

Benefits from achieving BCS targets

Reproductive performance

Cows that calve in the BCS range 4.5–5.5 have 6-week or 100-day in-calf rates at least 12% higher than if they had calved at a BCS below 4.5.

- If you actually had 35% of cows in your herd below BCS 4.5 and 20% above BCS 5.5, the impact on 6-week/100-day in-calf rate would be about 5%. If you achieved a more desirable profile with 10% of cows in the herd below BCS 4.5 and 5% above BCS 5.5, the herd's potential improvement in 6-week/100-day in-calf rate would be 4%.
- Cows that lose less than one condition score between calving and mating have higher in-calf rates compared to cows with greater losses.
- A reduction from a 0.75–1.0 to a 0.45–0.6 average herd BCS change in early lactation is likely to have the following beneficial effects:
 - 3% higher 6-week/100-day in-calf rate
 - 2% lower Not-in-calf rate

Milk production

Cows that calve in higher body condition score have more body fat (and protein) reserves which they can mobilise in early lactation to support milk yield. However they tend to have reduced appetites, and take longer following peak milk yield to reach maximum feed intake than thinner cows.

Research studies indicate that when a herd is offered ad lib feed of high quality, thinner cows can take advantage of their increased appetites in early lactation, and produce as much or even more milk as their fatter herd mates. However, if feed quality is sub-optimal and / or access to feed is restricted (as it often is in pasture-based systems) then thinner cows will produce less milk than their fatter herd mates.