

COLLECTING MATURE COW FEET AND LEG SCORES



Mature cow feet and leg scores assess the structural soundness of the feet and legs in mature females, and are measured as visual scores.

Mature cow feet and leg score data does not need to be collected by an accredited scorer.

Recording mature cow feet and leg score data

Mature cow feet and leg scores are collected for 6 traits, related to feet and leg structure, based on the visual appearance of the animal using the Beef Class Structural Assessment system.

Each trait uses 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 use in commercial breeding programs.
- Scores of 1 and 9 should be considered culls. If there is variation from foot to foot, or leg to leg, the score that is recorded should reflect the worst foot or leg.

Use of accredited technicians

Contrary to the collection of feet and leg scores on young animals, mature cow feet and leg scores do not need to be collected by an accredited scorer, although an accredited scorer can be used if that is preferred.

Once sufficient scores have been collected, research will evaluate the usefulness of breeder collected scores for genetic evaluation versus those collected by accredited technicians.

When should mature cow feet and leg scores be collected?

Mature cow feet and leg scores, relating to feet and leg structure, can be taken at any time throughout the year. Only one score per year is required.



- ◇ It is important that there is some variation in the scores that are collected. Scoring all the animals in a group with the same structural soundness score for a trait does not identify any differences in structure between animals, and consequently does not provide any useful information.
- ◇ Management group information should be recorded for any cows or group of cows that have been treated differently or exposed to significant non-genetic influences prior to scoring that may affect their structural score for a trait.
- ◇ 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.
- ◇ Scores should be recorded for the whole mob. Collecting “occasional” scores, or only collecting scores for a subset of cows is of no value.
- ◇ Scores should be recorded for all females in a mob on the same day. Scores for cows that have been collected on different days will not be directly compared.
- ◇ If foot trimming is practiced, structural soundness scores should be collected prior to trimming so that differences between animals are accurately described.

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Front & Rear Feet Claw Set



Open Divergent (OD) desirable Scissor claws (SC)

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

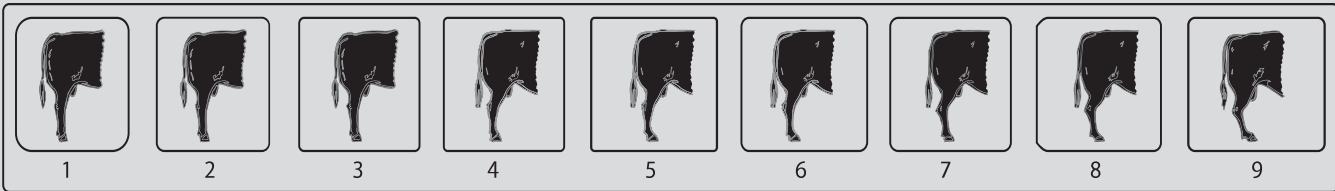
Front & Rear Feet Angle



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

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

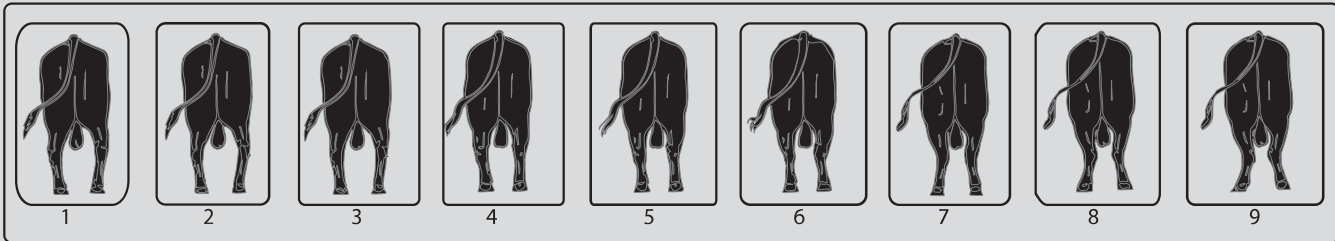
Rear Leg Side View



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.