



## What does poor body condition of sows indicate?

- Nutritional requirements of lactating sows are high with a large litter size due to increased milk production.
- Highly productive sows, may have difficulties ingesting sufficient feed to match their milk production and requirements.
- Taking in too little nutrients can lead to intense catabolism resulting in poor body condition.



## Legal requirements



Council Directive **98/58/EC** states in the Annex "Natural or artificial breeding or breeding procedures which cause or are likely to cause suffering or injury to any of the animals concerned must not be practised. This provision shall not preclude the use of certain procedures likely to cause minimal or momentary suffering or injury, or which might necessitate interventions which would not cause lasting injury, where these are allowed by national provisions." {point 20}

"No animal shall be kept for farming purposes unless it can reasonably be expected, on the basis of its genotype or phenotype, that it can be kept without detrimental effect on its health or welfare." {Annex, point 21}

Council Directive **2008/120/EC** states: "No piglets shall be weaned from the sow at less than 28 days of age unless the welfare or health of the dam or the piglet would otherwise be adversely affected. However, piglets may be weaned up to seven days earlier if they are moved into specialised housings which are emptied and thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before the introduction of a new group and which are separated from housings where sows are kept, in order to minimise the transmission of diseases to the piglets." {Annex I, Chapter II, point C3}



*Note: Listed requirements are not comprehensive. Moreover, there might be stricter national legislation in place.*

## Inspection method (recommended)

- The farmer records sow body condition during his/her daily inspections.
- The official inspector checks veterinary records and sows for body condition.
- The inspector reports findings to farmer and in case of discrepancies between legal requirements and situation on farm corrective actions are taken.



View the sow from behind and also whilst standing alongside her. Consider how visible the ribs, and the spine, hip and pin bones of the sow are, and apply pressure with the palm of the hand.

For evaluation of underconditioned sows on herd level, calculate percentage of sows assessed as thin and too thin.

### No risk for welfare: Good

- Hip and pin bones are covered with tissue but can be felt when applying light pressure with the palm of the hand;
- Backbone is only visible in the shoulder region;
- The base of the tail is covered with tissue.



### Moderate risk for welfare: Thin

- Hip and back bones are slightly covered with tissue and can easily be felt when applying light pressure with the palm of the hand;
- Flanks and base of the tail are slightly sunken in;
- Only individual segments of backbone and ribs are visible.



### High risk for welfare: Too thin

- The sow appears visually very thin, with hip and pin bones clearly visible;
- Flanks and the base of tail are sunken in.
- Individual segments of backbone are visible along the whole spine;
- Individual ribs are clearly visible.



Source for the assessment method: KTBL Leitfaden and Welfare Quality® protocols



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