Body Condition Score (BSC) System  
Part 2
Overview of BCS Project

Part 1 = Importance of Body Condition Score (BCS)  
- Impact on fertility and profitability

Part 2 = BCS system  
- Test your knowledge  
- Tips for evaluating cow BCS  
- Re-evaluate your knowledge

Please visit for more details:  
Range Cattle REC, Ona FL rcrc-rec-ona.ifas.ufl.edu  
South Florida Beef Program sfbfp.ifas.ufl.edu  
UF Electronic Data Information Source edis.ifas.ufl.edu

What is BCS?  
- Estimated amount of fat of each animal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BCS</th>
<th>% Empty Body Fat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source = http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/an319
Where to look?

1. Back
2. Tail head
3. Pins
4. Hooks
5. Ribs
6. Brisket

Figure 1. Six locations used to assess cow body condition score.
(Credit: Matt Harrison, UF/IFAS)

Source: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/an319
BCS 2 Lacks fat deposits, but displays some muscling in the lower hindquarters. The spinous processes feel sharp to touch and are easily seen with space between them. Entire rib cage is visible. Expected pregnancy rates = less than 30%.
**BCS 3** Backbone highly visible with noticeable fat cover over the foreribs. Processes of the spine can be individually identified by touch. Expected pregnancy rates = 50%.

**BCS 4** Foreribs not noticeable; 12th and 13th ribs still noticeable to the eye. Transverse spinous processes can be identified only by palpation to feel rounded rather than sharp. Full but straightness of muscling in the hindquarters. Expected pregnancy rates = 50 to 75%.

**BCS 5** 12th and 13th ribs not visible to the eye. Transverse spinous processes can only be felt with firm pressure to feel rounded – not noticeable to the eye. Spaces between the processes not visible. Areas on each side of the tail head are fairly well filled but not mounded. Expected pregnancy rates = 75 to 90%.
BCS 6 Ribs fully covered, not noticeable to the eye. Hindquarters plump and full. Noticeable sponginess to covering of foreribs. Firm pressure required to feel transverse processes. Expected pregnancy rates = 90% or higher.

BCS 7 Animal taking on a smooth, blocky appearance; bone structure disappearing from sight. Fat cover thick and spongy with patchiness likely. Expected pregnancy rates = 90% or higher. Calving problems can occur.
Body Condition Scoring

Additional comments

Avoid scoring cows after shrink
- Ribs will be more visible
- Underestimate BCS

The producer can gain experience using body condition scores by:
- Identifying cattle into 1 of 3 categories:
  - Thin (BCS 1 to 4)
  - Optimum (BCS 5 to 7)
  - Too fat (BCS 8 and 9).
So BCS NO

So BCS = 2

Definitely a blocky appearance and bone structures very difficult to identify?

Definitely a blocky appearance and bone structures very difficult to identify?

Definitely a blocky appearance and bone structures very difficult to identify?

Definitely a blocky appearance and bone structures very difficult to identify?
**Body Condition Scoring**

**Can you see the last 2 or 3 ribs?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 1
- **No:**
  - BCS 2

**Fat level is fairly thin with belly fat and brisket visible?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 3
- **No:**
  - BCS 2

**Femur head and rounded fat distribution in tail base and brisket?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 4
- **No:**
  - BCS 3

**Definitely a bloated appearance and bone structures are difficult to identify?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 5
- **No:**
  - BCS 4

**Can you see the last 2 or 3 ribs?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 1
- **No:**
  - BCS 2

**Fat level is fairly thin with belly fat and brisket visible?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 3
- **No:**
  - BCS 2

**Femur head and rounded fat distribution in tail base and brisket?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 4
- **No:**
  - BCS 3

**Definitely a bloated appearance and bone structures are difficult to identify?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 5
- **No:**
  - BCS 4

**Can you see the last 2 or 3 ribs?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 1
- **No:**
  - BCS 2

**Fat level is fairly thin with belly fat and brisket visible?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 3
- **No:**
  - BCS 2

**Femur head and rounded fat distribution in tail base and brisket?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 4
- **No:**
  - BCS 3

**Definitely a bloated appearance and bone structures are difficult to identify?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 5
- **No:**
  - BCS 4

**Can you see the last 2 or 3 ribs?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 1
- **No:**
  - BCS 2

**Fat level is fairly thin with belly fat and brisket visible?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 3
- **No:**
  - BCS 2

**Femur head and rounded fat distribution in tail base and brisket?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 4
- **No:**
  - BCS 3

**Definitely a bloated appearance and bone structures are difficult to identify?**

- **Yes:**
  - BCS 5
- **No:**
  - BCS 4
Thank you!

Please contact us for any questions

Philipe Moriel, Assistant Professor
Range Cattle Research & Education Center, Okeechobee, FL
Phone: (863) 735-1314
E-mail: pmoriel@ufl.edu

Lindsey Wiggins, Livestock Agent - Multi County
Hendry County Cooperative Extension Service
Phone: (863) 674-4092
E-mail: horse1@ufl.edu

Now, let’s see if you can improve your scores...