

Market in a Timely Manner

# Chute Side Quality, Defect and Culling Guide



Manage Every Animal for Quality—Monitor Every Animal in the Chute

## AGING 1

Knowing the age of the cows in the herd is a must to make effective management decisions. The best method for monitoring cow age is through a record keeping system that you understand and use. However if records are not available here are a few aids to help you determine a cow's age. Cattle need teeth to graze and eat efficiently.



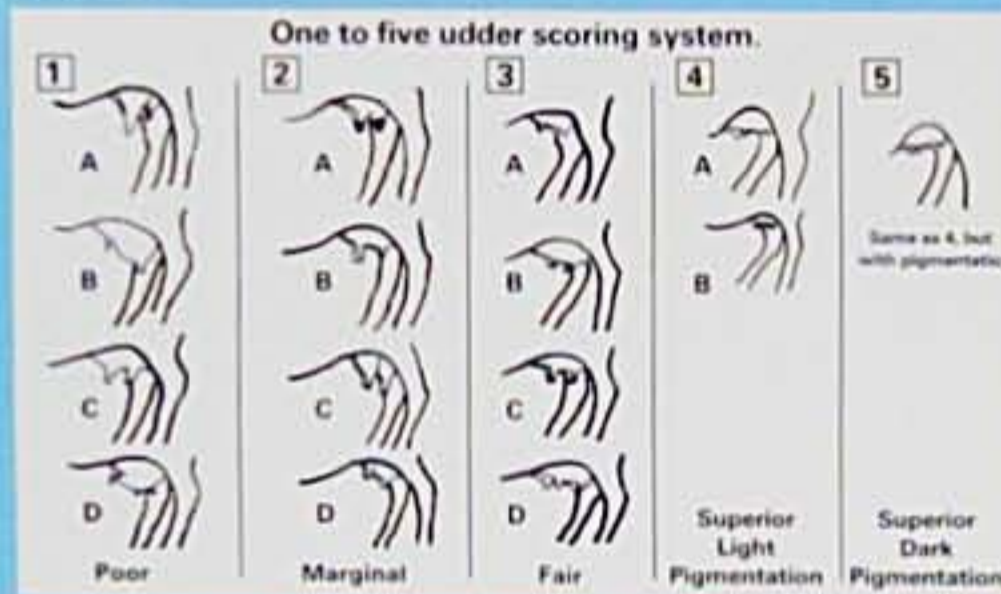
Photos: Auburn University

## UDDER SCORING 2

The following udder scoring system was devised by a commercial ranch couple who took many photographs of their cows at calving and developed categories (scores 1 to 5) that required various levels of human intervention. The best score is "5" but is only superior to a "4" because of pigmentation which is a major advantage in snow covered regions to prevent sunburned udders.

The system uses a "1" to "5" combined udder teat score system while accepting the different appearances (A, B, C, D) that can occur within each score. For example, a "5" or "4" require no intervention whereas a "1" will definitely require intervention to avoid a spoiled quarter, mastitis, or to allow the newborn to nurse. A "3" will generally not require any intervention. A "2" may require intervention and if found in a young cow will surely get worse the following lactation. The "1's" are definite culls and their daughters should be avoided as replacements when possible. The "2's" should be culled as economic conditions allow. Preference is given to daughters of "5's" and "4's" for replacements.

Other scoring systems are available and in use by the various breed associations however, the system can be universally applied.

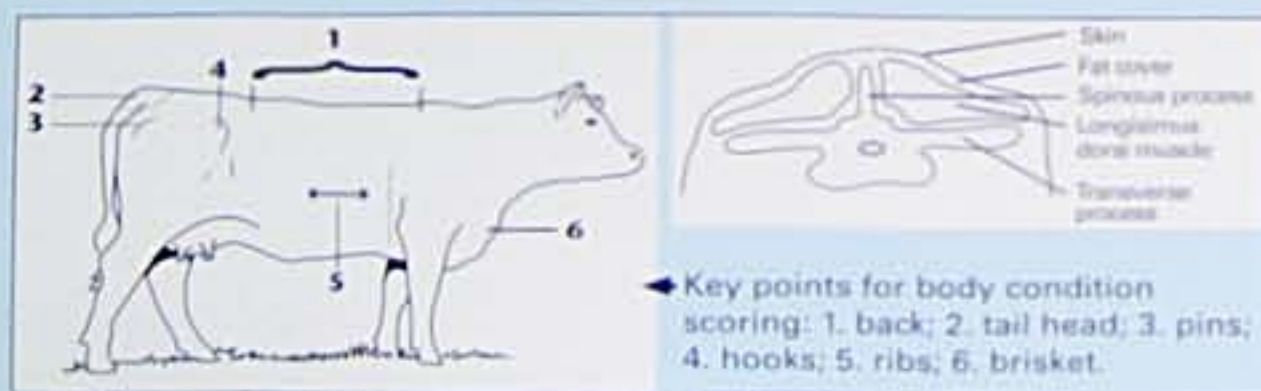


Source: The Beef Cow Mammary System — Ron Torell, Nevada Livestock Specialist & Robert Pawelek, Oregon State University

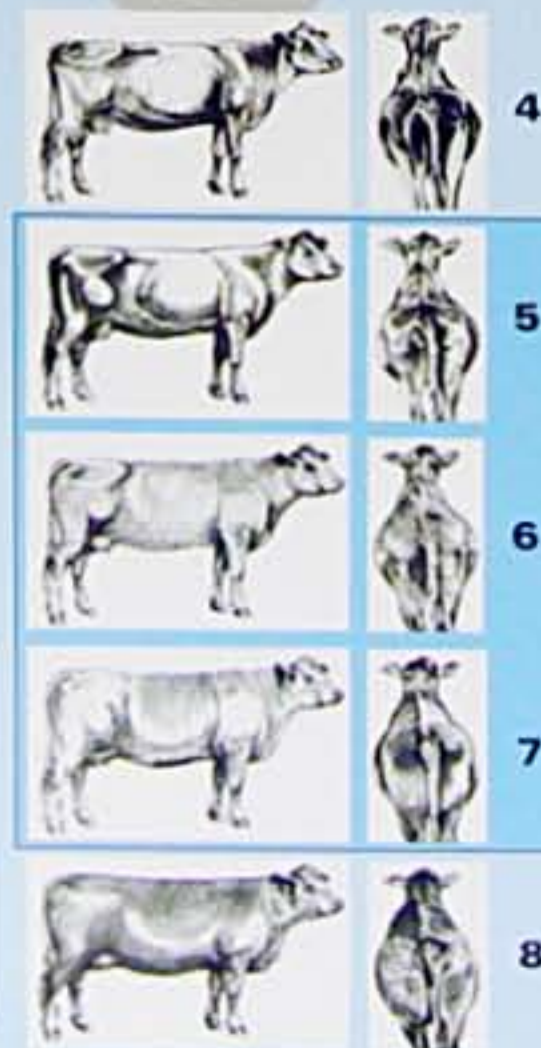
## BODY CONDITION SCORING (BCS) 3

Body Condition Scoring (BCS) is a useful management tool for distinguishing differences in nutritional needs of the cows in the herd. BCS range from 1 to 9, with a score of 1 being extremely thin and 9 being very obese. Cows should have a BCS of 5 to 7 at calving and a 5-6 at breeding. Fat slaughter cows have more trim and wastage when harvested. Thin cows bruise more easily.

Beef cows will utilize nutritional resources in the following manner:



Source: New Mexico State University — Cooperative Extension Service Circular 575



Source: Beef Production: Multiple & Management, 5th Edition, Animal Health Publications, Brigham City, Utah

## DISPOSITION 4

Disposition — One method to measure temperament is by using a chute score. Chute scores are determined while animals are in the chute and as they exit the chute. Cattle with a high chute score should be culled because of safety concerns for both the handler and the animal. Cattle with poor temperament (typically) have poorer gains and a higher percentage of dark cutting carcasses (both of) which are less profitable for the producer.

Cattle chute score:

**Score 1 — Docile.** Mild disposition. Gentle and easily handled. Stands and moves slowly during processing. Undisturbed, settled, somewhat dull. Does not pull on headgate when in chute. Exits chute calmly.

**Score 2 — Restless.** Quieter than average, but may be stubborn during processing. May try to back out of chute or pull back on headgate. Some flicking of tail. Exits chute promptly.

**Score 3 — Nervous.** Typical temperament is manageable, but nervous and impatient. A moderate amount of struggling, movement and tail flicking. Repeated pushing and pulling on headgate. Exits chute briskly.

**Score 4 — Flighty (Wild).** Jumpy and out of control, quivers and struggles violently. May bellow and froth at the mouth. Continuous tail flicking. Defecates and urinates during processing. Frantically runs fence line and may jump when penned individually. Exhibits large flight zone and exits chute wildly.

**Score 5 — Aggressive.** May be similar to Score 4, but with added aggressive behavior, fearfulness, extreme agitation, and continuous movement which may include jumping and bellowing while in chute. Exits chute frantically and may exhibit attack behavior when handled alone.

**Score 6 — Very Aggressive.** Extremely aggressive temperament. Thrashes about or attacks wildly when confined in small, tight places. Pronounced attack behavior.

Cattle with Chute scores of 5 and 6 should be culled.



"John doesn't cull cows with bad disposition, he just dresses for the occasion."

Source: BF Guidelines

## EYES 5

Monitoring the eyes of beef cattle on a routine basis is important. Repeated examinations allow the producer to become familiar with the normal appearance of the eye. Regular exams will allow the producer to market animals in a timely manner. The most damaging eye problem, from a beef quality standpoint is cancer eye. Skin color and sun exposure have a direct relationship to cancer eye in beef cattle. Cattle with light skin pigmentation and white faces are more susceptible to the disease. Cattle with confirmed case of cancer eye should be culled, because as the problem progresses the cull value of the cow decreases dramatically. Extreme cases will result in condemnation of the carcass.



"Bovine Ocular Squamous Cell Carcinoma" commonly called Cancer Eye

Source: BQA fact sheet and R. Helmreich

## STRUCTURE 6

The monitoring of structural soundness is a necessary management exercise that aids the producer in maintaining a cowherd that has minimal lameness problems. There are two common types of lameness: arthritic joints and foot and hoof problems. Excess hoof growth can lead to curling toes and eventual misalignment of the feet and leg bones. This may result in tendon and joint problems that create lameness. Below are a few examples of hoof problems that could impact the locomotion of the cow. Lameness creates problems when they enter the marketing chain. Lameness cows return fewer dollars to the producer when compared to non-lame cows. Non-ambulatory cattle can no longer be marketed.



Source: Cattle Lameness Buyer's Guide

## INJECTION SITE 7

All intramuscular (IM) and subcutaneous (SQ) injections must be given in the neck region. IM injections must be within the outlined triangle region of the animal's neck.

Improperly administered injections increase tissue damage that ultimately reduces the animal's value and quality due to the occurrence of lesions, abscesses, scar tissue in the muscle, and trim losses.

