

# Body Condition Score Description of Cattle

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*Beef cattle body condition scores (BCS) are numbers used to estimate energy reserves in the form of fat and muscle. The score helps you determine the nutritional need of a beef cow. Use this chart to help you interpret the BCS of cows in your herd.*

Body Condition Score	Body Fat Content	Appearance of Cow
1	4	Shoulder, rib, back, hook, and pin bones sharp to touch and easily visible; little evidence of fat deposits or muscling.
2	8	Spinous processes feel sharp to touch and are easily seen, with space between them; little evidence of fat deposits; some muscling in hindquarters.
3	11	Backbone highly visible, spinous processes individually felt and may be visible, space between processes less pronounced; beginning of fat cover over loin, back, and fore ribs.
4	15	Fore ribs not noticeable, 12 <sup>th</sup> and 13 <sup>th</sup> ribs can be seen, transverse spinous processes felt with slight pressure (they feel rounded); full but straightness of muscling in hindquarters.
5	19	Ribs 12 <sup>th</sup> and 13 <sup>th</sup> not visible, transverse spinous processes and space between can be felt with firm pressure (not visible); areas on sides of tail head fairly well-filled.
6	23	Ribs fully covered (not visible) firm pressure required to feel transverse processes; hindquarters full, noticeable sponginess over fore ribs and at sides of tail head.
7	26	Ends of spinous process felt only with firm pressure, spaces between barely distinguished; abundant fat cover on sides of tail head with some patchiness evident.
8	30	Bone structure disappearing, body taking on a smooth, blocky appearance; fat cover thick and spongy.
9	34	Bone structure not seen or easily felt; tail head buried in fat, animal's mobility may be impaired by excess fat.

## Examples of Scores



BCS 4



BCS 5-



BCS 5



BCS 7+

*Adapted from NRC Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle, 2000.*

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