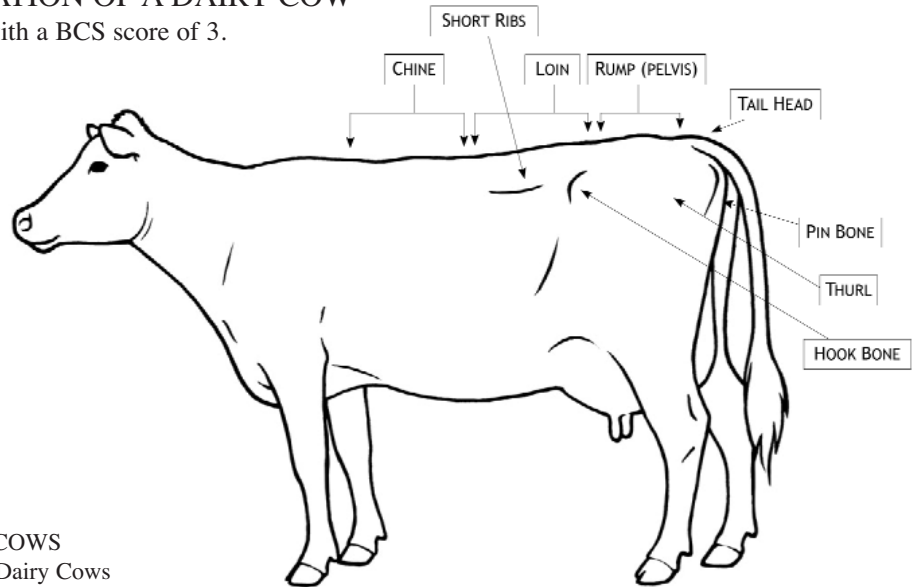




# Body Condition Scoring Chart

## LABELLED ILLUSTRATION OF A DAIRY COW

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



### BODY CONDITION SCORES FOR DAIRY COWS

Overview of all the body condition scores for Dairy Cows

#### 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:

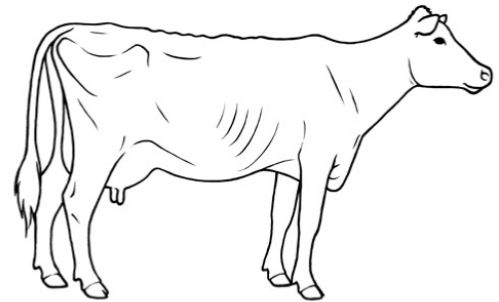
- Sharply defined, very angular in appearance
- No discernable fat pad

##### 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:

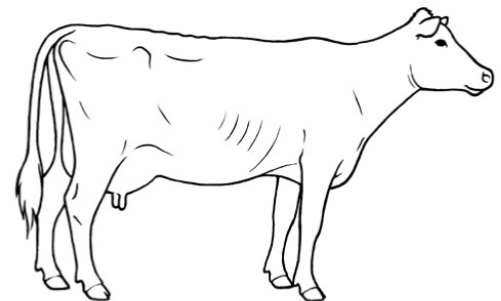
- Bones still prominent, angular
- No fat pad palpable

##### 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





# Body Condition Scoring Chart

## BODY CONDITION SCORES FOR DAIRY COWS

Overview of all the body condition scores for Dairy Cows

### BCS 3

#### 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:

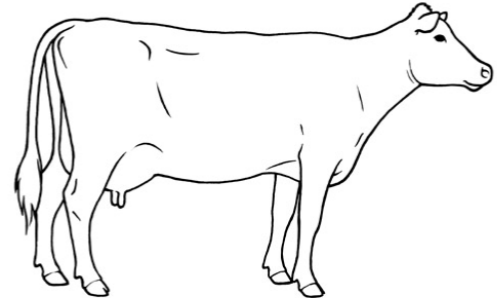
- Visible, but smooth, with rounded appearance
- Fat pad palpable

#### 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

#### 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:

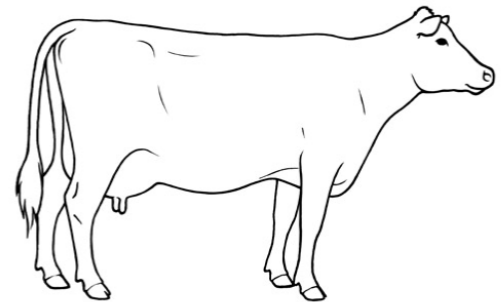
- Rounded, with obvious fat covering

#### 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

#### 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:

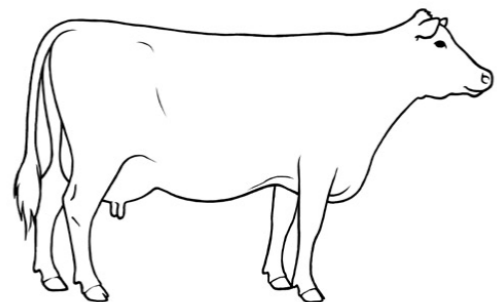
- Very round, buried (almost disappearing) in fat tissue

#### 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



Adapted from *What's the Score? Body Condition Scoring for Livestock CD-ROM*  
 CD 400/40-1 with permission of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. [www.agriculture.alberta.ca](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca)  
 Copies of the CD can be ordered on-line at: [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex9622](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex9622)