

## **BODY CONDITION SCORING FOR DAIRY COWS**

### **1. PURPOSE**

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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**

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

### **3. GENERAL**

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- 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**

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- 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  $\leq$  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  
Standard Operating Procedure # DC-301