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Body Condition Scores for Deer

Body Condition Scoring allows you to monitor the health and condition of your deer. Optimal Body Condition in bucks will allow for greater antler growth. Does will be more fertile: produce more high-quality milk, resulting in healthier, faster growing fawns. The Purina Mills Body Condition Scoring System allows you to visually score your deer based on fat coverage on several key body areas. Ideal Body Condition Scores lies between 3-4 (can be as high as 4.5 just prior to the rut, especially in bucks).

- 1. POOR** - Deer is emaciated. Majority of ribs are prominent during summer and visible but less distinct in winter. Spine appears sharp with a steep muscle angle and prominent sawtooth appearance from the side. Hip bone is clearly visible with sharp edges, surrounded by sunken muscles at the rump. Tail head is devoid of fat and framed by deep sunken depressions on each side, resulting in sharp looking pin bones. Belly is tucked high with hollow flanks and a sharp shelf. Brisket is thin and narrow.
- 2. LEAN** - Deer is thin. Many ribs visible but not prominent during summer. In winter, ribs are slightly prominent. Spine is evident but not sharp, with somewhat steep muscle angle and mild sawtooth side appearance. Hip bone is clearly seen, with sharp edges and slightly sunken rump muscles. Tail head displays sunken depressions on each side, with sharp pin bones and a small amount of observable fat.
- 3. PRIME** - Deer is strong, muscular and healthy. Ribs should be slightly visible but not sharp during warmer months. Ribs are nicely covered in flesh and not visible in winter. Spine is visible, but not prominent, and surrounded by moderately sloping muscles. No "sawtoothing" of the spine is visible. Rump clearly visible but not sharp, featuring flat, angular muscles. Tail head reflects slight hollows at either side, rounded pin bone and a small bit of fat. Belly has a slight depression with slight shelf and lean appearance with no fat rolls. Slightly rounded brisket.
- 4. HEAVY** - Deer is healthy, but carrying a few extra pounds, considered normal and healthy prior to rut. Ribs are not visible. Spine is not readily seen, with adjoining muscles rising at a gentle slope. Hips are full with hip bone barely visible. Slight depression can be seen beside tail head. Pin bones appear rounded and smooth. Flank is full with no shelf. Slight fat rolls developing. Brisket appears full and rounded.
- 5. OBESE** - Does may have reproductive problems. Ribs are layered in fat. Spine lies buried in fat, surrounded by rounding muscles with little to no slope. Hip bone is hidden by fat. Rump appears full and overly round. Tail head is covered with rounding at each side, pin bones are buried in fat. Belly is distended, with full flank and no shelf. Fat rolls are clearly evident at the midline and brisket.

Does Purina make



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Body Condition Score Chart For Deer



Deer Industry
New Zealand

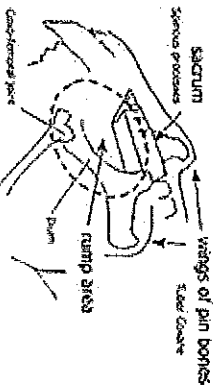
P P
Passion Profit

Visual assessment of the body condition of live deer is difficult. A thick coat can disguise actual body condition. The only reliable method of assessing a live animal's body condition is by hands-on palpation. Ideally, deer should be standing straight and quiet.

Landmarks used for body conditioning scoring are:

- Wings of pelvis/ pin bone: estimation of depth of tissue over the tuber coxae (pin bone).
- Sacrum: appraisal of the sharpness of spinous process on top of the sacrum.
- Rump area: appraisal of muscle mass and fat cover beside the sacrum.
- Spine: muscle along the spine (L. dors) becomes concave in poor condition deer.

If deer bend their back legs under palpation pressure, the assessment of the wings of the pelvis should be ignored. Scores range from 1 to 5 as described below with half unit increments.



Score 1: Very Poor Condition (Cachectic)
Wings of pin bones are extremely prominent and sharp. Sacral spinous processes are very sharp. There is little muscle in the rump and no fat cover. The rump areas are very concave at palpation.



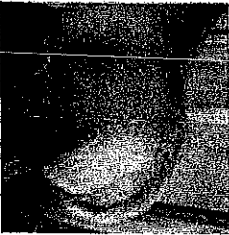
Score 2: Poor Condition (Leanness)
Wings of pin bones are prominent and very easily felt by palpation without finger pressure. Sacral spinous processes are also prominent. The rump areas are slightly concave.



Score 3: Moderate Condition
Wings of pin bones are prominent, but rounded and can be easily felt by palpation with slight finger pressure. Sacral spinous processes are slightly enveloped and not prominent. The rump areas are flat.



Score 4: Good Condition
Wings of pin bones are rounded and can be felt by palpation under a thin layer of fat. Sacral spinous processes are enveloped and are felt by palpation only with firm finger pressure. The rump areas are slightly rounded.



Score 5: Very Good Condition (Fat)
Wings of pin bones are concealed under a thick layer of fat and cannot be felt by palpation with firm finger pressure. Sacral spinous processes are well developed and not felt at palpation. The rump areas are rounded.

If the body condition score of any deer falls below 2, immediate action must be taken to prevent further deterioration and any risk to animal health and welfare. Farmers must comply with the requirement of the Deer Code of Welfare.

