COLLECTING STRUCTURAL SOUNDNESS SCORES

Subjective structural soundness scores collected by an accredited scorer when animals are younger than 750 days are used to calculate Structural Soundness EBVs within the TransTasman Angus Cattle Evaluation (TACE).

Recording structural soundness scores

Structural soundness scores for TACE are collected using the Beef Class Structural Assessment System.

Scores are collected for 5 traits related to feet and leg structure using a 1- 9 scoring system, where:

- A score of 5 is considered ideal
- Scores of 4 and 6 show slight variation from ideal, but this includes most animals. Any animal scoring 4 and 6 would be acceptable in any breeding program
- Scores of 3 and 7 show greater variation, but would be acceptable in most commercial breeding programs, however seedstock producers should be wary
- Scores of 2 and 8 are low scoring animals and should be looked at carefully before purchasing
- Scores of 1 and 9 should be considered culls

Use of accredited technicians

Structural soundness scores for TACE must be collected by an accredited technician. A list of accredited technicians can be accessed from the TACE area of the Angus Australia website, or by contacting staff at Angus Australia.

Structural soundness scores not collected by an accredited technician will not be included in TACE.

When should animals be scored?

TACE can analyse structural soundness scores from animals that are less than 750 days of age at scoring (i.e. 25 months). The majority of animals are scored as either yearlings or rising 2 year olds.

Animals should be scored on the same day or after as the collection of a 400 or 600 day weight for TACE.

The most recent 400 or 600 day weight contemporary group forms an important criteria in determining the contemporary group in which structural soundness scores are analysed. Structural scores can only be analysed in TACE for animals that have a prior 400 or 600 day weight included in the analysis.

Structural soundness scores can be collected on mature cows but are not currently utilised in the calculation of Structural Soundness EBVs.

- While more than one set of structural score information can be recorded for an individual animal, TACE is only analysing the first set of structural score information for each animal at this stage.
- While bulls are most commonly scored, structural soundness scores can be collected on both heifers and bulls.
- It is important to try and score as many animals within each contemporary group as possible. Collection of structural soundness scores for only a selection of animals (e.g. only collecting scores for sale bulls rather than the entire bull drop) may result in data biases and the subsequent calculation of Structural Soundness EBVs that do not reflect the true genetic merit of animals.
- 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 score of [5] does not identify any differences in structural soundness between animals, and consequently does not provide any useful information for the calculation of Structural Soundness EBVs.
- If there is variation from foot to foot, the score that is collected should reflect the worst foot.
- A management group should be recorded for any animals or group of animals that have been treated differently or exposed to significant non-genetic influences prior to measurement that may affect their structural soundness scores. For example, differences in feed, or animals being run on different types of country (i.e. soft, rocky).
- Structural soundness scores should be recorded for all animals in a contemporary group on the same day. TACE will not directly compare scores collected on different days. Likewise, the same accredited technician should be used to score all animals in a contemporary group.
- If foot trimming is practiced, structural soundness scores should be collected prior to trimming so that differences between animals are accurately described.
- Structural score information can also be collected for a range of other traits such as sheath and navel scores, udder evenness and attachment, teat size and shape and capacity. These scores are not currently included in the TACE analysis however they may be used to develop Structural Soundness EBVs for these traits in the future.

STRUCTURAL SOUNDNESS SCORES

Front Feet Claw Set

Open Divergent (OD) desirable Scissor claws (SC)

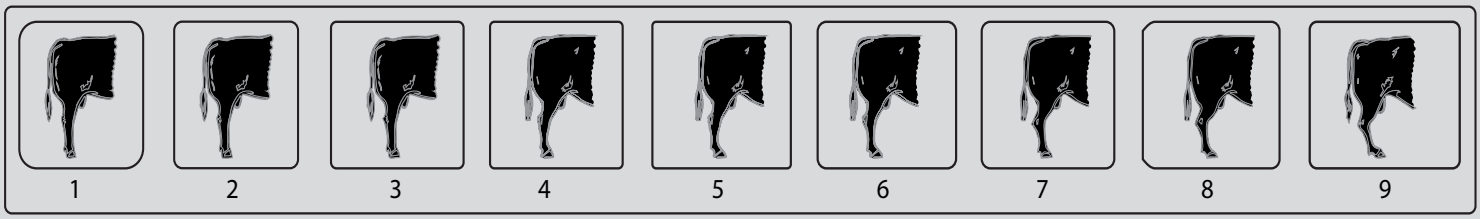
Reference: Shape (primarily curl) and evenness of the claw set.

Front & Rear Feet Angle

Steep feet angle (SA) desirable Shallow feet angle (SA)

Reference: Strength of pastern, depth of heel and length of foot.

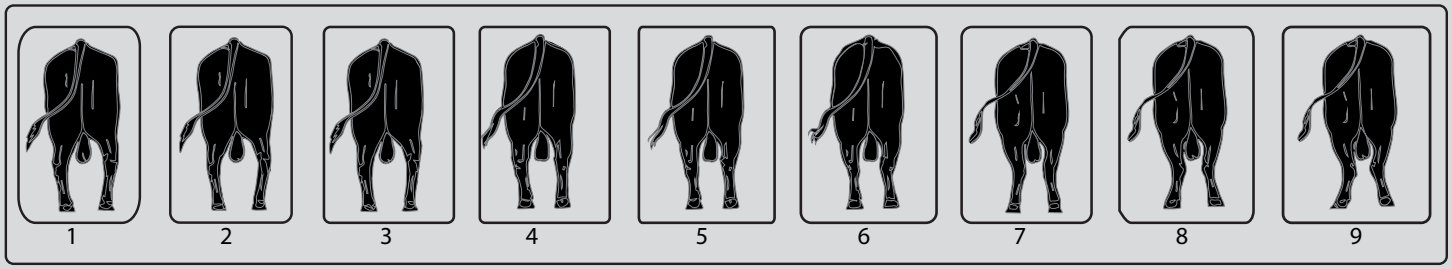
Rear Leg Side View



Straight rear leg (ST) desirable Sickle hocked rear leg (SI)

Reference: Angle measured at the front of the hock.

Rear Leg Hind View



Bow legged rear leg (BL) desirable Cow hocked rear leg (CH)

Reference: Direction of the feet when viewed from the rear.