Appendix 10: Body Condition Scoring For Sows

Introduction:

Body Condition Scoring can contribute significantly to good management of sows in all settings. Body condition scoring provides a clear indication of both the appropriateness of the feed and the effectiveness of the feed delivery system.

The scoring technique provided below is simple and can be quickly learned. Body Condition Scoring requires that various areas of the sow's body be felt to determine fat covering.

Suggested scoring guide

A scale from 1 (emaciated) to 5 (obese) is used in the scoring system which combines both visual appraisal and feel. Visual appraisal alone is not good enough: handling the pig is essential to get an accurate assessment of condition.

Figure 4 shows the various locations on the pig's body which can be palpated to determine body condition (source: Queensland Government, Department of Primary Industries).
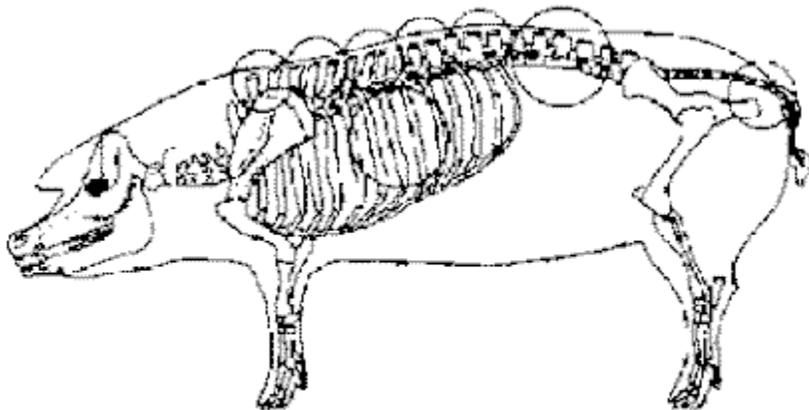

Figure 4: Palpation points for body condition scoring.

Table 1. Condition scoring guide

Score	Appearance	Pelvic Bones	Loin	Ribs
1	Emaciated	Very prominent. Deep cavity around tail head.	Vertebrae are prominent and sharp. Very narrow loin. Hollow flank.	Individual ribs are very prominent.
2	Thin	Obvious with slight cover.	Narrow loin. Flank rather hollow. Slight cover on spine, but prominent vertebrae.	Rib cage less apparent but individual ribs easily detected with slight pressure.
3	Ideal	Covered but felt with pressure.	Spine covered and rounded.	Ribs are covered but can be felt with pressure.
4	Fat	Only felt with firm pressure. No cavity around tail.	Difficult to feel vertebrae. Flank filled.	Rib cage not visible and difficult to feel.
5	Obese	Impossible to feel and huge fat deposits (hanging skin and fat).	Thick fat cover, impossible to feel bones. Flank full and rounded.	Thick fat cover, not possible to feel ribs.

Condition score 1:
The sow is visually thin, with hips and backbone very prominent and no fat cover over hips and backbone.

Condition score 2:
The hip bones and backbone are easily felt without any pressure on the palms.

Condition score 3:
It takes firm pressure with the palm to feel the hip bones and backbone.

Condition score 4:
It is impossible to feel the bones at all even with pressure on the palm of the hands.

Condition score 5:
The sow is carrying so much fat that it is impossible to feel the hip bones and backbone even by pushing down with a single finger.

In practice very few extreme (1 or 5) scores are found in well managed pig herds, while scores of 1 or 4 will be rarely seen. The majority of sows should fall into the middle

scoring range (2 or 3). To cover this middle range adequately, half scores may be used (1.5 to 3.5).

Sows should not enter the farrowing house with a condition of less than 3. Condition score of an individual sow may fall to 2.5 during lactation but a score of 2 or less is not acceptable and producers should take steps to avoid this problem.

Although each of the scale points has a definite description, the system still has an element of subjectivity as different stock-people may score the same sow slightly differently within the half-point system. However the important point is to arrive at a consistency of scoring on the unit. Then use an external visitor, your vet or consultant, to check your scores to ensure you are somewhere "in line" with common practice.

Timing:

Sows should be condition scored at weaning, at service, mid-gestation and at farrowing. Body condition lost during lactation needs to be regained during gestation.

Date: _____   Body Condition Scores: 1 = emaciated   5 = fat

1_ 2_ 3_ 4_ 5_ 6 _7_ 8_ 9_ 10_ 11_ 12 _ 13 _ 14 _ 15 _ 16 _ 17 _ 18 _ 19 _ 20 _
21 _ 22 _ 23 _ 24 _ 25 _ 26 _ 27 _ 28 _ 29 _ 30 _ 31 _ 32 _ 33 _ 34 _ 35 _ 36 _
37 _ 38 _ 39 _ 40 _ 41 _ 42 _ 43 _ 44 _ 45 _ 46 _ 47 _ 48 _ 49 _ 50 _

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21 _ 22 _ 23 _ 24 _ 25 _ 26 _ 27 _ 28 _ 29 _ 30 _ 31 _ 32 _ 33 _ 34 _ 35 _ 36 _
37 _ 38 _ 39 _ 40 _ 41 _ 42 _ 43 _ 44 _ 45 _ 46 _ 47 _ 48 _ 49 _ 50 _

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37 _ 38 _ 39 _ 40 _ 41 _ 42 _ 43 _ 44 _ 45 _ 46 _ 47 _ 48 _ 49 _ 50 _

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