

BODY CONDITION SCORING FOR DAIRY COWS

1. PURPOSE

Body Condition Scoring (BCS) is a tool for determining if an animal is too thin, too fat, or in ideal condition. It is therefore intended to identify nutritional deficiencies and general health problems of Dairy Cattle.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

- 2.1 Trained and qualified staff
- 2.2 Feed Specialist
- 2.3 Veterinarian
- 2.4 Lactanet personnel

3. GENERAL

- 3.1 Assessment frequency:
 - 3.1.1 Animals are regularly monitored by the Dairy Barn staff during the daily husbandry tasks. The body condition of a cow or herd is scored when:
 - Illness is suspected.
 - The animal (s) is transferred to another stall.
 - Plans to transport the animal.
 - Periodic scoring at each stage of lactation.
 - Periodic assessment by Lactanet to assess nutritional requirements.
- 3.2 Body Condition Scores (BCS) of the cattle can indicate whether their nutritional needs are being met. Poor BCS may result from:
 - Poor access to feed (not enough or too much competition at the feed bunk),
 - Poor quality of feed
 - disease
 - lameness
 - other factors
- 3.3 The ideal body score is stated to be between 2.75-3.25. This includes dry-off and calving cows, and growing heifers.
- 3.4 Any observed abnormalities must be immediately reported to the Technician, Herd Manager and/or Veterinarian.
 - 3.4.1 Cows that are too fat at calving (BCS>4) are more prone to reproductive and metabolic diseases (e.g., difficult calving, retained placenta, cystic ovaries, uterine infections, ketosis, displaced abomasum, milk fever).
 - 3.4.2 Cows that are too thin at calving (BCS<3.00) may not have sufficient body reserves to support high levels of milk production. Cows that lose more than 1 BCS experience reduced fertility, ketosis, particularly if the loss is too rapid.
 - 3.4.3 Significant change in BCS is noted.

4. PROCEDURES

- 4.1 **BODY CONDITION SCORING PROTOCOL:**
 - 4.1.1 Record the identification number of the animal on the Cattle Assessment Record.
 - 4.1.2 Use the [Body Condition Scoring Chart \(Table 1\)](#) to conduct the assessment.

- 4.1.3 Put your hands on the important body parts.
- 4.1.4 Feel the amount of fat covered over the various body points. Note that gut fill can give a visual impression of the condition over the ribs; it is, therefore, important to feel the amount of fat cover.
- 4.1.5 Assess the body condition of the animal to determine if the animal is:
 - a. Too thin (BCS < 2) requires corrective action.
 - b. Acceptable (BCS >2)
- 4.1.6 Record the results of the assessment in the Herd Health Scoring Record. Refer to Appendix [DC-A-6A: Herd Health Scoring Record](#). Records must be permanently retained.

4.1.6.1 Identify animals that are too thin or overweight. Consult with the feed specialist and/or veterinarian to evaluate possible causes.

Macdonald Campus Farm Cattle Complex
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