

BODY CONDITION SCORING (BCS)

ARE YOU ON TARGET?

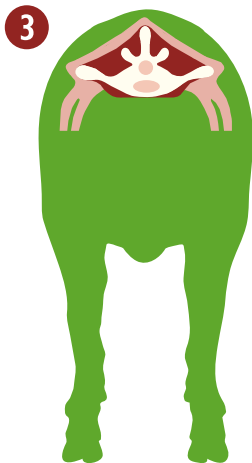
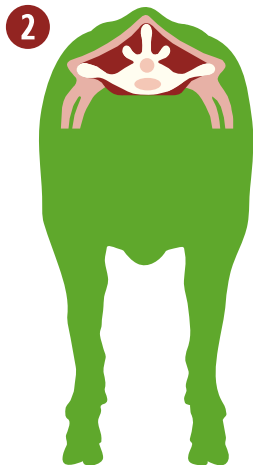
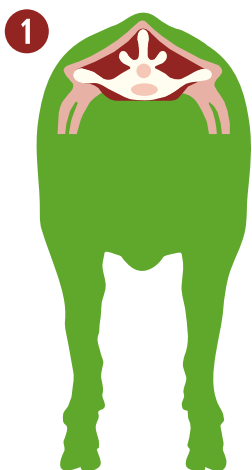
The key production drivers of profit in a sheep flock are:

1. Kilograms of lamb weaned per hectare
2. Weaning weight per lamb
3. Number of lambs weaned per hectare

→ Ewe body condition score will influence these three profit drivers ←

How to BCS?

- Run your hand over each ewe's spine and loin area, from the last rib to the hip bones.
- You are looking for fat covering the 'spinous processes' (the upward-pointing section of the spine) and the 'transverse processes' (the bony protrusions on either side of each vertebra).
- Remember to account for changes in wool cover between ewes; you're looking for fat/muscle covering the bone, not wool density.



Condition Score 1 -

- › Spine and vertebra pronounced and pointed.
- › Able to simply feel and push your fingertips underneath each vertebrae.
- › Loin depressed and shallow, with minimal fat cover.

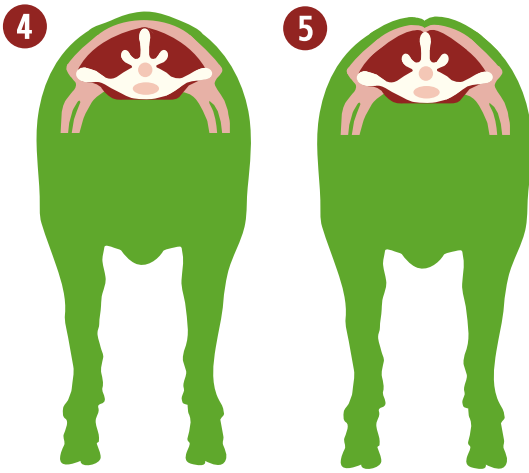
Condition Score 2 -

- › Spine still noticeable, but feels smoother, with individual vertebrae perceived as folds beneath the fat and muscle.
- › Still able to push your fingers below the transverse processes with light pressure.
- › Loin moderately deep, but with minimal fat cover.

Condition Score 3 -

- › Bony posterior of each vertebra is smooth and spherical.
- › Hard pressure required to feel the end of the vertebra.
- › Loin is full, with moderate fat cover.





Condition Score 4 -

- › Bone posteriors of each vertebra feels smooth and rounded.
- › Strong pressure needed to feel the end of the spine.
- › Loin is full and has a modest fat layer.

Condition Score 5 -

- › Not able to feel any region of the spine even with pressure applied.
- › Loin is extremely full and fatty.

Where your flocks BCS should be throughout the year

Timing	Small breeds of ewes (hill breeds)	Medium breeds of ewes (upland breeds)	Large breeds of ewes (lowland breeds)
Weaning	2.0	2.0	2.5
Mating	2.5	3.0	3.5
Mid Pregnancy	2.0	2.5	3.0
Late Pregnancy	2.0	2.5	3.0
Lambing	2.0	2.5	3.0
Eight weeks after lambing	2.0	2.0-2.5	2.5-3.0

Source: RSPCA welfare standards - Sheep - 2023

Adopting management practices based on BCS - DECISION TREE

What stage are you?

Weaning		Pre-tupping		Scanning	
Is your BCS below or above 3?		Is your BCS below or above 3?		Is your BCS below or above 3?	
ABOVE	BELOW	ABOVE	BELOW	ABOVE	BELOW
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to rotationally graze ewes on pasture and monitor their BCS regularly - Consider rotating the group behind other groups of ewes with lower BCS scores who require better quality grazing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the group receive the better quality grazing by running with ewe lambs or rotating ahead of the main flock - Carry out a Faecal Egg Count (FEC) test to determine if parasites are the problem - Blood sample ewes & ewe lambs to check trace elements levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to rotationally graze ewes on pasture and monitor their BCS regularly - Consider rotating the group behind other groups of ewes with lower BCS scores who require better quality grazing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the group receive the better quality grazing by running with ewe lambs or rotating ahead of the main flock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to rotationally graze ewes on pasture and monitor their BCS regularly - Consider rotating the group behind other groups of ewes with lower BCS scores who require better quality grazing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyse your silage to ensure the diet is providing optimal nutrition - Draft out lower condition twin bearing ewes & triplets and give a higher quality ration to meet their higher energy requirements - Blood test barren ewes to check for enzo, toxo and borders disease

› Ewes that persistently underperform following remedial action should be further investigated by your vet or culled from the flock.