



**Body Condition Score (BCS)  
System**

**Part 2**

South Florida Beef-Forage Program



Range Cattle Research & Education Center




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**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 [rcrec-ona.ifas.ufl.edu](http://rcrec-ona.ifas.ufl.edu)  
 South Florida Beef Program [sfbfp.ifas.ufl.edu](http://sfbfp.ifas.ufl.edu)  
 UF Electronic Data Information Source [edis.ifas.ufl.edu](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu)

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**What is BCS?** **UF** UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

- Estimated amount of fat of each animal.

BCS	% Empty Body Fat
1	3.8
2	7.5
3	11.3
4	15.1
5	18.9
6	22.6
7	26.4
8	30.2
9	33.9

Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle, 7th Revised Edition, 1996. National Academy Press, Washington, DC

Source = <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/an319>

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### 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.  
Credits: Matt Hersom, UF/IFAS

Source = <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/an319>

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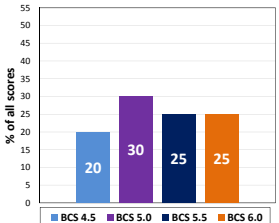


Figure 1. Six locations used to assess cow body condition score.  
Credits: Matt Hersom, UF/IFAS



BCS Category	% of all scores
BCS 4.5	20
BCS 5.0	30
BCS 5.5	25
BCS 6.0	25

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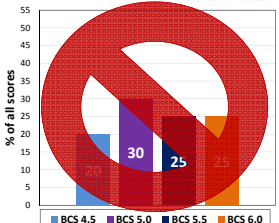


Figure 1. Six locations used to assess cow body condition score.  
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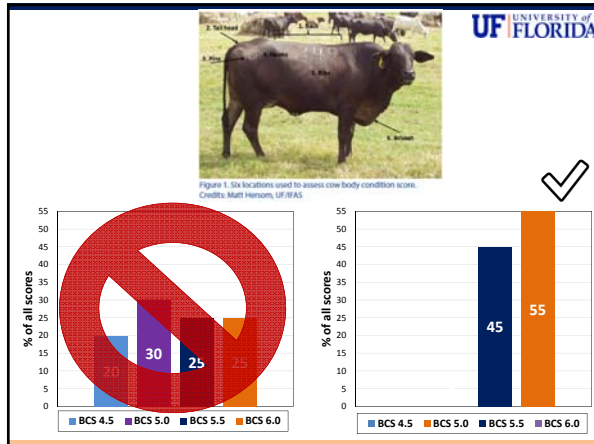
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BCS	% Body Fat*	Detailed Description*
<b>Thin</b>		
1	3.77	Clearly defined bone structure of shoulder, ribs, back, hooks and pins easily visible. Little muscle tissue or fat present.
2	7.54	Small amount of muscling in the hindquarters. Fat is present, but not abundant. Space between spinous process is easily seen.
3	11.30	Fat begins to cover loin, back and foreribs. Upper skeletal structures visible. Spinous process is easily identified.
<b>Borderline</b>		
4	15.07	Foreribs becoming less noticeable. The transverse spinous process can be identified by palpation. Fat and muscle tissue not abundant, but increasing in fullness.
<b>Optimum</b>		
5	18.89	Ribs are visible only when the animal has been shrunk. Processes not visible. Each side of the tail head is filled, but not mounded.
6	22.61	Ribs not noticeable to the eye. Muscling in hindquarters plump and full. Fat around tail head and covering the foreribs.
7	26.38	Spinous process can only be felt with firm pressure. Fat cover in abundance on either side of tail head.
<b>Fat</b>		
8	30.15	Animal smooth and blocky appearance; bone structure difficult to identify. Fat cover is abundant.
9	33.91	Structures difficult to identify. Fat cover is excessive and mobility may be impaired.

\* (Source: NRC, 2000)  
\* (Adapted from: Heid and Spott, 1986) [http://www.cowbcs.info/pdf/BCS\\_Update.pdf](http://www.cowbcs.info/pdf/BCS_Update.pdf)

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**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%.**

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**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%.**

Cow # 1



The image block contains two photographs of a cow. On the left is a photograph of a brown cow standing in a green field. On the right is a 3D anatomical model of a cow, showing its body structure and musculature. The text above the images describes the characteristics of a cow with a Body Condition Score (BCS) of 3, including a highly visible backbone and noticeable fat cover over the foreribs.

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**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%.**



The image block contains two photographs of a cow. On the left is a photograph of a black cow standing in a field. On the right is a 3D anatomical model of a cow, showing its body structure and musculature. The text above the images describes the characteristics of a cow with a Body Condition Score (BCS) of 4, including foreribs that are not noticeable and 12th and 13th ribs that are still noticeable to the eye.

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**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%.**



The image block contains two photographs of a cow. On the left is a photograph of a black cow standing in a field. On the right is a 3D anatomical model of a cow, showing its body structure and musculature. The text above the images describes the characteristics of a cow with a Body Condition Score (BCS) of 5, including 12th and 13th ribs that are not visible to the eye and transverse spinous processes that can only be felt with firm pressure.

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**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.**



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**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**



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**BCS 2.0**      **BCS 3.0**      **BCS 4.0**

**BCS 5.0**      **BCS 6.0**      **BCS 7.0**

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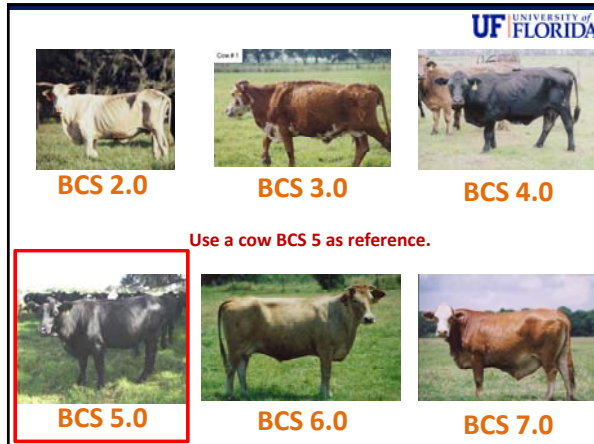
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### Additional comments

**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).

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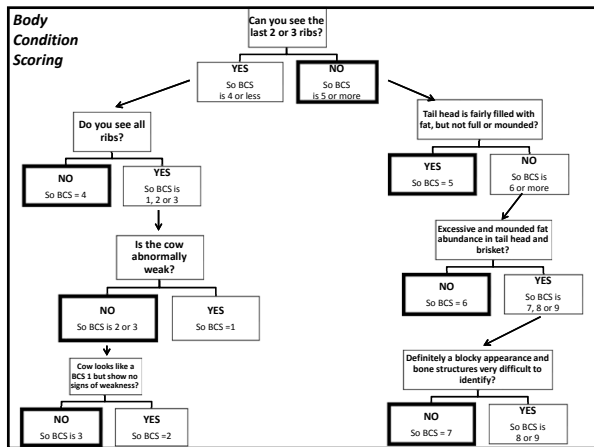
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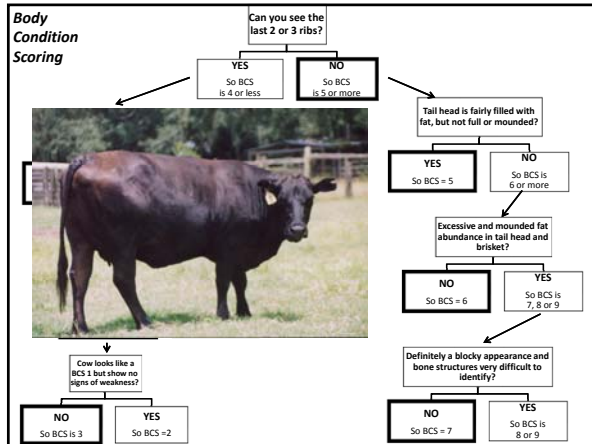
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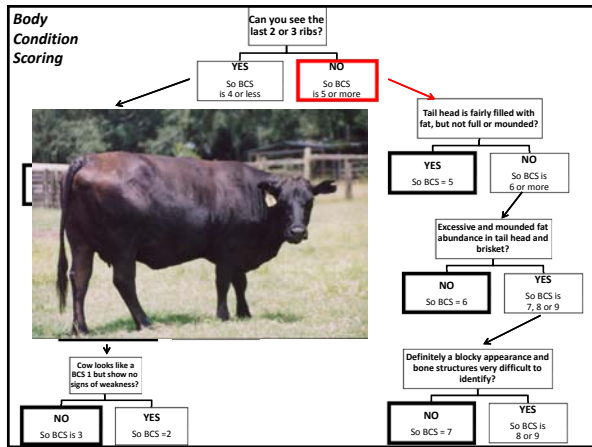
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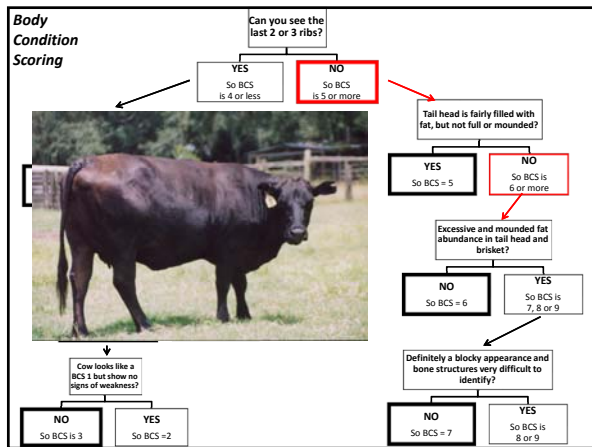
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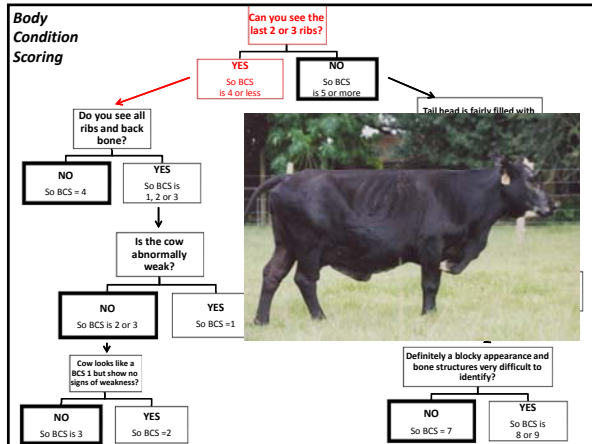
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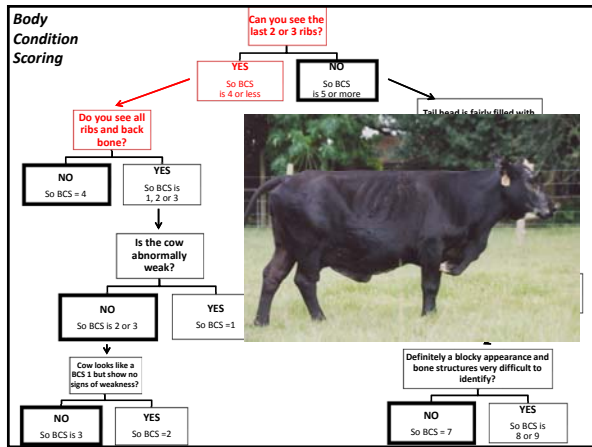
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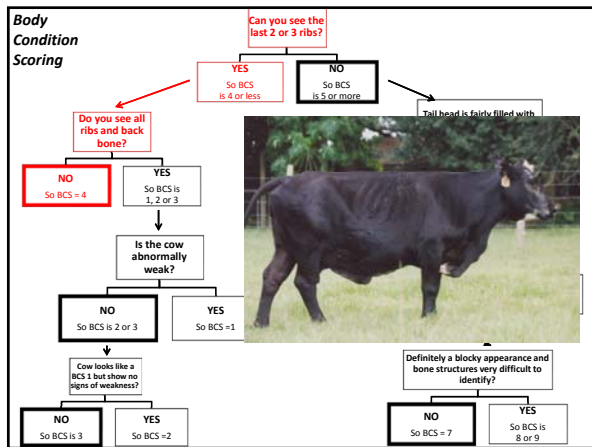
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Thank you !

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*Please contact us for any questions*

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

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