

# Manage your beef herd for proper body condition

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Body Conditioning Scoring (BCS) is the best method for visually assessing the nutritional status of the cattle herd and for determining current and future feeding needs. The body condition scoring system runs from 1 to 9, with a 1 being extremely thin and a 9 being extremely obese. Many producers have found that a simple system is best: under-conditioned, optimum conditioned or over-conditioned. When the herd becomes "under-conditioned" (body condition score 4 or less), management steps should be taken to improve body condition. Nutritional deficiencies linked to thin, poorly conditioned cows can lead

to weak, unhealthy calves, unsuccessful rebreeding, and low milk production that can mean poor weaning weights and even sickness and death. "Optimum conditioned" would be body condition score 5-6 for mature cows or 6 to low 7 for heifers and first-calf cows. If cows are "optimum conditioned," particularly before calving, they are more likely to be better milk producers, rebreed in a timely manner, and wean a heavier calf. When the herd becomes "over-conditioned" (8 or higher), it may be time to evaluate stocking rate and production status. Over-conditioned cows are often not pregnant or have poor-performing calves.

A joint effort between  
UT Extension  
([animalscience.ag.utk.edu](http://animalscience.ag.utk.edu))  
and Co-op  
([www.ourcoop.com](http://www.ourcoop.com)).



Under Conditioned (BCS 2-3)

**Under-Conditioned Cows** do not rebreed efficiently. They do not milk as well and produce a less-than desirable calf that is more susceptible to illness. In good times and bad, they tend to be less profitable. Sort these cows into one group for additional feeding.

### Management Practices

1. Evaluate health status. Update parasite control and disease prevention, as needed.
2. Pregnancy-check cows. Cull open cows.
3. Test your hay and base your supplement program on the results.
4. Nutrition must be managed to support adequate average daily gain to increase body condition. The total diet should be:
  - a) 13 – 14% crude protein
  - b) 72 % TDN
  - c) Properly fortified with vitamins and minerals
5. Early weaning of calves.

### Co-op Hand-Fed Winter Supplementation Recommendations

- Co-op 16% Natural Cattle Supplement with Rumensin (#456)
- Co-op 14% Select Hi E Cattle Feed with Rumensin (#94176)
- Co-op 20% Range Cubes (#420 and #419)

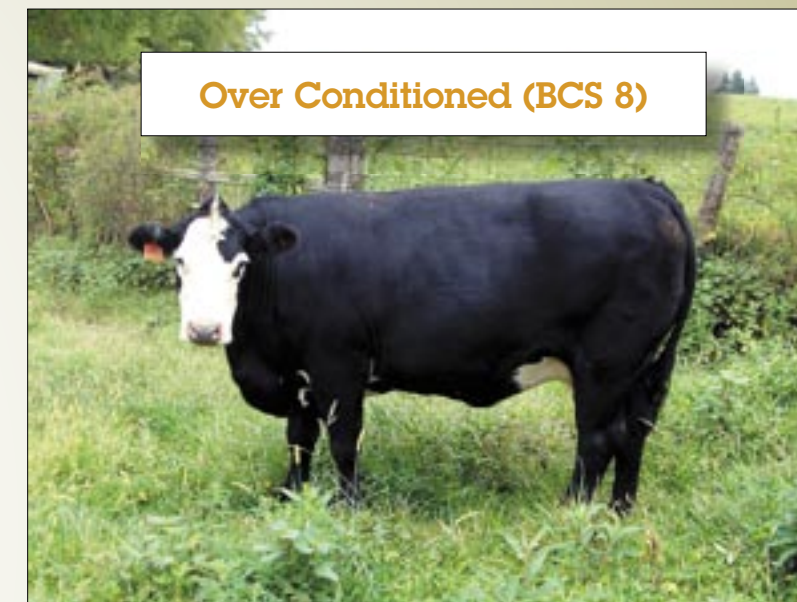


Optimum Conditioned (BCS 5-6)

Cows maintained in **Optimum Body Condition** are well suited to produce a healthy, vigorous calf each and every 365-day period. They rebreed quickly and efficiently, are nutritionally fit to produce plenty of milk, and raise a healthy, heavy calf. **The nutritional program should be designed to maintain optimum body condition.** Regardless of body condition, all cows should be pregnancy-checked and open cows culled.

### Co-op Winter Supplementation Recommendations

- Co-op 22% Supreme Repro Beef Cattle Mag Block (#613)
- Co-op 20% Cattle Mag Block (#615)
- Co-op 20% Range Cubes (#420 and #419)
- Sweetlix Tubs
- Pro-Lix Liquid Feeds



Over Conditioned (BCS 8)

**Over-Conditioned Cows** need little or no concentrate supplementation (only minerals) and can often thrive on lower-quality forage. Often, **Over-Conditioned Cows** are not as reproductively efficient, and they tend to produce less milk and are generally less productive and less profitable.

### Management Practices

1. Evaluate stocking rate. The potential may exist to run more cows per acre.
2. Pregnancy-check cows. Cull open cows.

### Co-op Free Choice Supplementation Recommendations

- Co-op Cow Supreme Hi-Mag Mineral (#638)
- Co-op 2:1 Hi-Mag Cattle Mineral (#675)
- Co-op Ultimate Hi-Mag Mineral (#96660)
- Co-op 20% Cattle Mag Block (#615)

These recommendations are for grass tetany season. For the remainder of the year, Co-op Minerals with lower magnesium levels provide UT-recommended levels of micro nutrients. Recent UT research has shown the importance of emphasizing trace minerals such as copper, selenium, and zinc as part of beef cattle supplementation. Proper levels of these minerals provide a better opportunity for disease prevention, efficient performance, and successful breeding.

For recommendations on your specific situation, contact your local Co-op feed specialist or Extension agent.