Dangers of FAT transition Dry cows

- More calving difficulties
- Increased risk of bleeding and vaginal tears at calving
- Increased risk of milk fever
- Increased risk of ketosis and LDA
- Greater immune suppression post calving
- Greater risk of weight loss and poorer fertility in next lactation

Dangers of THIN transition Dry cows

- Increased risk of lameness due to claw horn disease
- Increased risk of retained foetal memebranes
- Increased risk of poorer fertility
- Increased risk of lower production

If more than 10-20% cows fall outwith the optimal BCS for their stage of production, actions need to be taken at the herd level such as reviewing feeding, breeding and culling policies and implementing appropriate changes.

If you would like more information
contact our office or visit our website.

DAIRY HERD HEALTH & PRODUCTIVITY SERVICE

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BODY CONDITION SCORING

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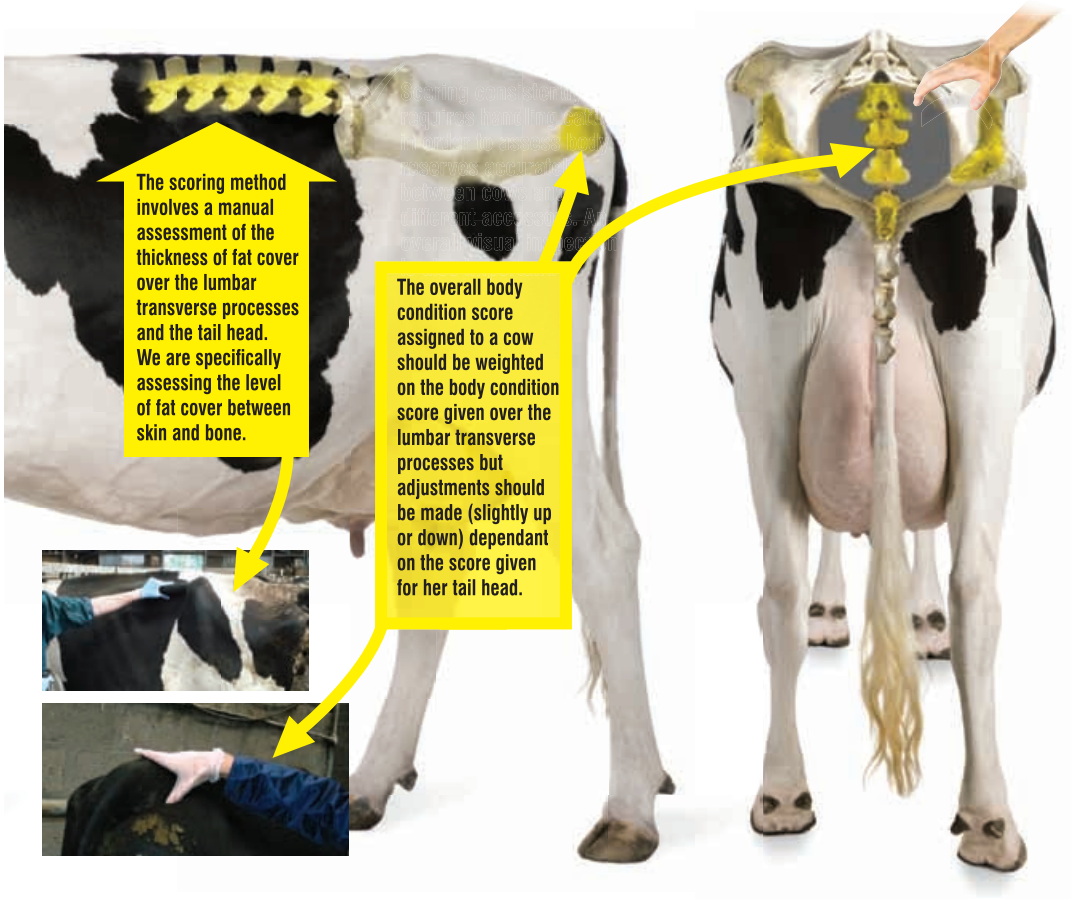
How to Body Condition Score (BCS)

The simple technique of body condition scoring can contribute significantly to the good husbandry and management of dairy and beef cows. Regular herd BCS is a very useful tool that is often under-utilised. Regular BCS monitoring of key groups of the herd allows for prompt identification and intervention when BCS fall outwith the optimum targets.

Points for examination:

- You should always handle the animal safely and quietly.
- Use the same hand when assessing the transverse processes and tail head area.
- Assessment relies mainly on the degree of fat cover over the lumbar transverse processes (which can be found just in front of the hook bone of the pelvis). The lumbar transverse processes are scored by feeling the individual processes along their length and end.
- The score is then refined by the tail head score. The tail head is scored by feeling for the amount of fat around the tail head and the prominence of the pelvic bones.
- If possible assess the scores to the nearest half or quarter point. Consistency in technique is key to good body condition scoring.



Condition Scoring Dairy Cows

Score	Condition	Transverse Processes	Tailhead
1	**Severe under conditioning - cow could not be any thinner**	Each individual process sharp and very prominent. No fat cover.	Deep cavity with no fatty tissue under the skin. Skin fairly supple.
2	**Lean**	Individual processes can be identified easily. There is a level of fat cover which gives each process a more rounded edge.	Shallow cavity but pin bones prominent; some fat under skin. Skin supple.
3	**Good**	Ends of the transverse processes can only be felt with pressure.	Fat cover over whole area but bones of the pelvis can still be felt, but only with firm pressure.
4	**Fat**	Individual processes cannot be felt. Very firm pressure needed to palpate the ends of the transverse processes which are very well rounded.	Bony cavity of the tail head is filled in. Patches and folds of fat are evident.
5	**Severe over conditioning**	Bony edges of the transverse processes not palpable.	Buried in fatty tissue. Pelvis impalpable even with very firm pressure.

On a scale of 1-5,
Score 1 is extremely thin
Score 5 is extremely fat

When to BCS cows?

Late lactation	8 Weeks pre-dry off
Drying off	7-8 weeks pre-calving
Mid-way through the dry period	3 weeks pre-calving
At calving	
Early lactation	3 weeks post -calving

Target is to maintain stable body condition of 2.5-3 at all stages of the production cycle.

Keeping BCS Records

To ensure best use is made of cow and herd BCS data it needs to be recorded accurately (preferably in a computer programme but a farm diary would suffice). Keeping good BCS records allows for close monitoring of any change in BCS and appropriate interventions to be made.

With practice, BCS is an easy technique to learn. It is a very useful tool for monitoring cow condition but frequently underutilised in the field. Regular BCS of your herd allows essential management decisions to be made in a timely fashion.