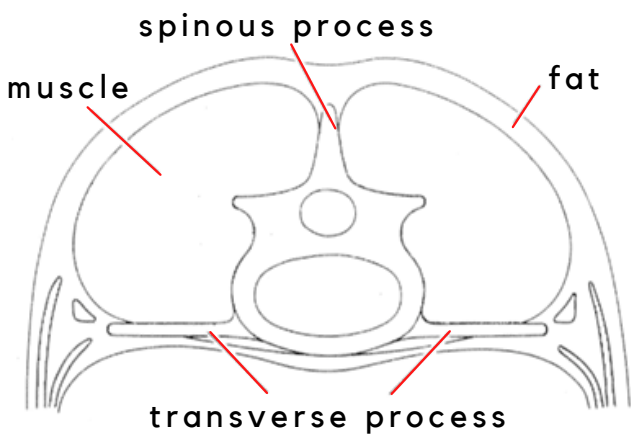


SMALL RUMINANT BODY CONDITION SCORING

WHAT IS BCS?

Body condition scoring is an important practice on a small ruminant operation to assess the nutritional status and fat cover of a flock or herd. BCS is conducted on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being severely under-conditioned and 5 being very overweight.



HANDLING

Handling the animal is necessary to get an accurate score, especially when dealing with wool. Handle the sheep or goat along the backbone and behind the last rib over the loin. Feel for the prominence of the spinous process and transverse process and over the loin to make your estimate. Place your fingers underneath the transverse process to check for the extent of fat cover.

THE SCALE

HOW IT HANDLES

WHAT IT MEANS

1.0 -

The spinous process and transverse process are sharp and obvious. The loin is thin with no fat cover. Individual ribs are easily felt.



Extremely thin, emaciated

Needs additional supplementation to have better odds of becoming bred.

2.0 -

The spinous process and transverse process are prominent but smooth. The loin is moderately thick with very little fat cover. Individual ribs can be felt.



Extremely thin

3.0 -

The spinous process and transverse process are smooth and rounded. The transverse processes are only felt with pressure. The loin is full with moderate fat cover. You can not feel between the ribs.



Ideal

Ideal condition for successfully getting bred and maintaining condition through lactation.



4.0 -

The backbone can only be felt as a line down the back. The transverse processes can not be felt. The loin is full and rounded, with a thick fat covering.

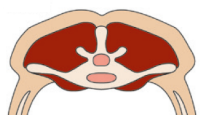


Overconditioned

May still become bred, but producer can save money by reducing supplementation.

5.0 -

Neither the backbone nor transverse processes can be seen or felt even with pressure. There is a dimple along the back where the backbone should be. The loin full and covered in a very thick fat layer.



Extremely overconditioned

Producer has large opportunity to increase profits by cutting back supplementation.

THIN EWES ARE BAD NEWS

Some amount of fat on all animals is essential for insulation and energy stores. Very thin ewes and does will have decreased fertility, increased disease or internal parasite incidence, decreased milk production, and increased overall operating costs.

Lactation is the most energy expensive stage for small ruminants. Ewes and does can drop 0.5 or more in BCS during lactation, so it's best to score your flock or herd ahead of time. Ewes and does should be scored at breeding to make nutritional preparations for lambing and kidding season.

WHAT'S THE HARM IN OVER-CONDITIONED?

Fat is expensive to put on and expensive to maintain. Excess fat on a herd or flock constitutes an unproductive expense in feed. Using BCS to inform nutritional management on the small ruminant operation can potentially save the producer's profits.

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RECOMMENDED RANGES

Ewes and Does

Production Stage	Optimum BCS
Breeding	2.5 to 3.5
Prior to wintering and lambing/kidding	3.0 to 3.5
Weaning	2.5 to 3.5

Rams and Bucks

Prior to breeding season	3.0 to 3.5
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FACTORS AFFECTING BCS

Nutrition

Level of Production

Stage of Production

Age

Health



A dairy goat with a BCS of 5.0. The spinous process and transverse processes are covered in fat, not able to be seen or felt. The hip and pin bones are poorly defined. A thick layer of fat covers the ribs.