description that best matches the animal. A useful alternative way of learning this CS system is described by Clive Dalton.

## CONDITION

| Score | Description   |
|-------|---|
| 10    | Heavy and lumpy covering of fat over the hips, pins, backbone and ribs.   |
| 9     | Short ribs completely covered in fat, tail head completely buried in fatty tissue.  |
| 8     | Short ribs cannot be felt, even with firm pressure. Light rounds of fat on tail, soft to touch.   |
| 7     | Backbone can only be felt by pressing down firmly – back is flat across loin.   |
| 6     | Can only feel the short ribs with firm pressure. There is fat cover easily felt on tail. If cannot feel short ribs and the loin is rounded go above CS 6, if not go below CS 6. |
| 5     | Can identify short ribs individually, feel rounded, hips and pins are rounded, backbone is flat not bumpy.  |
| 4     | Some fat on the pins, the backbone is bumpy, i.e. you can see the individual backbone notches.  |
| 3     | Short ribs are sharp to touch and easily distinguished.   |
| 2     | No fat felt.  |
| 1     | Short ribs prominent and sharp, absolutely no fatty tissue over spine, hips or ribs, tail head and ribs project prominently.  |



CONDITION SCORING FOR HEREFORD X FRIESIAN BEEF COWS





CONDITION SCORING FOR SIMMENTAL BEEF COWS

