

MANAGING EWE CONDITION SCORE

Ewe condition score is a major driver of ewe productivity and profitability. Condition scoring at key times, such as weaning and scanning, allows you to identify the ewes in lighter condition and target feed towards these ewes.



CONDITION SCORE

Condition Score 1



BACKBONE

The bones form a sharp narrow ridge. Each vertebra can be easily felt as a bone under the skin. There is only a very small eye muscle. The sheep is very thin.

SHORTRIBS

The ends of the short ribs are very obvious. It is easy to feel the squarish shape of the ends. Using fingers spread 1cm apart, it feels like the fingernail under the skin with practically no covering.

Condition Score 2



The bones form a narrow ridge but the points are rounded with muscle. It is easy to press between each bone. There is a reasonable eye muscle. Thin fat cover.

The ends of the short ribs are rounded but it is easy to press between them. Using fingers spread 0.5cms apart, the ends feel rounded like finger ends. They are covered with flesh but it is easy to press under and between them.

Condition Score 3



The vertebrae are only slightly elevated above a full eye muscle. It is possible to feel each rounded bone but not to press between them.

The ends of short ribs are well rounded and filled in with muscle. Using 4 fingers pressed tightly together, it is possible to feel the rounded ends but not between them. They are well covered and filled in with muscle.

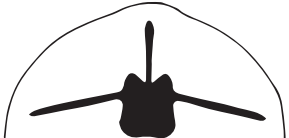
Condition Score 4



It is possible to feel most vertebrae with pressure. The back bone is a smooth slightly raised ridge above full eye muscles and the skin floats over it.

It is only possible to feel or sense one or two short ribs and only possible to press under them with difficulty. It feels like the side of the palm, where maybe one end can just be sensed.

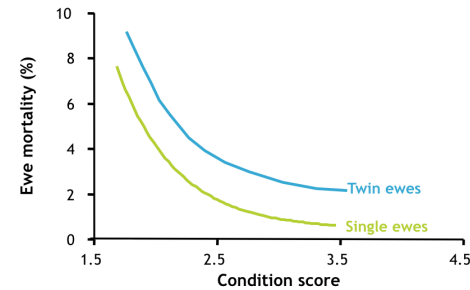
Condition Score 5



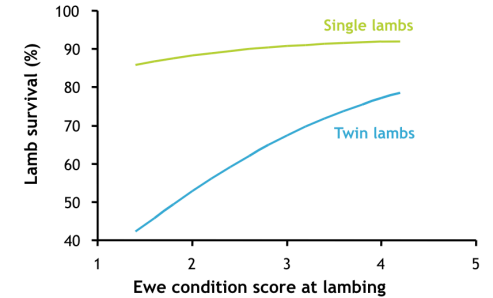
The spine may only be felt (if at all) by pressing down firmly between the fat covered eye muscles. A bustle of fat may appear over the tail (wasteful and uneconomic).

It is virtually impossible to feel under the ends as the triangle formed by the long ribs and hip bone is filled with meat and fat. The short rib ends cannot be felt.

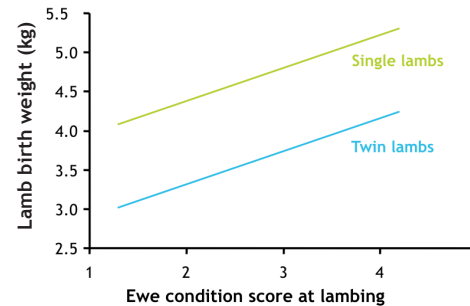
Better body condition during late pregnancy gives ewes a buffer and reduces ewe mortality



Reallocating feed from single-bearing ewes to twin-bearing ewes increases twin survival



Ewes in better condition have heavier lambs



Lamb birth weight directly impacts on lamb survival

