

# A GUIDE TO BODY CONDITION SCORING

Body condition scoring (BCS) is a management tool used to assess the energy reserves and nutritional status of beef cows at key stages of her production cycle. Results should be used to adapt feed requirements where necessary to ensure that cows are in the correct condition at calving, service and housing for optimal fertility, health, economic feeding and minimal calving difficulties.

## WHAT ARE THE TARGET BODY CONDITION SCORES?

Stage of reproductive cycle	Target body condition score	
	Spring calving cows	Autumn calving cows
Calving	2.5-3.0	3.0
Service	2.5-3.0	2.5-3.0
Housing	3.0-3.5	3.0

## HOW TO BODY CONDITION SCORE

When assessing BCS, animals should be handled on their left side (as seen from behind), using the same hand on each cow. The main assessment is based on the loin area, ribs and tail head.

### Loin area

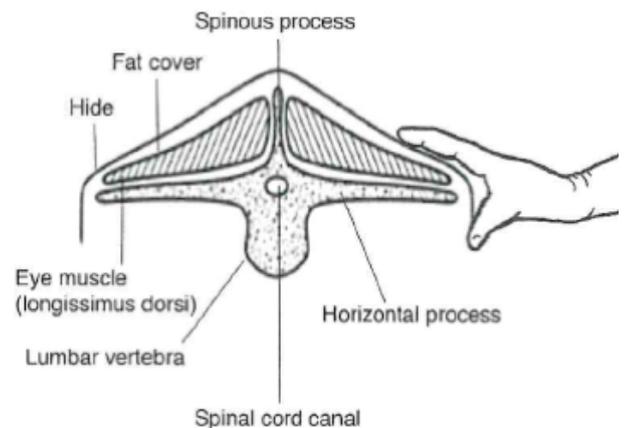
Grip the loin halfway between the last full rib and the hip bone. The hand is placed over the top of the loin with the fingers pointing towards the spine and thumb curled under the ledge formed by the horizontal processes of the spine.

### Ribs

Use the flat of the hand and finger-tips to feel the amount of fat over them.

### Tail head

Stand directly behind the cow and assess the amount of fat deposited around the tail head and the prominence of the pelvic bones.





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**MAXX**  
CATTLE BOOSTER



## VISUAL GUIDE

Remember to download your body condition scoring record sheet at [www.rumenco.co.uk](http://www.rumenco.co.uk)

### 1 Poor/ very thin

**Tail head:** Deep cavity with no fatty tissue under skin. Skin fairly supple, coat condition often rough.

**Loin:** Spine prominent and horizontal processes sharp.

**Ribs:** Sharp with no fat cover.



### 2 Moderate/ lean

**Tail head:** Shallow cavity but pin bones prominent, some fat under skin. Skin supple.

**Loin:** Horizontal processes can be identified individually with ends rounded.

**Ribs:** Can be identified individually but feel rounded rather than sharp.



### 3 Good

**Tail head:** Fat cover over whole area and skin smooth but pelvis can be felt, but only with firm pressure.

**Loin:** End of horizontal process can only be felt with pressure, only slight depression in loin.

**Ribs:** Individual ribs can only be felt with firm pressure.



### 4 Fat

**Tail head:** Completely filled with fold and patches of fat evident but soft to touch.

**Loin:** Cannot feel processes and have completely rounded appearance.

**Ribs:** Folds of fat developing over ribs.



### 5 Grossly fat

**Tail head:** Almost buried in fatty tissue.

**Loin:** Pelvis impalpable even with firm pressure.

**Ribs:** Covered with thick layer of fat.



Picture source: NADIS