

COLLECTING DOCILITY INFORMATION

Docility scores taken on calves between 60 and 400 days of age are used to calculate Docility EBVs within the TransTasman Angus Cattle Evaluation (TACE).

Recording docility scores

Animals can be scored for docility using either a crush or yard test:

- **Crush Test**- Calves are put up a race and held in a crush or weigh scales for a minimum of 10 seconds (but not necessarily head bailed).
- **Yard Test** - Calves are individually put into a small square yard and the handler attempts to hold the animal in one corner for a minimum of 10 seconds.

While docility scores from both scoring systems are acceptable, the crush test is more commonly used as animals can be scored when moving through the crush for other purposes (e.g. weighing, animal health treatments).

Docility score descriptions

When using either the crush or yard test, the behaviour of animals should be observed and animals scored using the criteria displayed in the following table.

Half scores (i.e. 1.5, 2.5, 3.5, 4.5) can be used to identify animals who exhibit behaviour which is intermediate to the scores listed.

In a “normal” Angus beef herd where the majority of animals have acceptable temperament, it would be expected that the majority of animals would have a score of 1, 1.5 or 2, with a small percentage of animals receiving a score of 2.5 and above.

Docility Scores for TACE		
1	Docile	Mild disposition, gentle and easily handled, stands and moves slowly during handling, undisturbed, settled, somewhat dull, does not pull on headgate when in crush, exits crush calmly.
2	Restless	Quiet but slightly restless, may be stubborn during handling, may try to back out of crush, pulls back on headgate, some flicking of tail, exits crush promptly.
3	Nervous	Manageable but nervous and impatient, a moderate amount of struggling, movement and tail flicking, repeated pushing and pulling on headgate, exits crush briskly.
4	Flighty	Jumpy and out of control, quivers and struggles violently, may bellow and froth at mouth, continuous tail flicking, defecates and urinates during handling, frantically runs fenceline and may jump when penned individually, exhibits long flight distance and exits crush wildly.
5	Aggressive	May be similar to score 4 but with added aggressive behaviour, fearful, extreme agitation, continuous movement which may include jumping and bellowing while in crush, exits crush frantically and may exhibit attack behaviour when handled alone.

When should animals be scored?

Docility scores must be recorded when animals are between 60 and 400 days of age for inclusion in TACE.

The recommended time of scoring is at weaning or shortly afterwards. The advantage of scoring at weaning is that all calves should have had minimal handling and so will express variation in temperament. Variation in handling between animals prior to scoring should also be minimised.

Only one docility score can be analysed in TACE for each individual animal.



- ◇ There needs to be some variation in scores for them to be used in the TACE analysis. Scoring all animals in a group with a docility score of [1] does not identify any differences in docility between animals, and consequently does not provide any useful information for the calculation of Docility EBVs.
- ◇ Docility scores should be collected for all animals in a contemporary group. Only recording docility scores for a subset of animals is of no value and can lead to biased Docility EBVs.
- ◇ All animals in a contemporary group should be scored on the same day. TACE will not directly compare the docility scores of animals that have been scored on different days.
- ◇ Docility scores should be collected when animals are in as large a group as possible. Consequently, try to collect docility scores before any of the animals in a management group are treated differently.
- ◇ If any animals being scored on a particular day have had a different level of handling prior to scoring, they should be assigned a different “docility management group”.
- ◇ The method of scoring used (i.e. crush or yard) should be specified when submitting the docility scores.
- ◇ It is important that both a consistent scoring method is used and the same person scores all animals that are being assessed in the herd on a particular day.
- ◇ While more than one docility score can be recorded for an individual animal, TACE is only analysing the first docility score for each animal at this stage.