

BULL MANAGEMENT AND FERTILITY: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BEEF CATTLE PRODUCERS

Why Body Condition Matters

Body condition is essential for a bull's fertility, stamina and overall longevity. Monitoring **body condition score (BCS)** should be a year-round practice, but fall processing is one of the best times to assess it.

During the breeding season, bulls can lose **100–200 lbs**, so it's important to **reassess BCS during the bull breeding soundness evaluation (BBSE)**. This ensures that any nutritional adjustments made earlier have achieved the optimal BCS before turnout.

Target Range (5-point scale)

Ideal Breeding Season BCS: 2.5-3.0

Bulls below 2.5 (under-conditioned) may struggle to maintain weight and fertility, and may lack the energy and strength needed for successful breeding.

Bulls above 3.5 (over-conditioned) may be at higher risk for infertility, lameness, mobility problems, overheating, reduced performance and cow injury due to excessive weight when mounting.



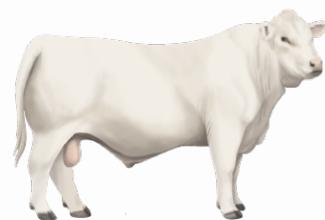
BCS 1 (emaciated)

Prominent ribs, hips and spine; no fat cover



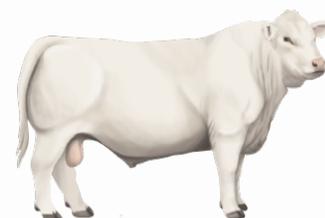
BCS 2 (thin)

Slight fat cover; backbone and ribs still visible



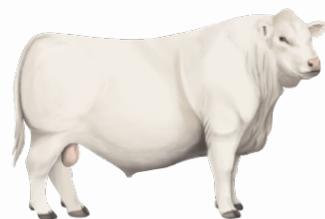
BCS 3 (ideal)

Smooth appearance; ribs covered but can still be felt



BCS 4 (heavy)

Noticeable fat deposits; rounded appearance



BCS 5 (obese)

Excessive fat; mobility often impaired

Bull Management Checklist

Pre-Breeding Preparation

- Schedule a **bull breeding soundness evaluation**.
- Record and review **body condition score (BCS)**; targeting 2.5-3.0 on a 5-point scale.
- Verify **vaccinations and parasite control** are up to date.
- Inspect **feet, legs and hooves** for soundness and mobility issues.

Breeding Season

- Monitor **bull-to-cow ratio** (younger bulls: 1:15-20; mature bulls: up to 1:25-30).
- Ensure adequate **pasture size and terrain** for bull mobility.
- Watch for signs of **lameness, injury or reduced libido**.

Post-Breeding Review

- Re-check **body condition** after the breeding season.
- Record **breeding performance** (pregnancy rates, cow return rates).
- Cull or treat **underperforming bulls** as needed.

Nutritional Management

- Review **nutrition programs** to maintain ideal BCS.
- Provide access to **clean water and balanced minerals**.
- Adjust feeding** if bulls are under- or over-conditioned.

