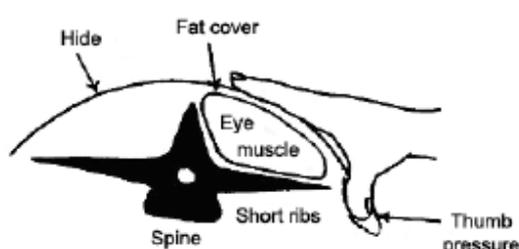
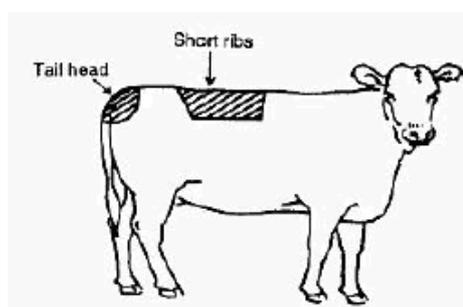


# BEEF CATTLE

## BODY CONDITION SCORING

*This fact sheet applies to beef cattle and applies in most hobby farm situations. Condition scoring for dairy cattle is done differently so, if you have a house cow that you milk for home consumption, please seek advice on how to assess its body condition score.*

This method provides a simple and reasonably reliable way of estimating the body fat reserves in your cattle. You feel two areas of the cow – the short ribs and around the tail head.



Put your fingers flat over the short ribs and press your thumb into the end of them – as in the picture. You score according to the ease with which you can feel the individual short ribs with your thumb.

You then feel the tail head in the same way and score according to how much palpable fat can be felt.

- 0 Emaciated.
- 1 The individual short rib ends are sharp to the touch and there is no tail head fat. The hip bones and ribs are prominent.
- 2 The individual short rib ends can be easily felt but feel rounded rather than sharp. There is some tissue cover around the tail head. Individual ribs are no longer easy to see.
- 3 The short rib ends can only be felt with firm thumb pressure. Fat cover can be easily felt either side of the tail head.
- 4 The short rib ends can't be felt and the fat cover either side of the tail head is easily seen as slight mounds. You can just start to see folds of fat developing over the ribs and thighs.
- 5 You can't see the bone structure of the cow and the tail head is just about buried in fatty tissue.

**The ideal body score\* is in the range 2.5 to 4**

*\*Please note that, when hand feeding extensive beef cattle herds in drought conditions, a condition score of 2 is an acceptable target providing there is no intention of breeding from them. But maintaining cattle in this “store condition” requires considerable skill and it is strongly recommended that hobby farmers do not attempt it. Stay within scores 2.5 to 4 and you minimise the risk of health and welfare problems.*

*Body condition score chart and both pictures courtesy of Agriculture Victoria.*

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