

New Zealand Dairy Industry

Body Condition Score Assessor Certification Programme

Code of Practice





The development of this programme has been funded by DairyNZ and the Ministry for Primary Industries through the Transforming the Dairy Value Chain Primary Growth Partnership.

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Developed by DairyNZ – Version 2, July 2017

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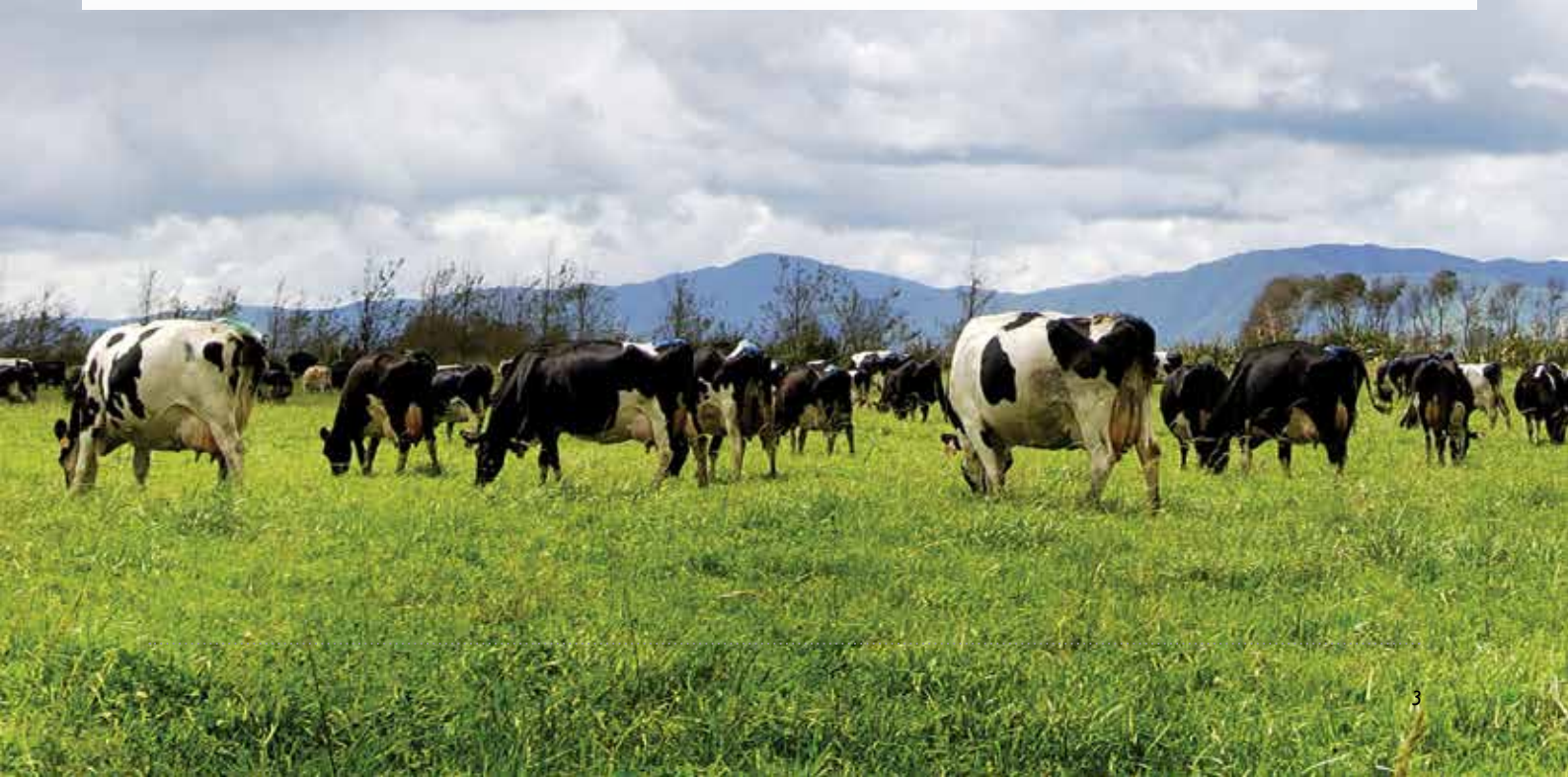
FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of content covered in this Code of Practice, we welcome any feedback and improvements you may have.

Feedback to: **BCScertification@dairynz.co.nz**

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Programme Structure

The Body Condition Score Assessor Certification Programme (programme) has been established to support the use of body condition scoring as a tool for dairy herd management.

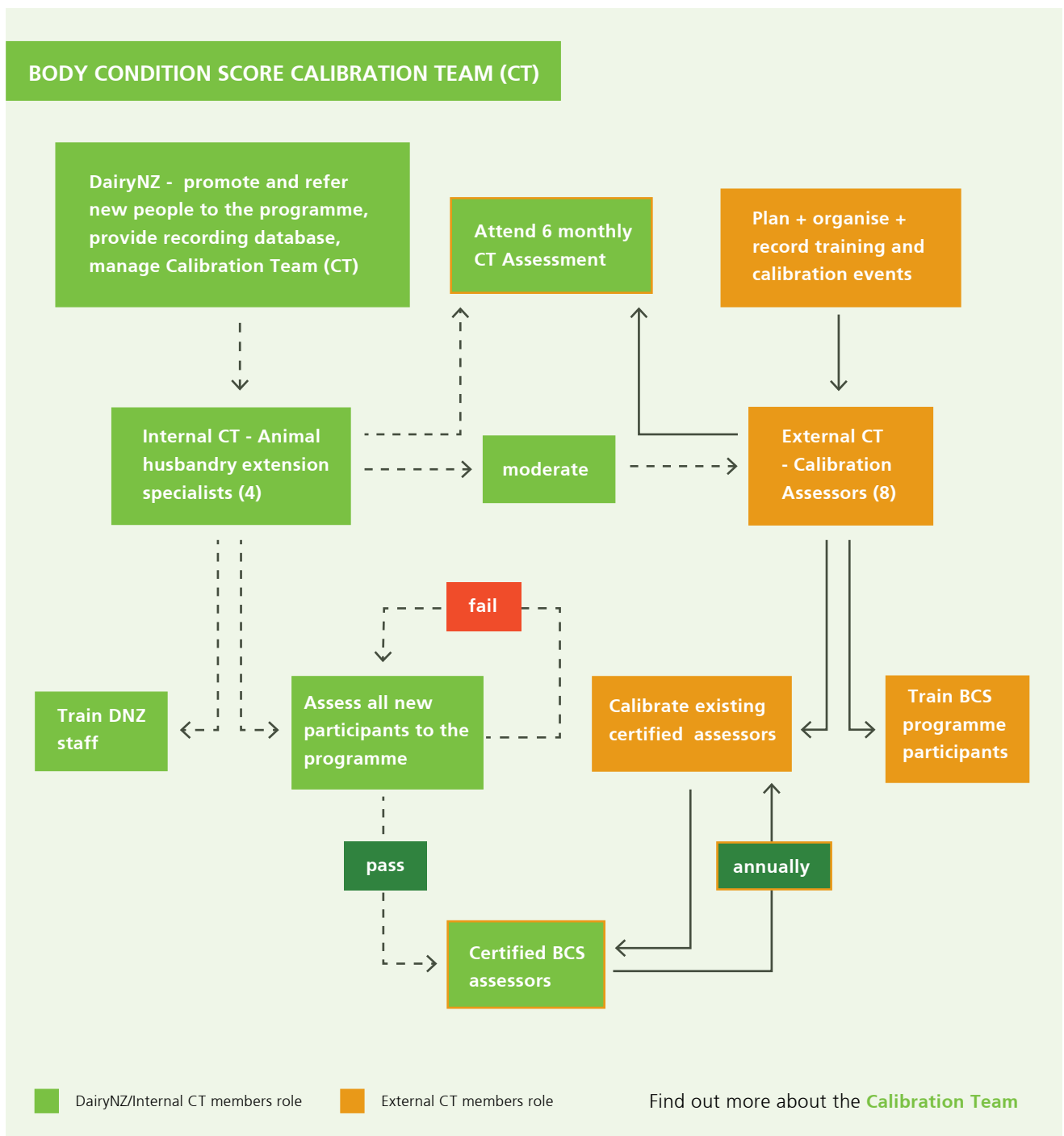
The programme is designed to help standardise condition scoring so that farmers seeking to use the services of a Certified Body Condition Score (BCS) Assessor can be confident that their chosen assessor has the experience required and is consistently scoring to the DairyNZ BCS national reference standards.

The programme started in 2012 and in 2017 the programme was modified. The following outlines the 2017 Programme Structure. This Code of Practice (CoP) documents the programme processes and the professional practice expectations of those certified under the programme.



1.1 The Calibration Team

The Calibration team, train, assess and calibrate programme participants. The Calibration Team (CT) is made up of four internal DairyNZ Animal Husbandry Extension Specialists (AHES) and eight external Rural Professionals (Calibration Assessors) who are a mix of veterinarians and consultants. The diagram below outlines the Calibration Team roles:



1.2 How to become a Certified BCS Assessor



Attend training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not compulsory but highly recommended for everyone • For more information and to register: BCS Training Events
Prior to Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For more information and to register: BCS Assessment Events • Familiarise yourself with the BCS Assessor Certification Code of Practice and agree to abide by it • Download the BCS Tracker App onto your android or iphone – it will be used for recording assessment (alternative recording options will be provided for those who cannot use the app) • Practise scoring before sitting a certification assessment using the app
Achieve certification status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass on-farm assessment using the app (or alternative). See BCS Assessment Events for assessment criteria • Your name and contact details will be listed on the Certified BCS Assessors page unless you request for it not to be • You will be sent the Certified BCS Assessor logo to use

1.3 How to maintain certification

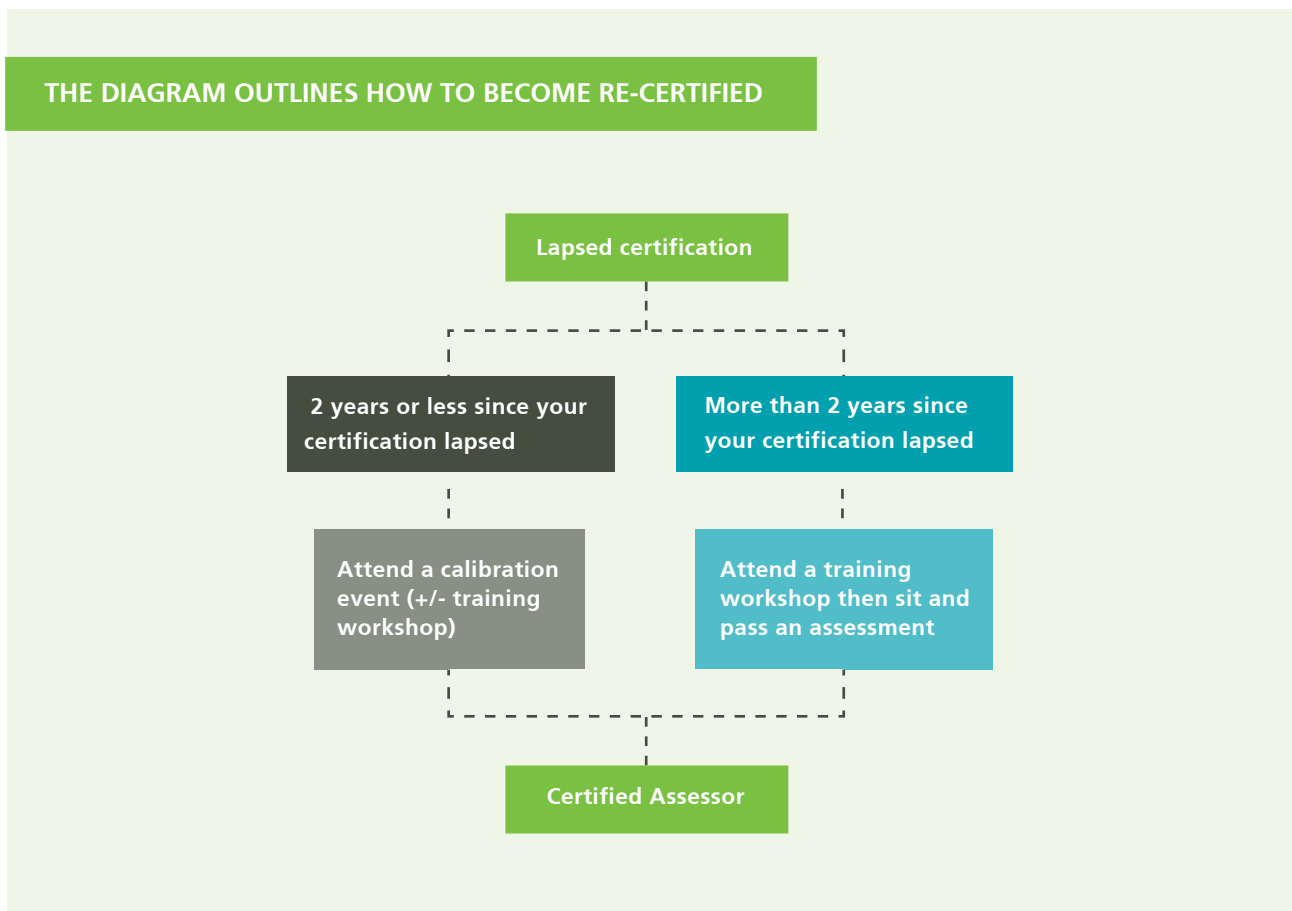
Attendance at an annual on-farm calibration event is required to maintain certification. Failure to meet this requirement will result in loss of certification status.



Attend calibration event	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One year after your previous successful assessment or calibration• For more information and to register: BCS Calibration Events• Details about the format and requirements of the event are outlined on the BCS Calibration Events page
Maintain BCS Certification Assessor status	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing you fully attend the calibration event your certification will be extended for a further year and your details will remain on the Certified BCS Assessors page unless you request for it not to be• You can continue to use the Certified BCS Assessor logo• If your calibration report demonstrates significant drift (outside the “pass” criteria for an assessment) the recommendation will be for you to attend another calibration in 6 months time.

1.4 Lapsed Certification

Certification will be considered lapsed if a calibration event is not attended within 14 months of your previous assessment/calibration. Your name and details will be removed from the **Certified BCS Assessors** page and you will not be entitled to use the BCS Certified Assessor logo.



Attendance at a **training event** is not compulsory for those who have let their certification lapse but is recommended, particularly for those who need to sit an assessment or those who have done limited scoring since they were last certified.

1.5 Complaints process

The Programme has in place a process by which clients of Certified BCS Assessors may lodge a complaint about the performance of an assessor. Only complaints relating to issues arising while the assessors certification is current will be accepted.

Agreement to this process is a condition of being a Certified BCS Assessor.

Details can be accessed at: [Complaints process](#)

If a certified assessor has a complaint please email the BCS programme manager BCScertification@dairynz.co.nz

1.6 Supporting information

Professional Interaction

Many Assessors will already be members of professional organisations and operating under Codes of Professional Conduct relevant to interactions with BCS clients and aligned professionals.

For example:

- Veterinary Council of New Zealand
- New Zealand Institute of Primary Industry Management Incorporated (NZIPIM)

Membership of relevant professional organisation(s) is encouraged. Assessors not currently affiliated with any relevant professional organisation will ensure they are familiar with, and operate to, the principles contained within **NZIPIM code of ethics** and rules of conduct.

1.7 Take home messages

- All information pertaining to the programme can be found at **BCS Assessor Certification Programme**
- The latest version of the BCS Assessor Certification CoP can be found on the **Certified BCS Assessors** page
- Download the **BCS Tracker App** onto your android or iphone and use at assessment and calibration events (as well as when scoring on farm)
- Understanding and being familiar with the **Complaints process** is a condition of being a Certified BCS Assessor
- Assessors not currently affiliated with any relevant professional organisation will ensure they are familiar with, and operate to, the principles contained within **NZIPIM code of ethics** and rules of conduct

Expectations of a Certified BCS Assessor

Certified BCS Assessors are expected to follow the programme processes outlined below when providing body condition scoring (BCS) services to clients. Many Assessors, or their employers, will already have procedures in place that satisfactorily meet these programme expectations.

2.1 Pre-scoring information

What to do before the day

- Collect farm/herd/mob information
- Match BCS assessment type to need of client
- Explain limitations on use of BCS results
- Establish where scoring will occur and discuss potential limitations
- Establish farm personnel requirements on day of assessment
- Biosecurity

2.2 Scoring procedure

What to do on the day

- Postponement
- Health and safety
- Biosecurity procedures
- Equipment list
- Standard scoring procedure
 - paddock
 - race
 - rotary and herringbone dairies

2.3 Reporting to client

What to include

- Animal welfare compliance
 - cows of concern
- BCS results report
 - mob/herd score
 - individual score
 - disclaimer
- Programme reporting tools

Pre-scoring information

3.1 Prior to providing BCS assessment service we recommend you

Collect Farm and mob/herd pre-scoring information

- Farm identification (milk supply number)
- Client and farmer (if not the client) contact name/s
- Mob ID/name
- Number of cows in mob
- Location of scoring

Match BCS assessment type to need

Refer to the table "Purpose of BCS Assessment" on page 11.

Explain limitations on use of BCS results

The body condition scores that result from an assessment are a measure at a point of time. Sick or injured cows may influence BCS over a short period. Seasonal, environmental, animal management and individual animal genetic and physiology factors may lead to noticeable changes in scores over time .

Establish where scoring will occur and discuss potential limitations

See Section Four for potential issues relating to scoring cows in the farm dairy.

Establish farm personnel requirements on day of assessment, who will:

- ensure cows to be scored are easily accessible and identifiable (any duplicate IDs or mismatched eartags and EID have been resolved before visit)
- provide a Health and Safety induction on arrival
- be present at the time of scoring*

* Recommended where scoring is for the following purposes:

Purpose	Farm Personnel Requirement
Fitness for transporting stock	Present throughout scoring/drafting of cows
Sale and Purchase of stock	Present to identify which animals are part of sale/purchase agreement
Grazing, Sharemilking, Contract milking, Lease contracts	As defined in the contract

Biosecurity

Stand-down after international travel - do not visit farms within three days of returning from Central or South America, any part of Asia or any part of Africa. Stand-down periods may also be appropriate for other countries, depending on their disease status at the time of travel.

Note: Assessors need to request permission to bring additional visitors onto the farm.

3.2 Purpose of BCS Assessment

BCS Purpose	Recommended time	Type
Farm planning key times for reproduction or feed management	Approx. 80 days after calving ² to assess the success of the management strategy	Mob/herd profile ³ or individual BCS
	Approx. 160 days after calving ³ to plan feed requirements for summer/autumn	Mob/herd profile or individual BCS
	Approx. 220 days after calving <i>(most important time)</i>	Individual cow's BCS
	90 days before the planned start of calving	Mob/herd profile or individual BCS
	At the planned start of calving to assess the success of the management strategy	Mob/herd profile or individual BCS
Contractual sale and purchase⁴	Anytime	Mob/herd profile, with outliers identified, or as contract dictates
Contractual grazing, sharemilking, contract milking, lease⁵	At start and finish, or as contract dictates	Mob/herd profile with outliers identified, or as contract dictates
Animal health	Assessment of fitness before transport	Individual cow's BCS
	Screening for at risk animals eg. illness or injury ⁶	Individual cow's BCS
	Monitoring for absentee owners	Mob/herd profile, outliers identified
	Animal Welfare investigations	Individual scores corresponding
Feed management effectiveness	Other than key times	Mob/herd profile or individual BCS
Traits Other Than Production (data collected for NZAEL)	Primarily spring	Individual score

¹ Appendix 1 "BCS Targets and Advice" provides more information.

² Start of calving.

³ A mob/herd profile is an in paddock assessment of at least 70 randomly selected cows from across the whole paddock, with or without individual cow's BCS provided.

⁴ Where a BCS assessment is for contractual purposes it is recommended both parties to that contract agree to the use of a specified Certified BCS Assessor, or each party engages a Certified BCS Assessor to score simultaneously and the contract includes a process to address any differences in assessed BCS values.

⁵ Address any potential contractual risk implications eg. where scoring pertains to grazing contract performance.

⁶ Likely to be an additional outcome from body condition scoring for other purposes.

Scoring procedure

4.1 Postponement

If conditions are not satisfactory, scoring should be postponed. Animal behaviour, posture and coat can be altered sufficiently to affect scoring during particularly inclement weather. Check with the farmer that there are no animal health concerns that may necessitate postponement (eg. cows being off feed due to adverse weather, outbreak of a contagious or transferable disease).

4.2 Health and Safety

- Ensure you ask for and receive a farm health and safety induction, and follow farm policy.
- Due care is required when working with animals, and assessors should assess and adjust to the flight distance of the mob/herd.

4.3 Biosecurity procedures

There is a risk of disease introduction by people, equipment and vehicles traveling between groups of animals and between farms.

At the farm:

- Vehicles should be free of visible manure on the tyres and wheel wells. Vehicles should be kept away from animal areas.
- Arrive with clean clothing and boots.
- While on the farm, avoid unnecessary contact with stock.

Prior to departure:

- Before leaving, clean and disinfect your boots, and remove dirty clothing before re-entering your vehicle.
- Wash your hands with soap and water and apply hand sanitizer.
- Heavily soiled vehicles or equipment should be washed before leaving the farm.

4.4 Equipment list

- **BCS Tracker App** or other recording method
- DairyNZ **Body Condition Scoring Made Easy Field Guide**
- Biosecurity kit (virucidal disinfectant eg. VirkonS, VetSan, Citrox, soap and water, hand sanitiser)
- Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment
- The **BCS website** has some great videos on how to BCS if you need a refresher before going out on farm

4.5 Standard scoring procedure

A copy of the **Body Condition Scoring Made Easy Booklet** should be carried while scoring for easy reference and consistent calibration. Use a suitable method of data capture.

4.6 Paddock scoring

When paddock scoring, assess and accommodate the flight distance of the mob/herd being scored. When paddock scoring, if you are more than seven metres away from the cow being scored your accuracy is at risk. If the flight distance of the mob/herd is greater than seven metres, then the BCS assessment should be conducted as they walk through a race.

4.7 Scoring through a race

When doing this keep in mind the following points to maintain scoring accuracy:

- Cows need to be in single file, with the right side of the cow being unobscured (no distracting shadows, fences, gates, partitions or other stock).
- Cows should be stationary or moving very slowly whilst being inspected for scoring.

4.8 Scoring in Rotary and Herringbone dairies

Score from a position where you are at the same level or slightly above the cow being scored (e.g. while standing on a Vet Platform).

Scoring cows while they are in the bail can reduce the accuracy of scoring. This is because in most situations the pit/bail configuration and presence of the rump and kick rail makes it difficult to see and assess all eight body parts required for body condition scoring.

Reduced accuracy is of sufficient concern that scoring cows in a herringbone dairy without a good quality vet race or modified herringbone available should be avoided. Scoring from the pit whilst cows are in the bail should not be undertaken.

Scoring from a rotary milking platform is acceptable subject to the rotary speed being sufficiently slow to enable you enough time to score each cow. If necessary the rotary should be stopped periodically to allow scoring as needed.

Inadequate lighting in farm dairies can also have a substantial effect on the ability to score accurately. You should assess whether light levels are sufficient before scoring.

Reporting to client

5.1 Animal welfare compliance - before leaving the farm

Body condition scores are used in the interpretation of minimum standards under the Animal Welfare Act 1999. As an Assessor you must be familiar with those standards and their practical application, as contained in the Code of Welfare: Dairy Cattle, 15 December, 2016.

For a copy of the Code, visit MPI [Codes of Welfare](#)

Prior to leaving the farm, you are required to bring to the farmer's attention:

- any cows below BCS 3 and
- any animal health or welfare issues that were noticed while scoring cows.

At minimum, the cow ear tag or EID, the assessed BCS and a note of the issue requiring attention must be provided. A template is provided in Appendix 2.

It is an expectation of this Programme that this information will be provided in a written form.

This information should be accompanied by a recommendation to seek immediate help from appropriate professional support, if they are not able to manage the issues themselves.

Farmers should be advised if they are in any doubt to contact 0800 4 DairyNZ (0800 4 324 7969) and ask for the Animal Husbandry Extension Team.

Note : You should notify MPI if you have observed evidence of wilful mistreatment of animals, for example, numerous broken tails, systemic docked tails, significant untreated injury/illness in herd. (Tel. MPI 0800 008 333)



BCS Results report

Results should be provided in writing (email or printout) to the client unless the client has indicated otherwise.

Mob/herd report

Where services provided are for a mob/herd, the written report should include:

- Date scored
- Certified BCS Assessor name (which will be listed on the Certified BCS Assessor list)
- Reference to the BCS [Assessor Certification Programme](#) and the [Complaints procedure](#)
- BCS Assessor Certification logo
- Mob/herd identifier and total cow numbers scored
- The mob/herd BCS average, range, profile (graph), % by BCS (table); as described in the [Body Condition Scoring Made Easy Booklet](#)
- Scoring site (paddock, race, farm dairy , yards)
- The following Programme Explanatory Note

“At least 70 cows have been scored to provide the information in this report. Care has been taken to ensure these cows were selected as close to randomly as possible. Randomly scoring at least 70 cows within a herd gives a good indication of the average and range of body condition scores within the total herd”

Individual BCS report

Where the service provided is for a mob/herd or specifically drafted group with ear tags recorded for individual cows, the written report should include the same details as for the mob/herd report above (excluding the explanatory note), in addition to a list of BCS by cow ear tag.

BCS reporting for the purpose of Traits Other than Production (TOP) may vary from that outlined above. Contact the chairperson of the TOP Advisory for more information.

Disclaimer on all reports

The “Disclaimer” must be included in client proposals, contracts and reports where certification status is noted or implied.

(insert name of Certified Assessor) was recognised as a Certified Body Condition Score Assessor for dairy cattle after being independently assessed or calibrated on *(insert date of latest on-farm assessment)* as competent to allocate appropriate condition scores in accordance with the DairyNZ National Reference Standards and has maintained certification in accordance with the requirements of the Body Condition Score Assessor Certification Programme.

DISCLAIMER

This Report represents our assessment of the body condition scores (BCS) of the cattle assessed for you as our client against the DairyNZ National Reference Standards as at the date of the assessor’s inspection. The issue of the BCS Report (Report) is not a warranty or confirmation that the BCS allocated to the cattle in question shall meet any requirements of the client either as at the date of the issue of the Report or in the future. To the maximum extent permitted by law, any condition or warranty that would otherwise be implied into these terms and conditions is hereby excluded.

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Programme Reporting Tools

The Programme has developed a basic spreadsheet for data entry, BCS calculation and reporting. The outputs from the spreadsheet are reports that cover the minimum reporting requirements and can be printed or emailed direct to clients.

The Reports generated are:

- “Whole Mob Report”; provides BCS mob/herd average, range and distribution.
- “BCS List Report”; provides a list of the individual BCS (by cow ID & accompanying notes to farmer if entered).
- “Cows of Concern Report”; provides a list of cows to bring to the farmers attention prior to leaving the farm.

A copy of this spreadsheet can be requested from the Programme Manager (BCScertification@dairynz.co.nz) on certification. A basic competency in using excel spreadsheets is required.

Certified Assessors may use alternative reporting tools and templates, provided they contain the relevant information outlined above.

BCS Targets and Advice

Using a Certified BCS Assessor to profile herd condition is encouraged at four key times. Client monitoring of body condition score throughout the year is also recommended.

Time of scoring	Reason	Type of scoring	Advice	Target
80 days after calving (approx. at Planned Start of Mating - PSM) ⁷	To assess body condition loss post-calving	Mob/herd profile ⁸ or individual cow	Any cows below BCS 3.0 must be inspected and action taken to increase BCS above 3.0	The average BCS of the herd/mob should have dropped no more than 1 BCS since Planned Start of Calving (PSC) Target BCS of 4.0 at PSM
220 days after calving (approx. Feb in spring calving herds)	To make drying off decisions (which cows and when) and plan feed requirements up to calving <i>This is also a good time to check R2yr heifers for size and condition</i>	Mob/herd profile; or individual cow	Make a plan to manage cows so they reach target BCS for calving (dry-off early, milk OAD, preferentially feed) ⁹	Target should be based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> days to calving current BCS amount of feed available for BCS gain after drying off See DairyNZ BCS Reference Guide for further details
90 days prior to PSC (approx. April in spring calving herds)	To check progress against calving targets and plan for pre-calving feeding	Individual cow	Any cows 4.0 or less (or R3s 4.5 or less) will require additional feeding to reach target calving BCS by 1 month pre-PSC	
At PSC	Provides a benchmark against which to measure post-calving condition loss Determine if autumn management plan was successful Allows opportunity for risk assessment and management for post calving	mob/herd profile or individual cow	It is too late to take corrective action. Make a note that the adopted plan did not achieve the BCS targets	Mature cows calve at 5.0, with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> no more than 15% of herd below 5.0; and no more than 15% above 5.5 Heifers and R3s calve at 5.5

⁷ Alternatively, score at 160 days after calving (pre-Christmas for a spring-calving mob/herd) to help plan feed requirements for summer and autumn

⁸ A Mob/Herd profile is an in paddock assessment of at least 70 randomly selected cows from across the whole paddock with or without individual cow'' BCS provided

⁹ Dry cows will gain no more than 0.5 BCS per month and lactating cows 0.2 BCS (and may gain nothing) on pasture

Cows of Concern Template Report

Date of Scoring		
Farm ID (Milk Supply No.)		
Mob ID/Name		
Assessor Name		
Assessor Certification ID		
Assessor Certification Date		
Assessor Contact Address		
Assessor Contact Phone		
Assessor Email		
Service Event Identifier		
<p>There are <i><INSERT COUNT OF COWS BELOW 3></i> cows with BCS below 3. They require immediate attention. (Farmer notified in accordance with Animal Welfare Act 1999)</p>		
Cow ID	BCS	<p>Must include any instances of the following:</p> <p>BCS below 3 – requires immediate attention</p> <p>BCS 3</p> <p>Suspected illness, injury or lameness</p>
<p><i>(insert name of Certified Assessor)</i> was recognised as a Certified Body Condition Score Assessor for dairy cattle after being independently assessed on <i>(insert date of latest on-farm assessment)</i> as competent to allocate appropriate condition scores in accordance with the DairyNZ National Reference Standards and has maintained certification in accordance with the requirements of the Body Condition Score Assessor Certification Programme (Programme).</p>		
<p>DISCLAIMER</p> <p>This Report represents our assessment of the body condition scores (BCS) of the cattle assessed for you as our client against the DairyNZ National Reference Standards as at the date of the assessor’s inspection. The issue of the BCS Report (Report) is not a warranty or confirmation that the BCS allocated to the cattle in question shall meet any requirements of the client either as at the date of the issue of the Report or in the future. To the maximum extent permitted by law, any condition or warranty that would otherwise be implied into these terms and conditions is hereby excluded.</p> <p>While all reasonable endeavours have been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this Report, DairyNZ Limited, Certification Programme Manager, the administrators and assessors of the BCS programme do not accept responsibility for any loss or damage (whether direct, indirect, consequential or other), however caused (including through negligence), which you may directly or indirectly suffer in connection with your use of this report, and expressly disclaims any and all liabilities contingent or otherwise that may arise from any such loss arising out of your use of or reliance on information contained on or accessed through this Report. You agree that the above exclusion of liability confer a benefit on the entities or persons listed above and are enforceable by each of them in accordance with the Contracts (Privity) Act 1982</p>		

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