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C.K. Clarke

R.R. Schalles

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Visual body condition score of cows

Abstract

Condition scores are often used to describe the "fleshiness" of cows. These scores range from 1 (extremely emaciated) to 9 (extremely fat).

Keywords

Cattlemen's Day, 1989; Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station contribution; no. 89-567-S; Report of progress (Kansas State University. Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service); 567; Beef; Visual body condition score; Beef cows

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K**VISUAL BODY CONDITION SCORE OF COWS****S****C.K. Clarke and R.R. Schalles****U**

Condition scores are often used to describe the "fleshiness" of cows . These scores range from 1 (extremely emaciated) to 9 (extremely fat), and are described in detail below.

- 1 = Extreme emaciation. Ribs, hip bone, and tailhead projecting very prominently. No fat deposition detectable in any area. Transverse processes and neural spines easily distinguished and sharp to the touch.
- 2 = Very thin and devoid of fatty tissue deposition in all regions. However, the prominent muscular atrophy characteristic of condition 1 is not evident. All areas of the skeletal structure are visible and feel sharp upon palpation.
- 3 = Thin, but no evidence of muscular atrophy. Slight feeling of fat deposition over the ribs. Hip bone and tailhead regions are less prominent than in condition 2, but spinous processes still sharp to the touch and no fat present around tailhead.
- 4 = Prominent features of hip bone, tailhead, and ribs still evident, but overall less obvious and demonstrating some fat deposition, particularly in the area of the ribs. Spinous processes can be individually palpated and give slight indication of rounding. Tissue cover in the tailhead region is slight to the touch.
- 5 = Overall features of skeletal structure less discernible. Smooth appearance over the rib area. Spinous processes can be identified individually, but feel rounded to the touch. Some fat tissue is evident and can be felt around the tailhead.
- 6 = Overall skeletal features of hip bone and tailhead can be seen but give a smooth appearance. Spinous processes are only slightly evident and rounded to the touch with firm pressure. Rib area is smooth with palpable evidences of fat. Some initial appearances of fat deposition on either side of the tailhead.
- 7 = Generalized protrusion of the hip bone and tailhead can be seen, but increased fat deposition gives the animal a smooth appearance. Spinous processes cannot be visualized and are felt only with firm pressure. Rib area appears completely smooth with fat cover on either side of the tailhead being easily felt.
- 8 = Smooth appearance throughout with definite evidences of fat deposition over the hip bone and tissue covering both over and filling the area between the ribs. Fat cover around tailhead evident as slight swells and somewhat soft to the touch. Beginning of some fat deposits in the flank area can be noted, and the initial development of a fat fold in the rear immediately below the vulva can be seen.
- 9 = Extremely fat animal giving an overall blocky appearance. Skeletal features of tailhead and hip bone difficult to perceive because of extensive fat cover. Rib area shows bulging of fat with patches of fat evident in the flank and over the pin bones. Large roll of fat also apparent immediately below the vulva.