Body Condition Scoring Beef Cattle
Body Condition Scores

1 to 9 system:

1 = very thin

9 = obese
Priority of Nutrient Use

Cow’s perspective

1. Maintenance
2a. Growth
2b. Lactation
4. Reproduction
Priority of Nutrient Use
Cattleman’s perspective

1. Reproduction
2. Lactation
3a. Maintenance
3b. Growth
Priority of Nutrient Use
Dairyman’s perspective

1. Lactation
2. Lactation
3. Lactation
4. Lactation
As a cow destined for a packer,

What are her attributes?

What concerns might you have?
Dark color

Attributes

✓ Lean yield

Value

Concerns

✗ Bruising

✗ Trim loss
## Emerging Issues
### Most Frequently Cited

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Packers</th>
<th>Affiliated Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bruises</td>
<td>1. Pricing &amp; Prompt Payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Antibiotic Residues</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Arthritic Joints</td>
<td>4. Pathogen Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Yield (DP &amp; product)</td>
<td>5. Injection-site Lesions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Condition (leaness)</td>
<td>6. Birdshot/Buckshot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Condemnation Rate</td>
<td>7. Anti-microbial Resistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*National Market Cow and Bull Beef Quality Audit (NCBA/CSU, 1999)*
As a cow destined for a packer,
What are her attributes?
What concerns might you have?
Fat cows are Wasty

Concern
× Trim loss

Remember, the primary product harvested from cull cows/bulls is lean red meat.
Relationship between Body Condition Score and Reproduction
Effect of Body Condition on Rebreeding by 1st Calf Santa Gertrudis Heifers

Sprott & Wilbank
Effect of Body Condition on Rebreeding by 1\textsuperscript{st} Calf Hereford Heifers

Sprott & Wilbank
Body Condition Score vs. Conception Rate (Florida study, mature cows)

Kunkle, Sand & Rae
Body Condition Score vs. Conception Rate

Texas A&M data
883 cows

BCS @ palpation

% bred

# calves

1 2 3 to 10 >10
Body Condition Score

Critical time:

at calving
Priority
1. maintenance
2. growth
2. lactation
4. reproduction

Lowest nutrient requirements
Most efficient time to increase body condition

Priority
1. maintenance
2. growth
2. lactation
4. reproduction

Body Wt.

Highest nutrient demand and rebreeding

weaning (6-10 mo.)

calving

2-4 mo.
Why?

Health concerns
- internal parasites?
- disease?
Nursing a calf
Why?

Forage Availability
- not enough to eat
Nursing a big calf
Why?

Appears to be barren
Exceptions to the rules
25 year old Longhorn cow
- had just weaned her 23\textsuperscript{rd} calf
Adjust the 1 to 9 BCS system to fit the cows in your operation.
Optimal body condition score at calving for HEIFERS is slightly higher than cows, BUT, heifers should not be over-conditioned.
Relationship of Parity and BCS to Pregnancy Rate

Rae et al., 1993
Optimal BCS for heifers - 6
Fat heifers often experience:
- reduced conception rates
- lower milk production potential
Look at the following slides and make your assessment of the cow's body condition. Then left-click to reveal the condition score.
Body Condition Score

Summary

1. Related to reproduction
2. Reflects nutrient intake
3. Indicator of forage availability quality
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for more information

http://animalscience.tamu.edu