

Body Condition Score

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Body condition scoring (BCS) is used to assess body energy stores in livestock. Energy stores are reflected in the amount of fat available to metabolize as an energy source. When an animal's diet is inadequate to meet the animal's energy need, fat is used along with some muscle and organ tissue.

Body condition is important because there is a close relationship between BCS at calving/kidding/lambing/farrowing and the first 90 days after calving to reproductive success. In addition, cow body condition influences the calf/kid/lamb/piglet's ability to develop a strong immune system.

Here are our recommendations for body condition scoring in cattle, sheep, goats and pigs.

Body Condition Scoring for Cattle

The BCS system used for beef cows range from 1 to 9. A score of 1 reflecting cows that are severely under weight and a score of 9 reflecting cows that are obese.

When to score:

1. Fall pregnancy check/start of winter feeding season = Optimum score is 3.0
2. At Calving = Optimum score for Mature Cows is 3.0 & First Calf Heifers is 2.5
3. Thirty days before breeding season = Optimum score is 2.5 for all females.

Body Condition Scoring for Sheep

Conditioning for sheep is a physical examination rather than visual examination as with livestock such as cattle. Physical handling should be timed when you are handling them for other maintenance items.

Body Condition scores for sheep:

Body Condition scores range from 1 to 5 for sheep (from 0 to 5 depending on the operation).

When to score:

1. Pre-breeding: 3-4 weeks prior to breeding ewes (BCS 2-4.5)
2. Mid Pregnancy: 8-10 weeks prior to lambing (BCS 2-4.5)
3. Lambing/lactation: (2-4 is ideal)
4. Mid Lactation: 30-60 days after lambing
5. Weaning: 60-120 days after lambing (2-4 is ideal)

Here is some [additional information](#) on checking sheep

Body Condition score for pigs

The BCS for pigs is 1 to 5. A hands-on approach is key to finding BCS in pigs. Using a flat hand, feel the

amount of fat covering the bones of the pig.

When to check BCS pigs:

Sows should be checked for their BCS at mating, pregnancy checks and vaccinations or farrowing.

Here is some [additional information](#) about checking their BCS, follow ups and general guidelines.

Body Condition Score for Goats

The BCS for goats is 1.0-5.0 using increments of .5. They are also physically evaluated with a hands-on approach.

When to check BCS goats:

1. Pre breeding: 45-60 days before breeding (2.5 to 3.0 is optimal)
 2. In late gestation: At the end of pregnancy (2.5 to 3.0 is optimal)
 3. After birth: During lactation their BCS should not drop too quickly (2.5 to 3.0 is optimal)
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