

Body Condition of Beef Cows Must Be Maintained

Beef producers must maintain the body condition of cows if they expect the cows to breed back within a reasonable time. In addition, cows need adequate body condition so they will have strong calves at birth.

Cows should go into the winter in good body condition. It is difficult to improve body condition score during the winter since the quality of hay available for winter feeding could be questionable. Rainfall in the spring results in hay being harvested at a more mature stage and a lot of hay received rainfall before the curing process could be completed. Lower quality hay may cause cows to lose body condition as the winter progresses. Producers should condition score their cow herd now. This will serve as a base from which to evaluate cows later in the winter. If body condition starts to decrease then additional energy will need to be provided.

A scale of one to nine is used to evaluate the condition of cows. A condition score of one is a very thin cow and a score of 9 is a very fat cow. Ask your local Extension agent for a copy of the fact sheet BSH-B152, "Body Condition Scoring Beef Cattle". Producers need to keep cows in the middle of the range throughout the year. Cows should be at a condition score of five at calving and maintained at that level through breeding. Replacement heifers should be fed to be in a condition of a five plus to a six.