

# Body Condition Scoring

## BCS Factsheet



### Introduction

Body condition scoring is a tool to measure an animal's body reserves or fat accumulation. Condition ratings are determined by feeling with your hands for fat cover. When rating small ruminants, a five-point scale is used. An excessively thin or emaciated animal is given a score of one, and an excessively fat or obese animal is given a score of five. Half points are also commonly given.

### Why Use Condition Scoring?

- Objective way to monitor animal nutrition
- No need for scales or other infrastructure
- It is independent of animal size, gestation, fleece cover
- Helpful estimate of the quality of the animal prior to sale

**Note: not suitable for young animals (< 1 year old)**

### How to BCS

- To assess the condition score of sheep or goats, run your fingers and thumb backwards and forwards along the backbone and short ribs to feel the amount of fat and muscle over the loin region, which includes the 'short ribs' (transverse vertebral processes) and backbone, and the muscle between these two structures.
- Condition score is determined by the amount of roundness of the ends of the bones, the amount of tissue between each bone and the fullness of the muscle.

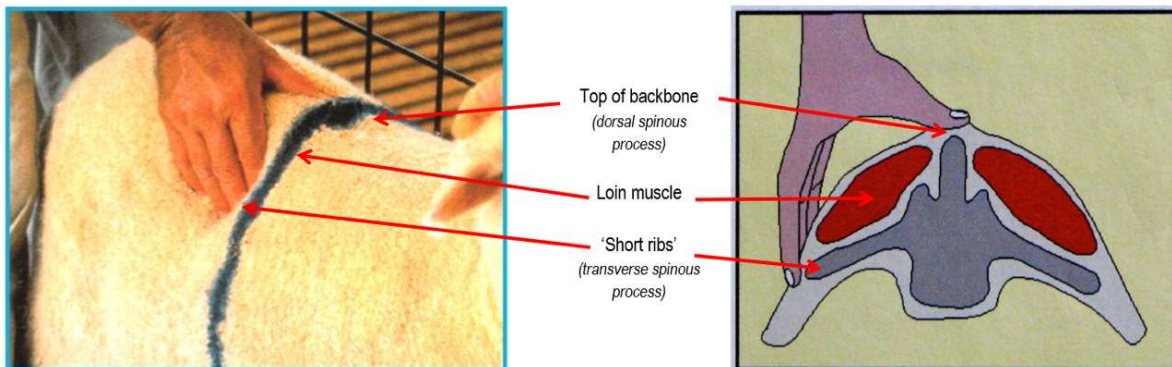


Figure 1: Condition Scoring Sheep & Goats

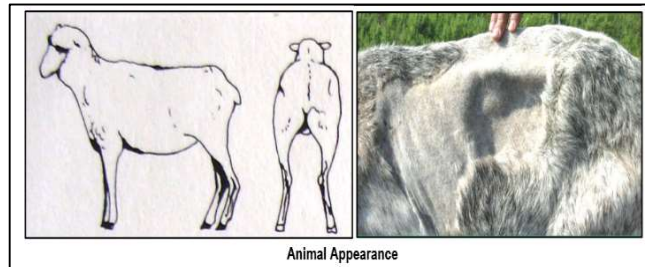
When feeling the short ribs, a BCS 3 feels like the back of your hand: you can feel the bones with a little bit of pressure, BCS 1 feels like the tips of your fingers and BCS 2 feel like your fingers between the first two knuckles.



Goat/Sheep	BCS	Interpretation & Action
Breeding females	< 2.5 (Thin to very thin)	Very thin breeders & their offspring have greater risk of disease or death – try to increase their feed
Breeding females	> 3.5 (fat)	Fat breeders are more likely to have birthing problems – try to avoid this in the last month of pregnancy
Breeding males	< 2.5 OR > 3.5 (too thin OR too fat)	Males too thin or fat will be poorer breeders – try to maintain in BCS 2.5–3.5 range

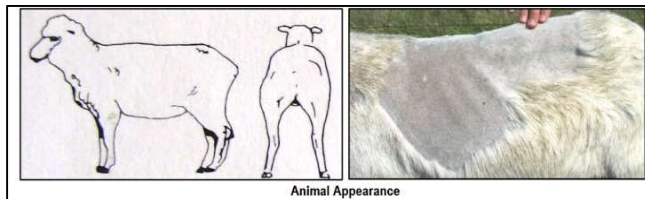
### Body Condition Scoring - 1:

Spine is prominent. There is virtually no muscle on the back and the bones are very obvious



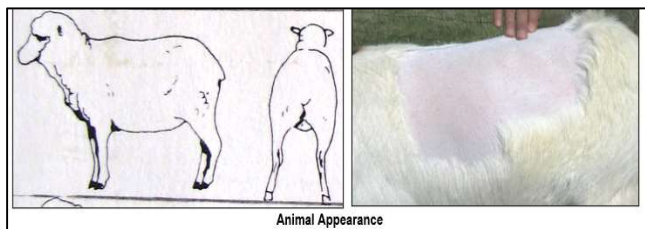
### Body Condition Scoring - 2:

backbone points form a narrow ridge but somewhat rounded with muscle, short rib ends rounded but still distinct.



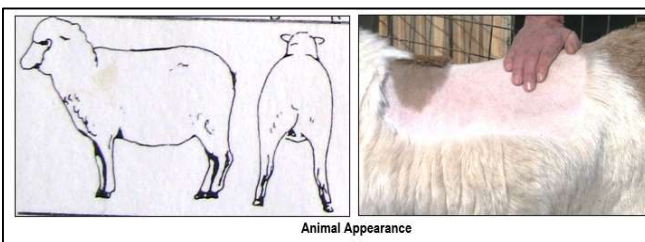
### Body Condition Scoring - 3:

Each rounded backbone is palpable without pressing hard, but cannot press between them. Short ribs ends can be felt by pressing firmly, but cannot feel in between



### Body Condition Scoring - 4:

Can only feel individual backbones with pressure, short ribs are well-rounded & filled between with muscle. Cannot feel individual bones. Loin muscle is bulging outwards



### Body Condition Scoring - 5:

Backbone can only feel with very firm pressure (if at all), ends of short ribs cannot be felt, loin muscle bulges above top of backbone

