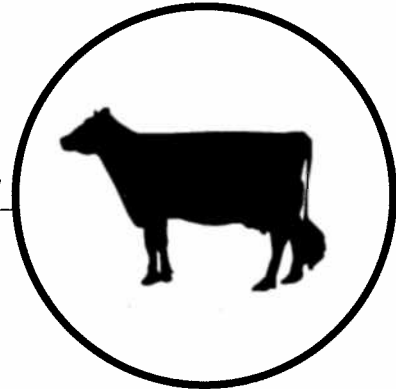


# What's the Score: Dairy Cow

BODY CONDITION SCORING (BCS) GUIDE

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- Page 6:** Overview of all the body condition scores for a Dairy Cow. Each body condition score will have an illustration to match and describe what you should be looking for in determining the body condition score of your animals.

## BODY CONDITION SCORING GUIDE FOR DAIRY COWS

This table can be used to score Dairy Cows in the field.

### CONDITION SCORE 1

**SHORT RIBS:** The ends of the short ribs are sharp to the touch and together give a prominent shelf-like appearance to the loin. Scalloping over the top and ends of the short ribs is very obvious.

**BACKBONE:** the vertebrae in the chine, loin and rump area are prominent and easily seen as individual bones

**HOOK AND PIN BONES:** the hook and pin bones are sharply defined and very angular in appearance with no discernable fat pad.

**THURL:** the area over the pelvis, between the hook and pin bones, forms a severe “V shaped” depression without fat cover

**TAIL HEAD:** the area on either side of the tail head is sunken and hollow with obvious folds of skin. The ligaments connecting the pin bones to the spine are sharply defined. The vulva is prominent.

### CONDITION SCORE 2

**SHORT RIBS:** The ends of the short ribs can be felt but are not as prominent as in condition score 1 cows. The edges of the short ribs can be easily felt but have a slight amount of fat cover giving them a slightly more rounded appearance. The over hanging shelf effect is less apparent.

**BACKBONE:** the vertebrae in the chine, loin and rump area are less visually distinct but are easily felt.

**HOOK AND PIN BONES:** the hook and pin bones are still prominent, angular with no fat pad palpable.

**THURL:** the area over the pelvis forms a less severe but still “V shaped” depression with little tissue cover

**TAIL HEAD:** the area on either side of the tail head is sunken and hollow. The ligaments connecting the pin bones to the spine are sharply defined.

### CONDITION SCORE 3

**SHORT RIBS:** The ends of the short ribs can be felt with moderate pressure. Taken together, the short ribs appear smooth without noticeable scalloping. The over hanging shelf effect is much less apparent.

**BACKBONE:** the vertebrae in the chine, loin and rump area appear rounded. The backbone can still be seen but the individual vertebrae are not distinct.

**HOOK AND PIN BONES:** the hook and pin bones can be easily seen but are smooth with a more rounded appearance with some palpable fat pad.

**THURL:** the area over the pelvis forms more of a “U shaped” depression

**TAIL HEAD:** the area on either side of the tail head is somewhat hollow but the folds of skin are not distinct. The ligaments connecting the pin bones to the spine are more rounded in appearance.

### CONDITION SCORE 4

**SHORT RIBS:** The ends of the short ribs cannot be seen as individual bones and can only be felt with firm pressure. The over hanging shelf effect is slight and is just visible.

**BACKBONE:** the vertebrae in the chine rounded and smooth. The area over the loin and rump appear flat.

**HOOK AND PIN BONES:** the hook and pin bones are rounded with an obvious fat covering.

**THURL:** the area over the pelvis, between the hooks and pins is almost flat. The pelvic bone can be felt only with firm pressure

**TAIL HEAD:** the area on either side of the tail head is not hollow and there are no skin folds. Some fat deposit can be felt.

### CONDITION SCORE 5

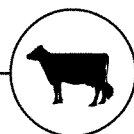
**SHORT RIBS:** The ends of the short ribs cannot be seen or felt. There is no overhanging shelf.

**BACKBONE:** the vertebrae in the chine loin and rump cannot be seen and only felt with difficulty.

**HOOK AND PIN BONES:** the hook and pin bones are very round and buried in fatty tissue, almost disappearing.

**THURL:** the area over the pelvis, between the hooks and pins has filled in and appears to be flat.

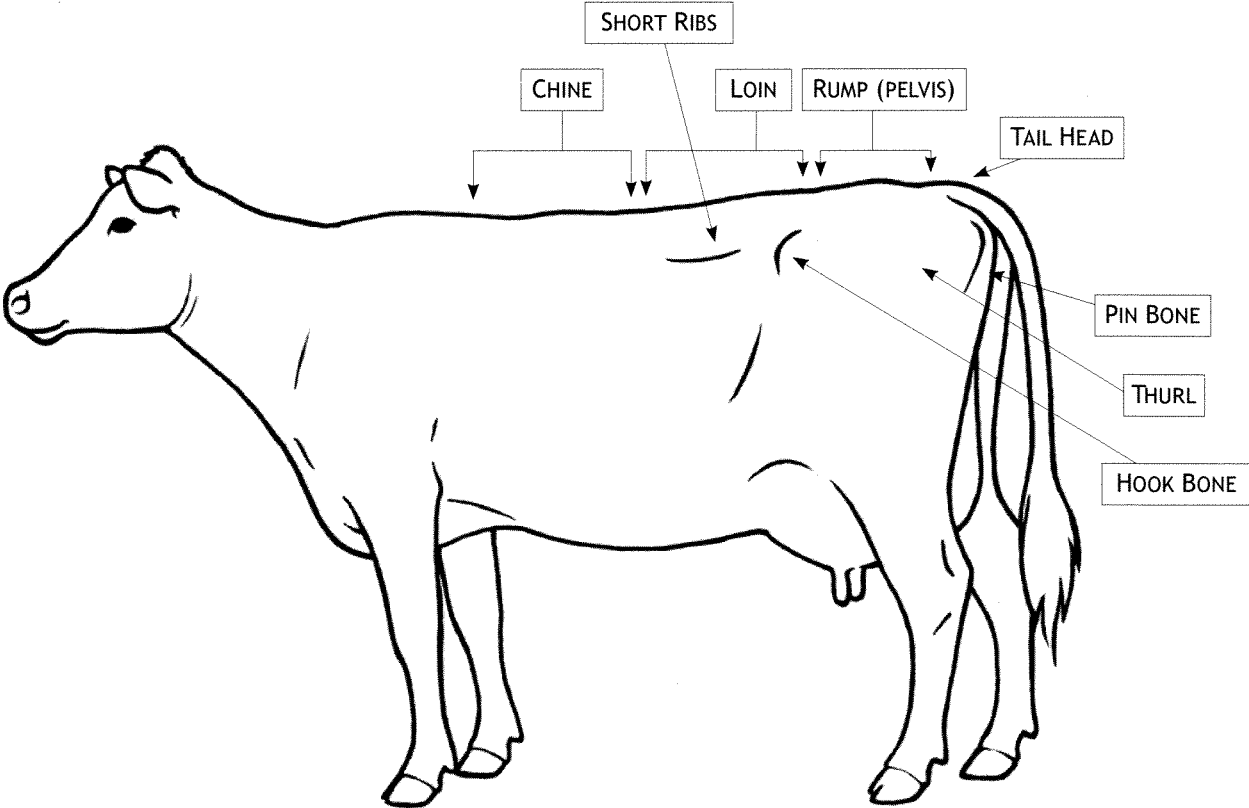
**TAIL HEAD:** the hollow is filled in and the area on either side of the tail head is buried in fatty tissue.





**LABELLED ILLUSTRATION OF A DAIRY COW**

Illustration of a Dairy Cow with a BCS score of 3.

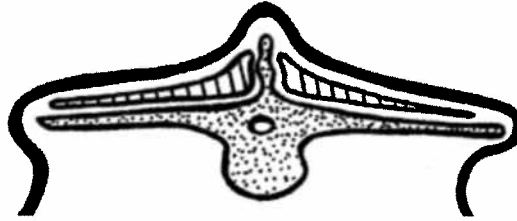


# CROSS SECTION OF THE LOIN AREA

Generic Cross Section of the Loin Area.

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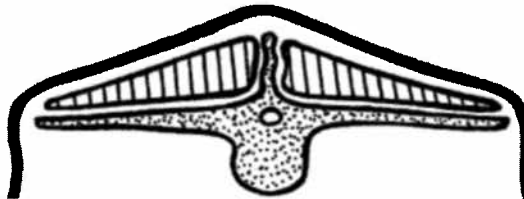
BCS 1 \_\_\_\_\_



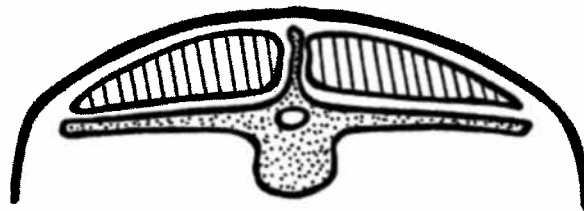
BCS 2 \_\_\_\_\_



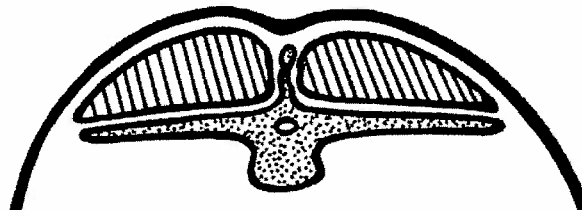
BCS 3 \_\_\_\_\_



BCS 4 \_\_\_\_\_



BCS 5 \_\_\_\_\_



## BODY CONDITION SCORES FOR DAIRY COWS

Overview of all the body condition scores for Dairy Cows

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### BCS 1:

#### SHORT RIBS:

- Ends sharp to touch
- Loin prominent, shelf-like appearance
- Obvious scalloping over top and ends

#### BACKBONE:

- Vertebrae prominent in chine, loin and rump area
- Individual bones easily visible

#### HOOK AND PIN BONES:

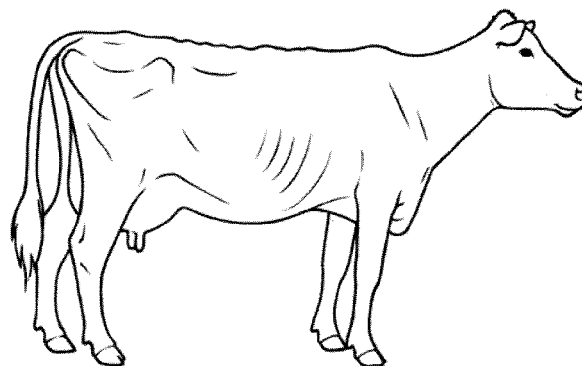
- Sharply defined, very angular in appearance
- No discernable fat pad

#### THURL (area over pelvis):

- Severe "V shaped" depression without fat cover

#### TAIL HEAD:

- Sunken and hollow on either side of tail head with obvious folds of skin
- Ligaments connecting pin bones to spine are sharply defined
- Vulva prominent.



### BCS 2

#### SHORT RIBS:

- Ends not as prominent as BCS 1, but can be felt
- Edges easily felt, with slight fat cover, and slightly more rounded appearance
- Overhanging shelf effect less apparent

#### BACKBONE:

- Vertebrae in chine, loin and rump area, less visually distinct
- Easily feel individual vertebrae

#### HOOK AND PIN BONES:

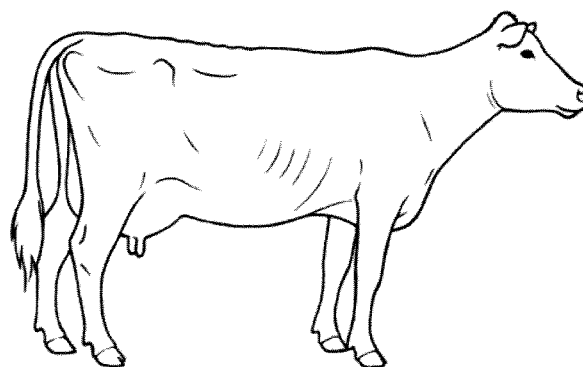
- Bones still prominent, angular
- No fat pad palpable

#### THURL (area over pelvis):

- Less severe "V shaped" depression
- Little tissue cover

#### TAIL HEAD:

- Both sides of the tail head are sunken and hollow
- Sharply defined ligaments connecting pin bones to spine



### BCS 3

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#### SHORT RIBS:

- Ends can be felt with moderate pressure
- Ribs appear smooth without noticeable scalloping
- Overhanging shelf effect much less apparent

#### BACKBONE:

- Vertebrae in chine, loin and rump area appear rounded
- Backbone visible, but individual vertebrae not distinct

#### HOOK AND PIN BONES:

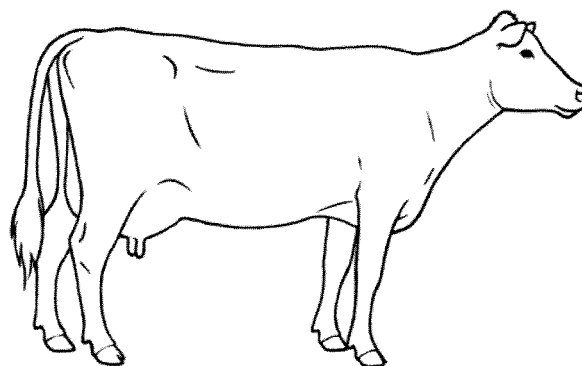
- Visible, but smooth, with rounded appearance
- Fat pad palpable

#### THURL (area over pelvis):

- Forms "U shaped" depression

#### TAIL HEAD:

- Both sides of tail head somewhat hollow, but skin folds not distinct
- Ligaments connecting pin bones to spine are rounded in appearance



### BCS 4

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#### SHORT RIBS:

- Individual rib ends not visible, only felt with firm pressure
- Overhanging shelf effect slight, barely visible

#### BACKBONE:

- Vertebrae in chine rounded, smooth
- Loin and rump areas appear flat

#### HOOK AND PIN BONES:

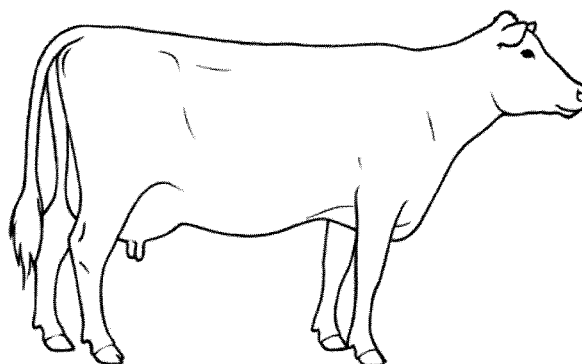
- Rounded, with obvious fat covering

#### THURL (area over pelvis):

- Area between hooks and pins almost flat
- Pelvic bone only felt with firm pressure

#### TAIL HEAD:

- Sides of tail head not hollow, no skin folds
- Some fat deposit palpable



## BCS 5

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### SHORT RIBS:

- Ends can't be seen or felt
- No overhanging shelf effect

### BACKBONE:

- Vertebrae in chine, loin and rump not visible
- Difficult to feel individual vertebrae

### HOOK AND PIN BONES:

- Very round, buried (almost disappearing) in fat tissue

### THURL (area over pelvis):

- Appears flat
- Filled in between the hooks and pins

### TAIL HEAD:

- Hollow filled in
- Areas on both sides of tail head buried in fat tissue

