


Body Condition Score ©AssureWel

What does body condition indicate?

- In feeding systems where each individual can eat her daily diet in protection to other sows, group members show mostly good body condition.
- Without protection from each other, subordinate sows may be forced to retreat from food, which leads to underfeeding, whereas dominant sows eat as much as they can. 
- The assessment of body condition ensures whether each individual obtains sufficient food by the feeding system.

Inspection method (recommended)

- The farmer records **sow's body condition** during his/her daily inspections.
- The inspector verifies records of the farmer by comparing written/digital documentation with interventions taken by the farmer.
- Additionally, the inspector checks sows for body condition in different groups.
- The inspector reports findings to the farmer and in case of discrepancies between legal requirements and situation on farm corrective actions are taken.

Legal requirements

Council Regulation (EC) **No 2008/120**: Requirements associated with competition for resources:

{Article 3, Point 6.}: ensuring that each individual obtains sufficient food through feeding system, even when competitors for the food are present.

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 6.}: feeding once a day at least and simultaneously access to food, when not fed *ad libitum* or by an automatic system.

Note: Listed requirements are paraphrasing the literal text of the regulation and are not comprehensive. Moreover, there might be stricter national legislation in place. For a more detailed description on the specific requirements, see the review "[Group housing and mixing of sows](#)".

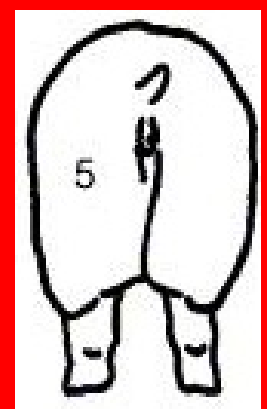
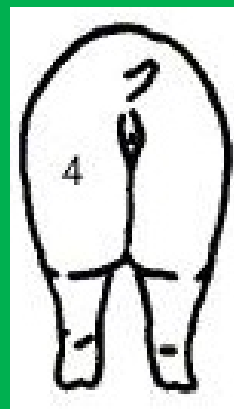
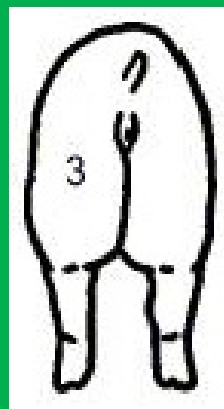
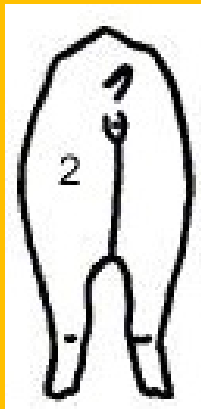
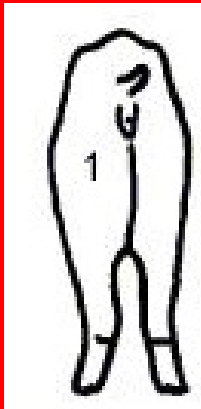


Body condition

Scoring method

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 too thin sows (BCS 1), and too thin and thin sows (BCS 1+2). Also, evaluate the proportion of fat sows (BCS 5).



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BCS 1: Too thin,

- Hip and pin bones are clearly visible.
- Flanks and the base of tail are sunken in.
- Spinal processes (of vertebrae) are clearly visible along the whole spine.
- Individual ribs are clearly visible.

BCS 2: Thin,

- Hip and pin bones are slightly covered with tissue and can be felt when applying heel of hand.
- Flanks and base of the tail are slightly sunken in.
- Only individual spinal processes (of vertebrae) and ribs are visible.

BCS 3: Good,

- Hip and pin bones are covered with tissue but can be felt when applying light pressure with heel of hand.
- Spinal processes (of vertebrae) are only visible in the shoulder region.
- The base of the tail is covered with tissue.

BCS 4: Very Good,

- Hip and pin bones are very well covered with tissue but can be felt when applying firm pressure with fingers/when palpating.
- Pelvis and ribs are not visible.
- Spinal processes (of the dorsal vertebrae) are not visible.
- Flanks are full.
- Slight fat wrinkles are visible around the base of the tail and on inner thighs.

BCS 5: Fat,

- Pelvis, ribs, dorsal and lumbar vertebrae cannot be felt even when applying firm pressure.
- The base of the tail is deeply sunken into the tissue and shows fat wrinkles.
- Strong fat wrinkles around on inner thighs.



All photos ©Boku, T. Leeb

Source: slightly adapted from *KTBL Leitfaden 2.0*: Schrader, L.; Schubbert, A.; Rauterberg, S.; Czyncholl, I.; Leeb, C.; Ziron, M.; Krieter, J.; Schultheiß, U.; Zapf, R. (2020): *Tierschutzindikatoren: Leitfaden für die Praxis – Schwein*. KTBL (Association for Technology and Structures in Agriculture), D-64289 Darmstadt, 2nd edition.



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