

# THE 5-POINT BODY CONDITION SCORING SYSTEM

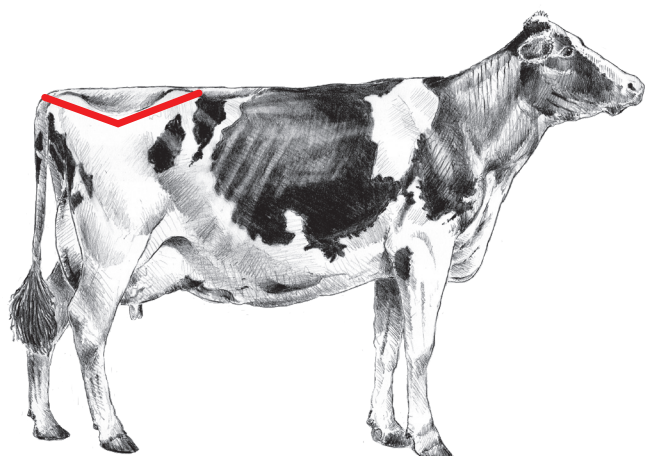
Body condition scoring (BCS) refers to the relative amount of subcutaneous body fat or energy reserve in the dairy cow. BCS is an important management tool for maximizing milk production and reproductive efficiency while reducing the incidence of metabolic and other peripartum diseases.

## Most body condition scoring systems use a 5-point scoring method with quarter-point increments

This system concentrates its accuracy toward the mid-range scores (2.50 to 4.00), which includes most cows. This mid-range is the most critical for making management decisions. Scores outside this range indicate significant problems (1.00 denotes a very thin cow, while 5.00 indicates an excessively fat cow). Exact scoring of BCS extremes is less critical. BCS is not an indication of energy balance. You should monitor changes in body condition over time.

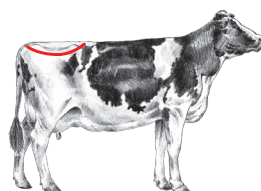
## Begin by viewing the cow's pelvic area from the side

Check the line formed from hooks to the thurl to the pins to determine if it is angular (V-shaped) or crescent (U-shaped). This is the most difficult part of the scoring process, especially if the cow is near the 3.00 or 3.25 score.

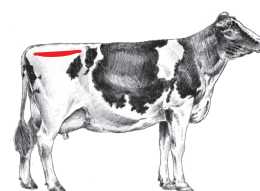


### ≤ 3.00: Flattened V

If the line forms a flattened V, then BCS ≤ 3.00. Move to the rear of the cow to view the hooks, then pins and short ribs to determine BCS to the precise quarter point. Use the guide drawings below.



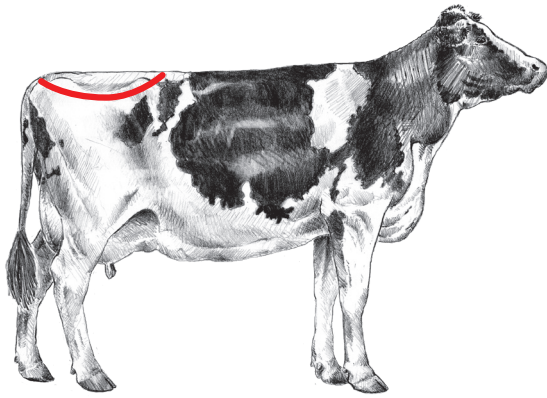
### ≥ 3.25: Flattened U



### > 4.00: Straight line

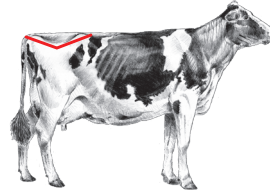
Turn this page over for more information.

<p>3.00</p>	<p>2.75</p>	<p>2.50</p>	<p>2.25</p>
<p>Hooks rounded</p>	<p>Hooks angular More prominent padding on pins</p>	<p>Pins and hooks angular Fat pad slightly palpable on point of pins</p>	<p>No fat pad on pins Visible corrugations halfway between tip and spine of short ribs</p>
<p>2.00: Corrugations visible three-fourths of the way from tip to spine</p>		<p>&lt; 2.00: Thurl prominent Saw-toothed spine</p>	



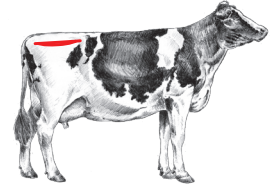
**≥ 3.25: Flattened U**

If the line forms a crescent or a flattened U, the BCS ≥ 3.25. Observe the sacral and tailhead ligaments next, as in the guide drawings below.



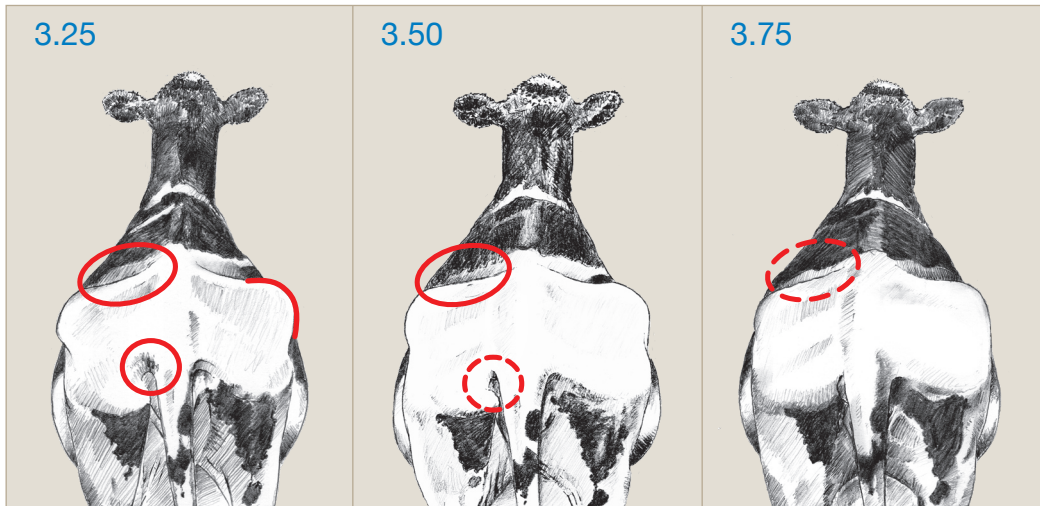
**≤ 3.00: Flattened V**

See reverse side.



**> 4.00: Straight line**

See below.



3.25

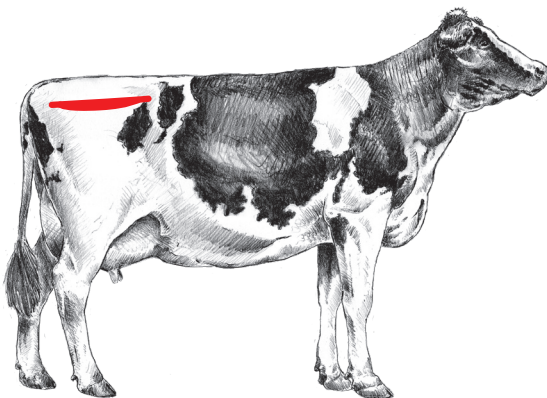
3.50

3.75

Sacral and tailhead ligaments both visible

Sacral ligament visible  
Tailhead ligament barely visible

Sacral ligament barely visible  
Tailhead ligament not visible



**> 4.00: Straight line**

If the line is nearly straight, the BCS > 4.00. Use the following indicators to determine the quarter-point value.

- 4.00: Flat thurl  
Sacral and tailhead ligaments not visible
- 4.25: Tip of short ribs barely visible
- 4.50: Flat thurl  
Buried pins
- 4.75: Hooks barely visible
- 5.00: All bony protrusions well rounded

