

4.5 Stock condition

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Stock condition

- Monitoring livestock condition score or liveweight is critical to being able to objectively assess performance over time
- Particularly important where stock are receiving supplementary feed to ensure that what is being fed is meeting stock needs

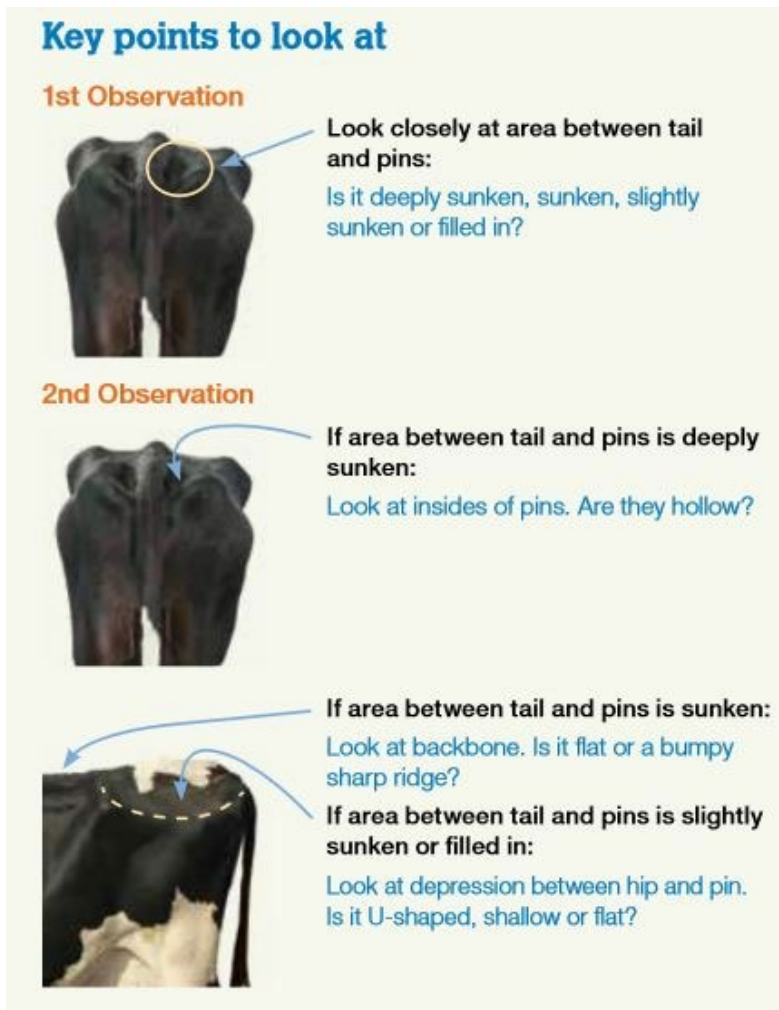


Condition score

Varies between species as to where score is evaluated

Assesses amount of fat and muscle tissue according to graphical image and what is felt/observed

See left for a dairy cattle example



<https://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/en/animal-management-and-milk-quality/fertility/body-condition-scoring#.YFXjbYtxW-Y>



Condition score

- Condition scoring a cow at times is simpler than scoring a fleece bearing animal as the fleece hides the animals score visually
- What is condition scoring useful
 - Quick to perform once educated
 - Cheap – only needs yards and then labour, low infrastructure costs
 - Do need something to record information, ideally to each animal, so can revisit. May just be group average.
- Needs to be repeated regularly e.g. every 3-4 weeks
- Assess how adequate diet is and if need more/less or different diet



Weighing

- Many livestock now have e-IDs from NLIS requirements, almost all livestock in Victoria do (all sheep and cattle)
- If enterprise has electronic scales and can link this with panel or stick reader then can rapidly collect individual weight, particularly with a panel reader. Allows more regularity in monitoring as very rapid.
- Higher infrastructure costs but can evaluate smaller variations (care with time off feed or when measured after feed)
- A condition score change in a Friesian might be 50kg whereas much smaller changes can be observed using weight



General assessment

- In addition to condition score and weighing a good shepherd (person that looks after the livestock) will note general animal behaviour over time and any feed impacts e.g. how well do animals come to feed and stay with the feed
- This can precede changes in bodyweight

