



Managing Body Condition For The Calving Season

Table 1. Visual method for evaluating body condition in cattle

	BCS	Physical Attribute					
		Spine	Ribs	Hooks/Pins	Tailhead	Brisket	Muscling
Thin	1	Visible	Visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	None/atrophy
	2	Visible	Visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	None/atrophy
Borderline	3	Visible	Visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	None
	4	Slightly visible	Foreribs visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	Full
Optimum Condition	5	Not visible	Not visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	Full
	6	Not visible	Not visible	Visible	Some fat	Some fat	Full
Over-Conditioned	7	Not visible	Not visible	Slightly visible	Some fat	Fat	Full
	8	Not visible	Not visible	Not visible	Abundant fat	Abundant fat	Full
	9	Not visible	Not visible	Not visible	Extremely fat	Extremely fat	Full

Adapted from Herd and Sprott, 1986; BCS = body condition score

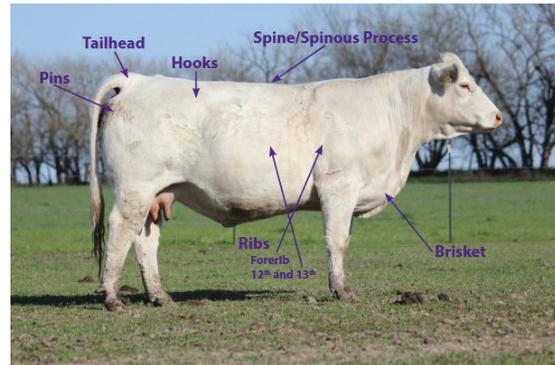


Figure 1. Key places on a live beef animal evaluated to determine body condition.

K-State Beef Cattle Experts Discuss How To Manage Body Condition Scores For Outliers in the Herd

It's a question that many cattle producers often ponder: Is it more costly to have fat or thin cows in the herd, and how should they manage the problem? The consensus? The team agreed that thin cows are more costly due to potential calving difficulties and a longer infertility window between calving cycles, but "it depends on where we are in the production cycle," K-State veterinarian Bob Larson said. "If we are late in pregnancy, we are headed into calving because I would rather cows be a little thin," he said. Larson said thin cows in the herd produce less colostrum, which can affect the calf. The specialists note that if low body-conditioning scores are uncommon in the herd and there are cows with scores of 3 or 4, producers should bring them in for a closer look. The possibility of a health issue in thin cows is more likely than in fat cows. The experts noted that if producers are having difficulty with thin cows, it will take approximately 30-60 days to see a change, assuming a daily gain of two pounds. "You're going to take a least 30 to 60 days to effectively change them," said Jason Warner, an associate professor of animal sciences, and extension beef specialist. "Can I get a cow to gain two pounds a day? Yes, but that does take a lot of energy to be able to do that." The K-State experts encourage producers to spend extra time checking on their thin cows to ensure there are no health concerns causing the issue. Being aware of the nutritional value of rations will also help when managing thin cows.

K-State Opens Registration For Finances and the Farm Online Course That Will Aid Producers in Many Areas of Financial Management

Kansas State University's Department of Agricultural Economics has announced plant to offer a popular online course that helps producers develop strong financial skills and make informed decisions that impact the farmer's bottom line. K-State Extension farm economist Robin Reid said the course, Finances and the Farm, has been taught since 2021, but has recently been updated "to provide a more interactive learning experience for participants." "The need to manage farm financials may be greater than ever before because of historically high input costs and lower commodity prices, creating uncertain profitability margins," Reid said. "The Finances and the Farm online class provides education for managing financial risk of the farm business; focusing on good record keeping as the foundation, using those records to develop financial statements, conducting benchmarking and performance analysis on those statements, and then using that information to make managing decisions." the cost is \$100, or \$300 if the participant wishes to receive Farm Service Agency borrower's training financial credit, which is approved for Kansas, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Coursework will be graded, and a certificate will be provided upon successful completion of the final exam. The course covers seven lessons:

- * Record keeping
- * Balance sheet
- * Income statement
- * Enterprise budgeting
- * Cash flow
- * Managing family living expenses
- * Goal setting

Reid and K-State farm analyst LaVell Winsor are the primary instructors. They said participants will better understand the structure of a balance sheet, income statement, enterprise budgets and cash flow; and learn financial management techniques for their own operation, among other lessons. Two case studies—one a row crop and beef cattle farm, and the other vegetable, egg and honeybee farm—are designed to help students check their understanding of the material and practice using financial statements. The self-paced course includes short videos, interactive reviews of content, quizzes and working with paper sheets and Excel documents. "This course is designed with the learner in mind, with the convenience of completing this course at their own pace, from their home or office," Winsor said. Participants can take up to six months to complete the materials, though Reid and Winsor urge students to get it done in 2-4 weeks. More information is available by contacting Reid by email, robinreid@ksu.edu, or 785-532-0964.