

Why body condition score your herd?

Assessing a cow's body condition score (BCS) using a 1 to 8 scale provides a standardised measure of a cow's energy (and protein) reserves, and tells a lot about:

- previous level of feeding,
- likely future productivity, and
- future feed requirements.

Effective management of body condition and nutrition improves herd reproductive performance, milk production, feed conversion efficiency, and enhances cow health and welfare.

Cows that are too thin at calving are less fertile and produce less milk

- They take longer to recommence cycling, reducing submission rates and conception rates.
- They partition more feed energy to body condition gain versus milk production. This means cows fail to achieve their genetic peak milk yield and have lower lactation persistency.

Cows that are too fat at calving often have health problems

- They are more likely to have calving problems, metabolic disorders and other health problems, and have poorer appetites after calving than thinner cows.

Cows that lose excessive condition in early lactation are also less fertile

- They take longer to recommence cycling, reducing submission rates and conception rates. Poor expression of heat signs can also occur.

Measuring and managing body condition is all about managing your herd's nutrition program. Condition scoring your cows at critical times during their lactation cycle lets you know if you need to consider changing herd nutrition.