

Body Condition Scoring

by William Lipsey

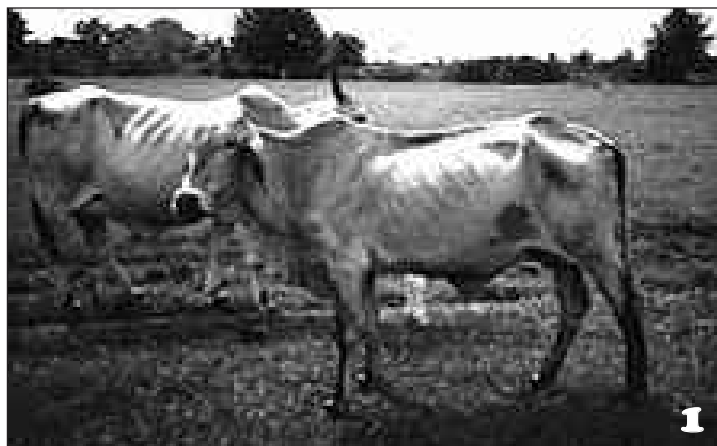
Body condition scoring (BCS) is a useful tool to help breeders recognize the nutritional needs of their beef herd. There is a strong link between a cow's condition and her reproductive performance. Calf vigor, calving intervals and conception rates are all closely related to a cow's body condition at calving and during the breeding season.

AHCA recommends that you take a body condition score at weaning. The Highland

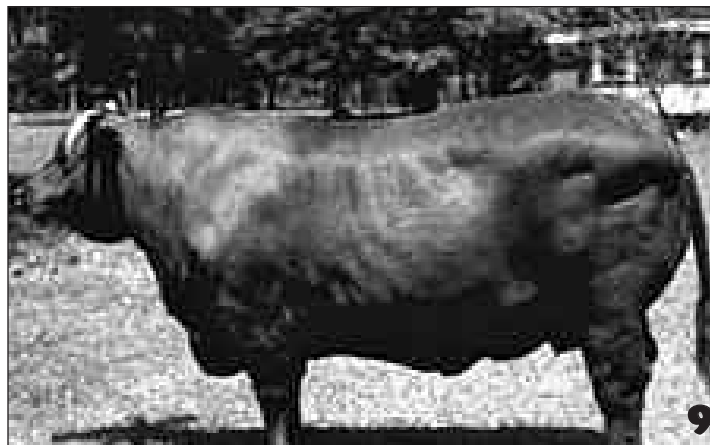
Performance Program worksheets provide producers with the information to collect BCS when they submit their weaning data. BCS range from 1-9 with ideal condition being in the 5-7 range. By checking a cow's condition at weaning, you will usually have a few months to try to correct any problems if necessary. Overly thin or fat cows can lead to reproductive problems mentioned previously. The easiest time to increase a cow's BCS is after weaning and before the cow calves. If your cows are over conditioned be careful not to put them on a

harsh diet – remember they are growing a calf but make sure that they are on a maintenance diet not a growth diet.

Since every cow has a different optimal weight, body condition scoring is one of the best tools a producer can use to help recognize the nutritional needs of their herds. By keeping your cows and herd sires in the optimal range (5-7) you can help ensure proper reproductive performance.



- 1 - Severely emaciated, all ribs and bone structure easily visible, physically weak**
- 2 - Emaciated but not weak, little visible muscle tissue**
- 3 - Very thin, no fat on ribs or brisket, back bone visible, some muscle visible**
- 4 - Thin, with ribs and backbone visible but hindquarters still showing fair muscling**



Photos compliments of Virginia Cooperative Extension

- 5 - Moderate to thin, last several ribs can be seen, little fat on brisket or over ribs**
- 6 - Good smooth appearance, some fat in brisket and over tailhead, ribs covered**
- 7 - Very good flesh, brisket full, tailhead shows fat pockets, back appears square**
- 8 - Obese, back square, brisket distended, neck thick, body appears square**
- 9 - Very obese, rarely seen, bone structure not seen or felt, mobility impaired**