



## **Season 1, Episode 5: Body Condition Scores with Dr. Laura Greiner**

**Dr. Laura Greiner, Iowa State University, discusses the importance of Body Condition Score (BCS) and how nutrition can impact BCS.**

### **Techniques**

Producers can use different techniques to create a BCS system that works best for their barns. 3-point and 5-point systems are the most common. The 3-point system identifies pigs as thin (1), normal (2) and fat (3). A 5-point system identifies pigs as extremely thin (1), thin (2), normal (3), obese (4) and overly obese (5). Pigs identified as outside of normal range would receive adjusted diets to help them reach a normal BCS before entering farrowing. Most producers highly utilize a BCS system in gestation and farrowing to help maintain a healthy pig throughout farrowing and lactation.

### **Issues with poor BCS**

Dr. Laura Greiner stresses under conditioning of sows will set them up for trouble later in life. Sow genetics have changed over the years towards a leaner pig with a large appetite. This has created a problem with sows gaining too much before entering farrowing. Consequently, during farrowing and lactation, they will burn energy stored in their fat rather than eating. This can lead to shoulder lesions due to pressure points and inactivity. In addition, carrying extra weight before farrowing can increase lameness and other joint issues. Milk production is also affected when an overweight sow begins to put more fat down into the mammary glands, which reduces the space for milk. This is important because a sow can produce more milk per kilogram body weight than a dairy cow and requires more energy than an Olympic marathon runner.

### **Nutrition Program**

BCS every sow once she returns to the breeding program and is bred. This will also aid your nutritionist in formulating a feeding program to help get her, or keep her, in ideal condition. Then, 30 days later, repeat the process to evaluate if the nutrition program is working. If the sow is at normal body condition, she should then be placed on a maintenance program and reevaluated at 60 and 90 days.

### **Challenges with BCS Systems**

BCS systems can be subjective and vary by person performing the evaluation. Caretakers can be taught to view the system differently causing variation in BCS values. Calibration checks are critical to keeping programs effective. There are tools available, such as calipers, that give actual criteria to follow in order to make the system less variable.

### **Implications**

Routinely checking BCS in your herd helps prevent lameness and overweight sows during gestation. Communication with your nutritionist is important in implementing an effective feeding program for your pigs. Periodic calibration checks are helpful in having a successful BCS system. Body condition scoring should be done every 30 days in order to help each pig be successful during gestation, farrowing and lactation.

**To Listen to this full podcast please visit: <https://globalaqnetwork.com/pigx/podcast/episode-5-body-condition-scores-with-dr-laura-greiner>**

