

Body  
Condition  
Scoring  
Beef Cattle

# Body Condition Scores

1 to 9 system:

1 = very thin

**9 = OBESE**

# Priority of Nutrient Use

Cow's perspective

1. Maintenance
- 2a. Growth
- 2b. Lactation
4. Reproduction

# Priority of Nutrient Use

Cattlemen's perspective

1. Reproduction
2. Lactation
- 3a. Maintenance
- 3b. Growth

# Priority of Nutrient Use

Dairyman's perspective

1. Lactation
2. Lactation
3. Lactation
4. Lactation



**As a cow destined for a packer,**

**What are her attributes?**

**What concerns might you have?**



Dark color

*Attributes*

✓ Lean yield  
Value

*Concerns*

✗ Bruising  
✗ Trim loss

# Emerging Issues Most Frequently Cited

## Packers

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1. Bruises
2. Antibiotic Residues
3. Birdshot/Buckshot
4. Arthritic Joints
5. Yield (DP & product)
6. Condition (leanness)
7. Condemnation Rate

## Affiliated Organizations

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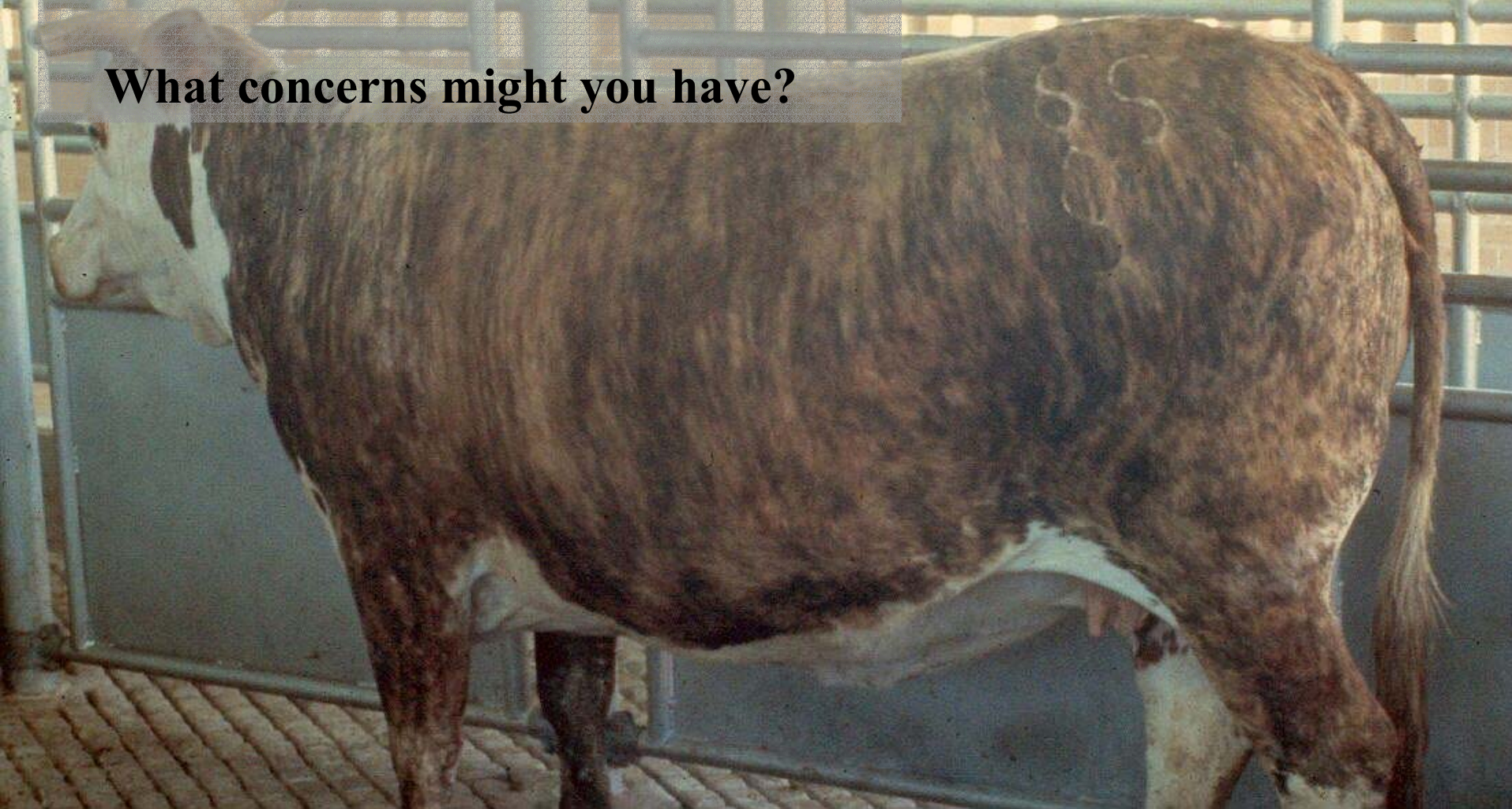
1. Pricing & Prompt Payment
2. Antibiotic Residues
3. National ID & Verification
4. Pathogen Control
5. Injection-site Lesions
6. Birdshot/Buckshot
7. Anti-microbial Resistance

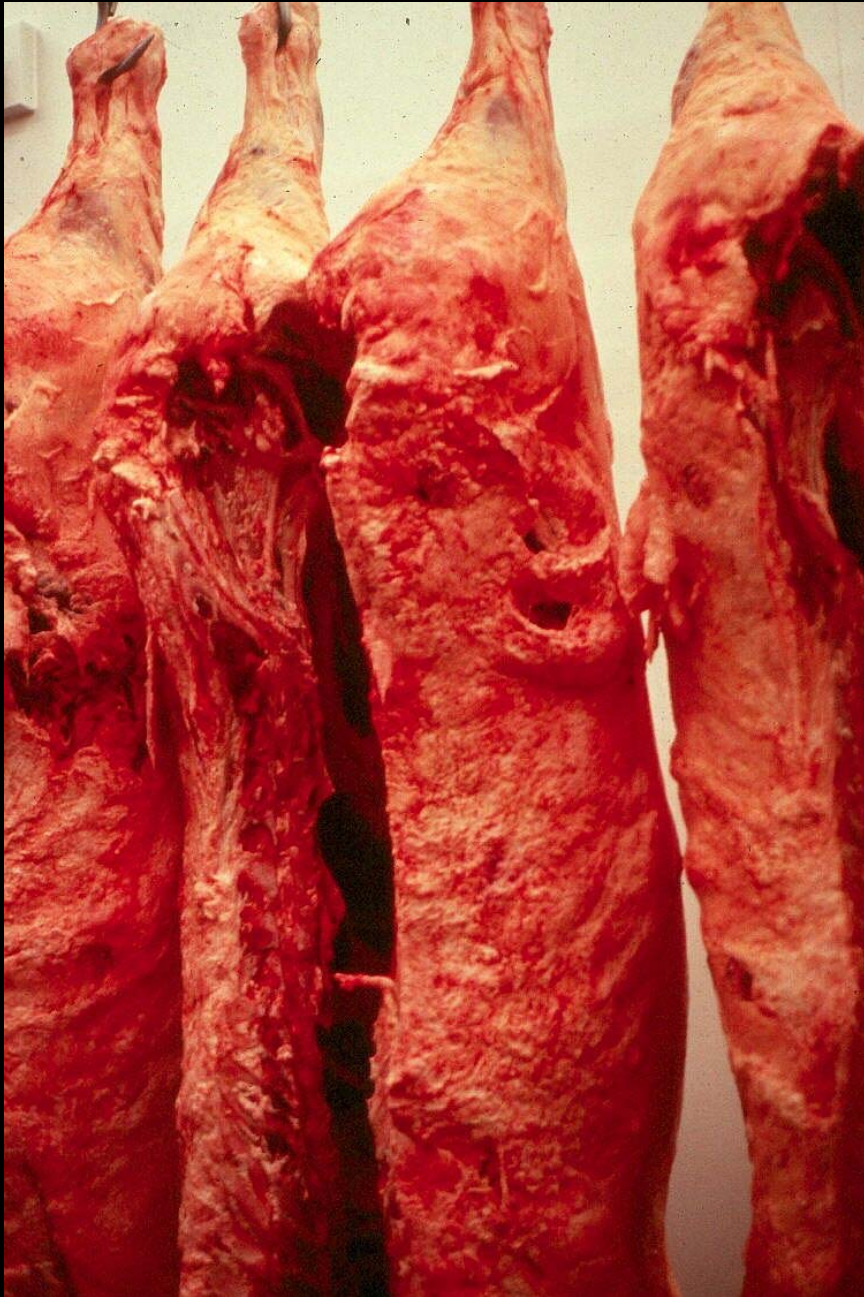


**As a cow destined for a packer,**

**What are her attributes?**

**What concerns might you have?**





Fat cows  
are *Wasty*

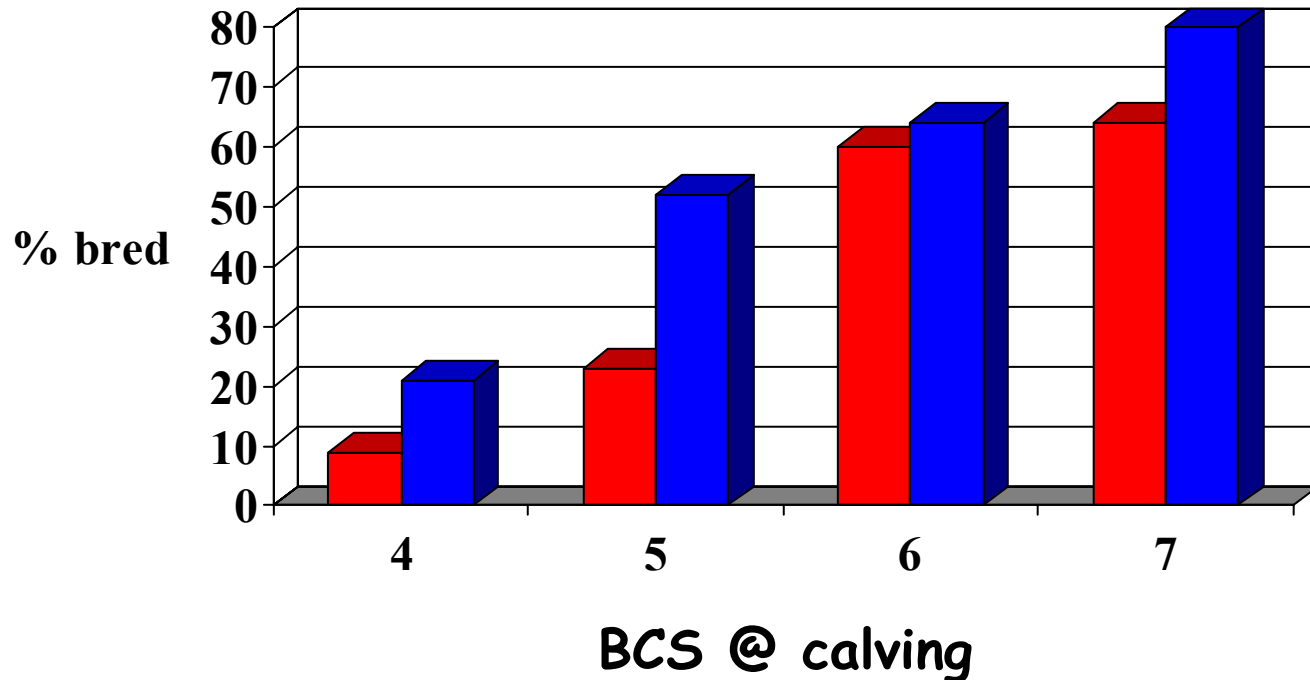
*Concern*

*x* Trim loss

Remember, the primary product harvested from cull cows/bulls is lean red meat.

# Relationship between Body Condition Score and Reproduction

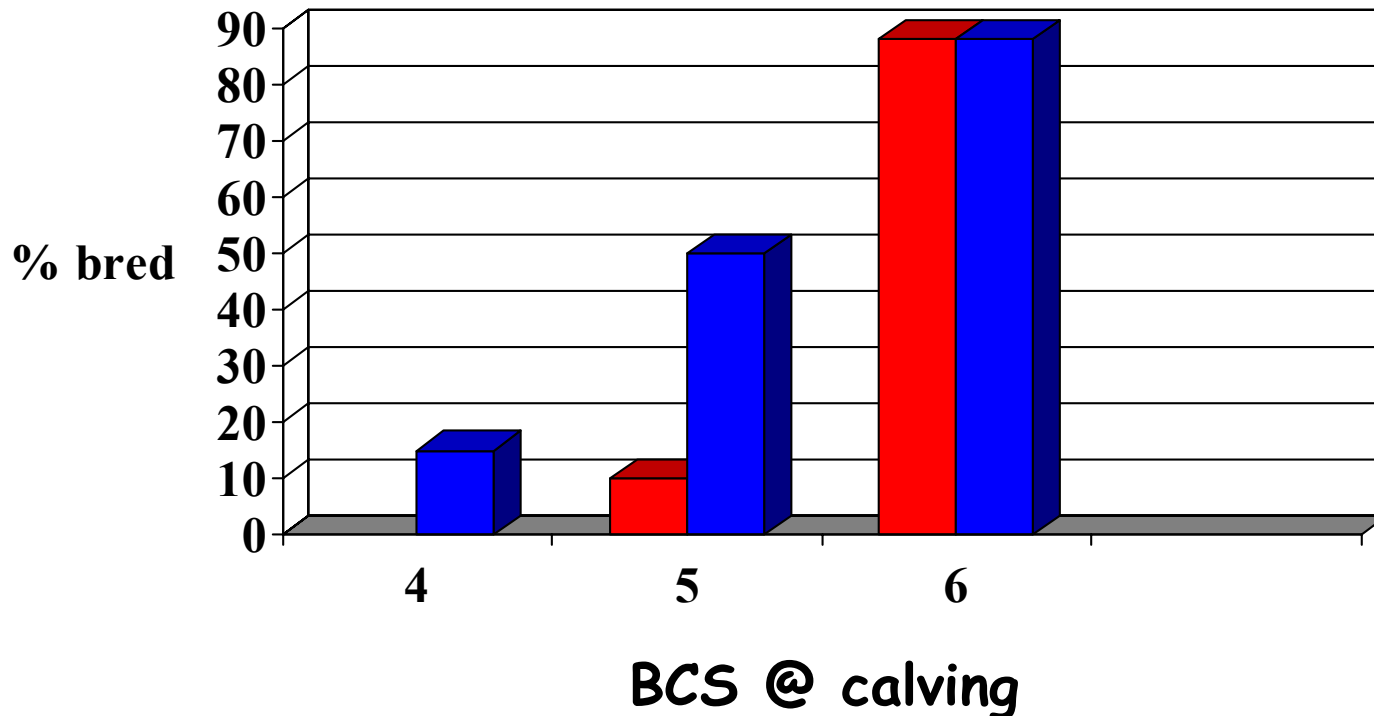
# Effect of Body Condition on Rebreeding by 1<sup>st</sup> Calf Santa Gertrudis Heifers



Sprott & Wilbank

■ 40 d postcalving ■ 80 d postcalving

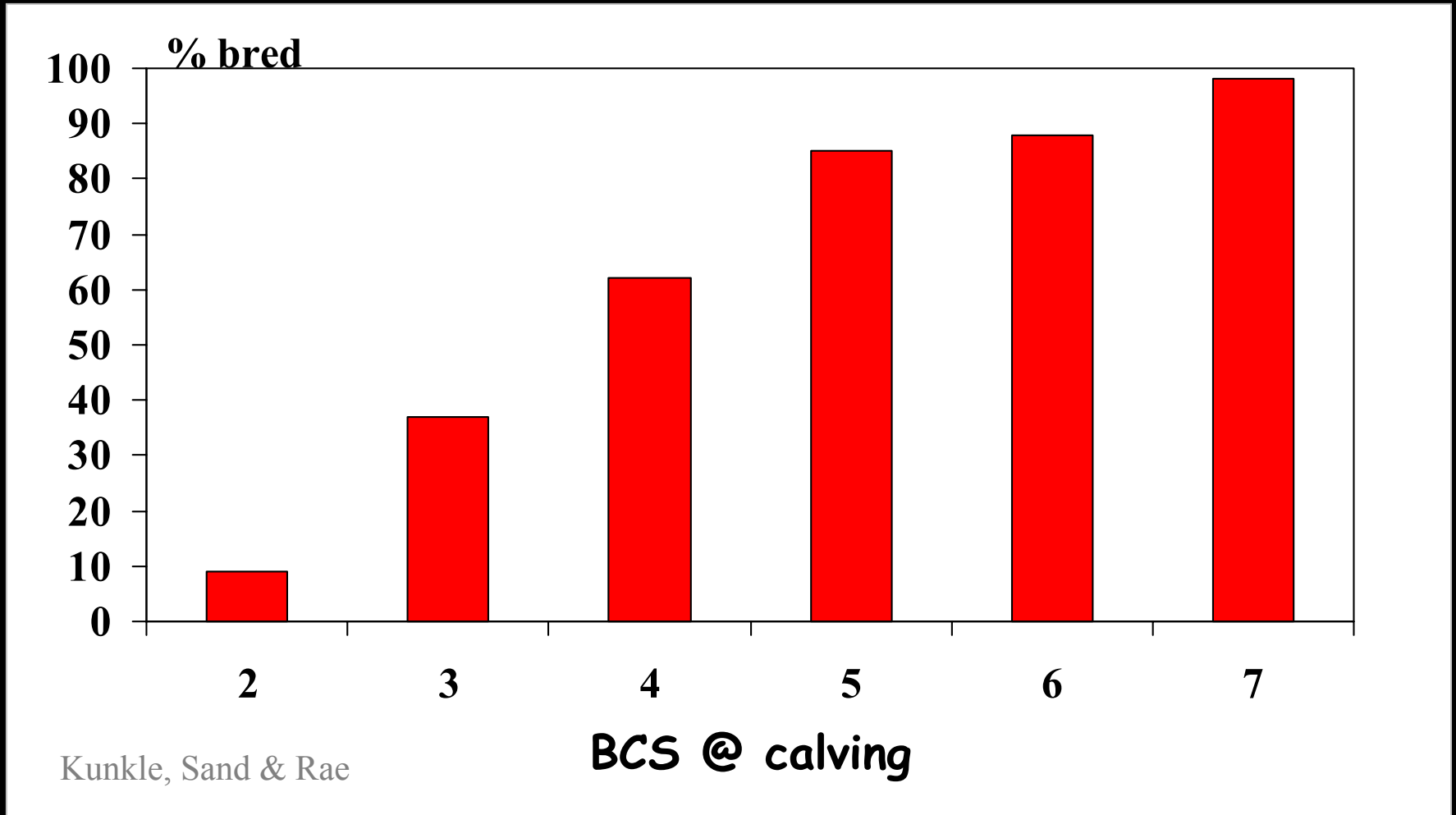
# Effect of Body Condition on Rebreeding by 1<sup>st</sup> Calf Hereford Heifers



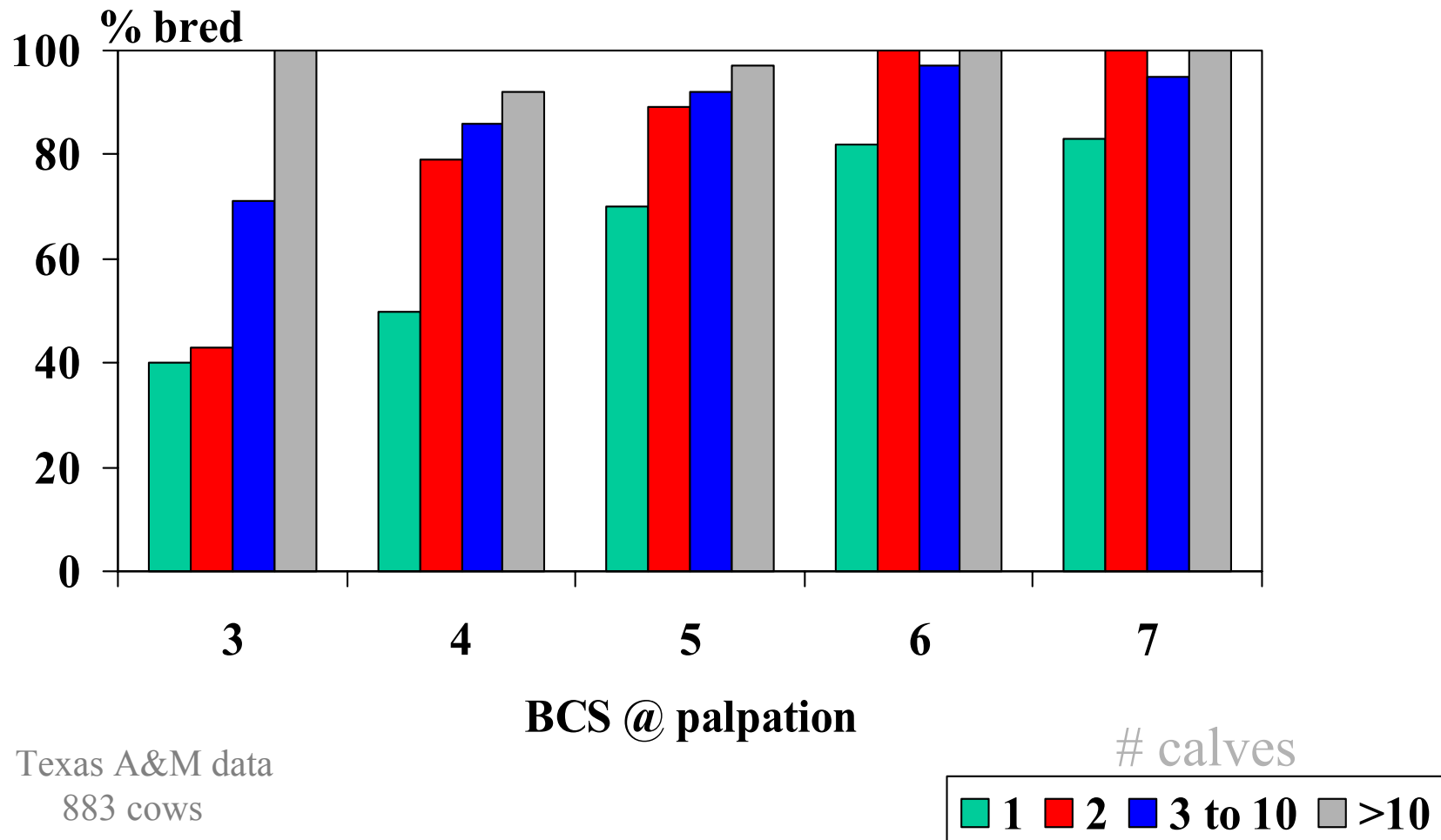
Sprott & Wilbank

■ 120 d postcalving    ■ 180 d postcalving

# Body Condition Score vs. Conception Rate (Florida study, mature cows)



# Body Condition Score vs. Conception Rate

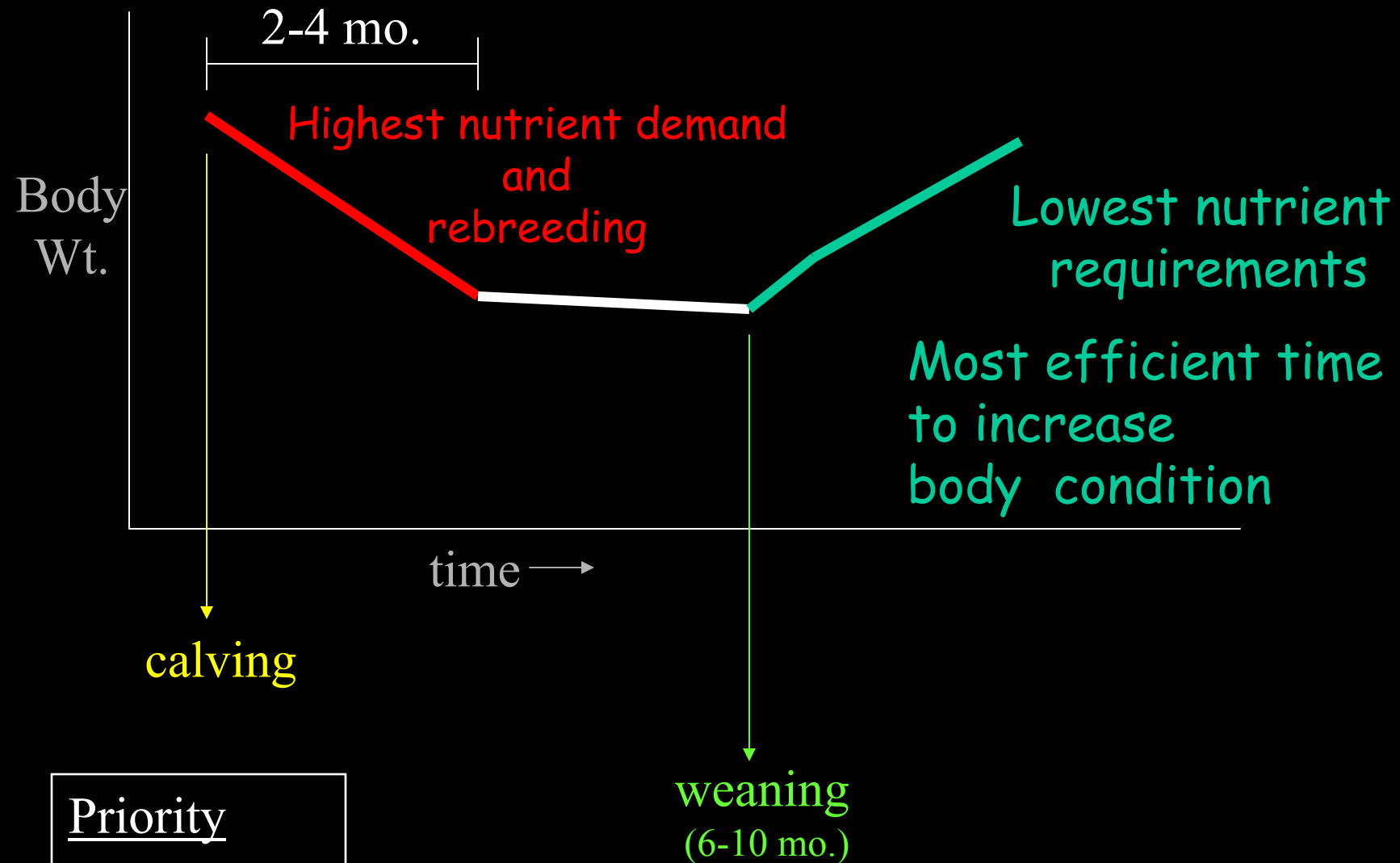


# Body Condition Score

Critical time:

at calving





### Priority

1. maintenance
2. growth
2. lactation
4. reproduction



Why?

**Health concerns**

- internal parasites?
- disease?

**Nursing a calf**

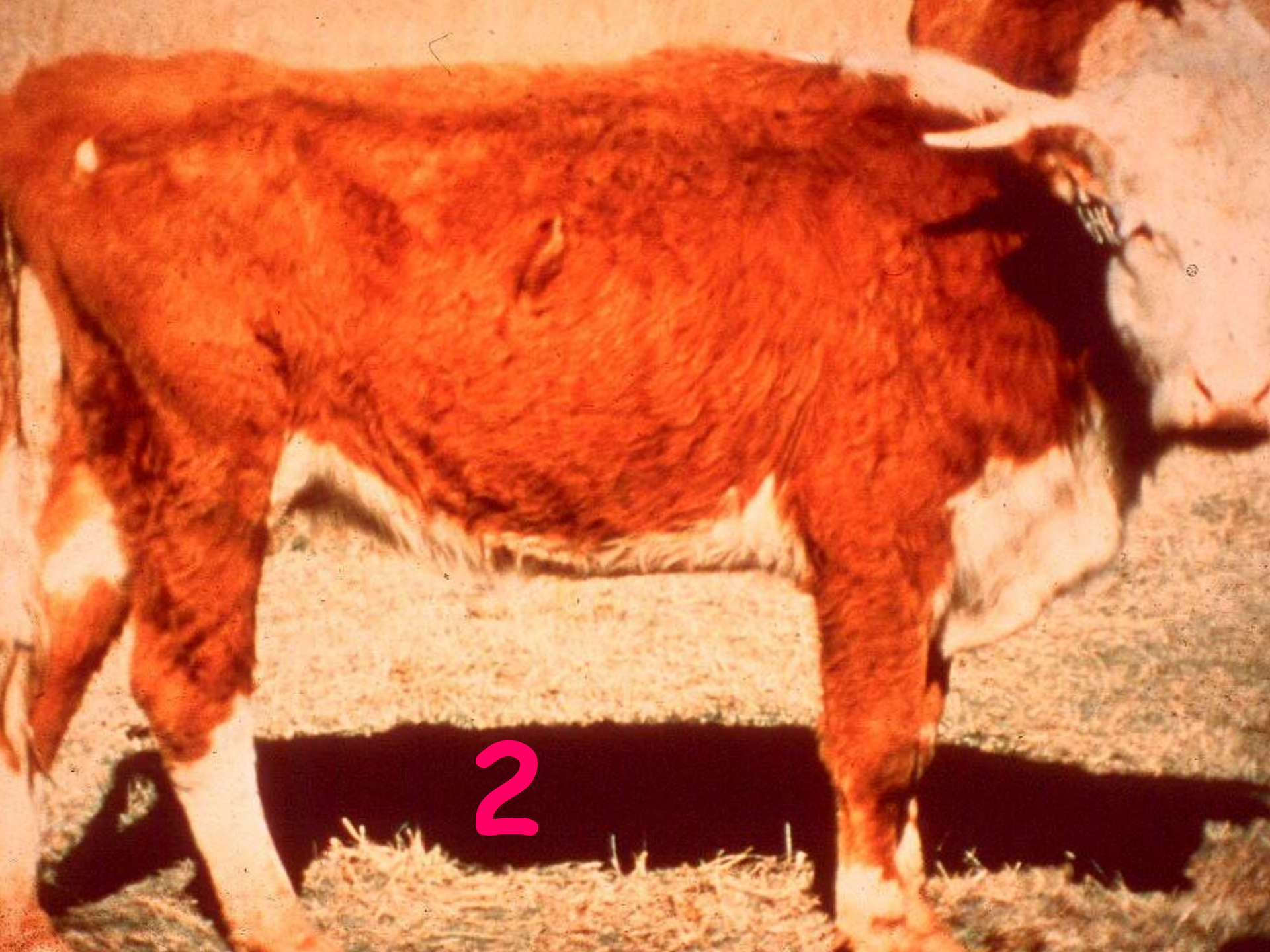
1



Why?

**Forage Availability**  
- not enough to eat  
**Nursing a big calf**

1



2









6





7



8

A photograph of a brown and white cow grazing in a green field. The cow is facing right and has its head down. The background shows trees and a clear sky.

Why?

Appears to be barren

9

Exceptions

to the

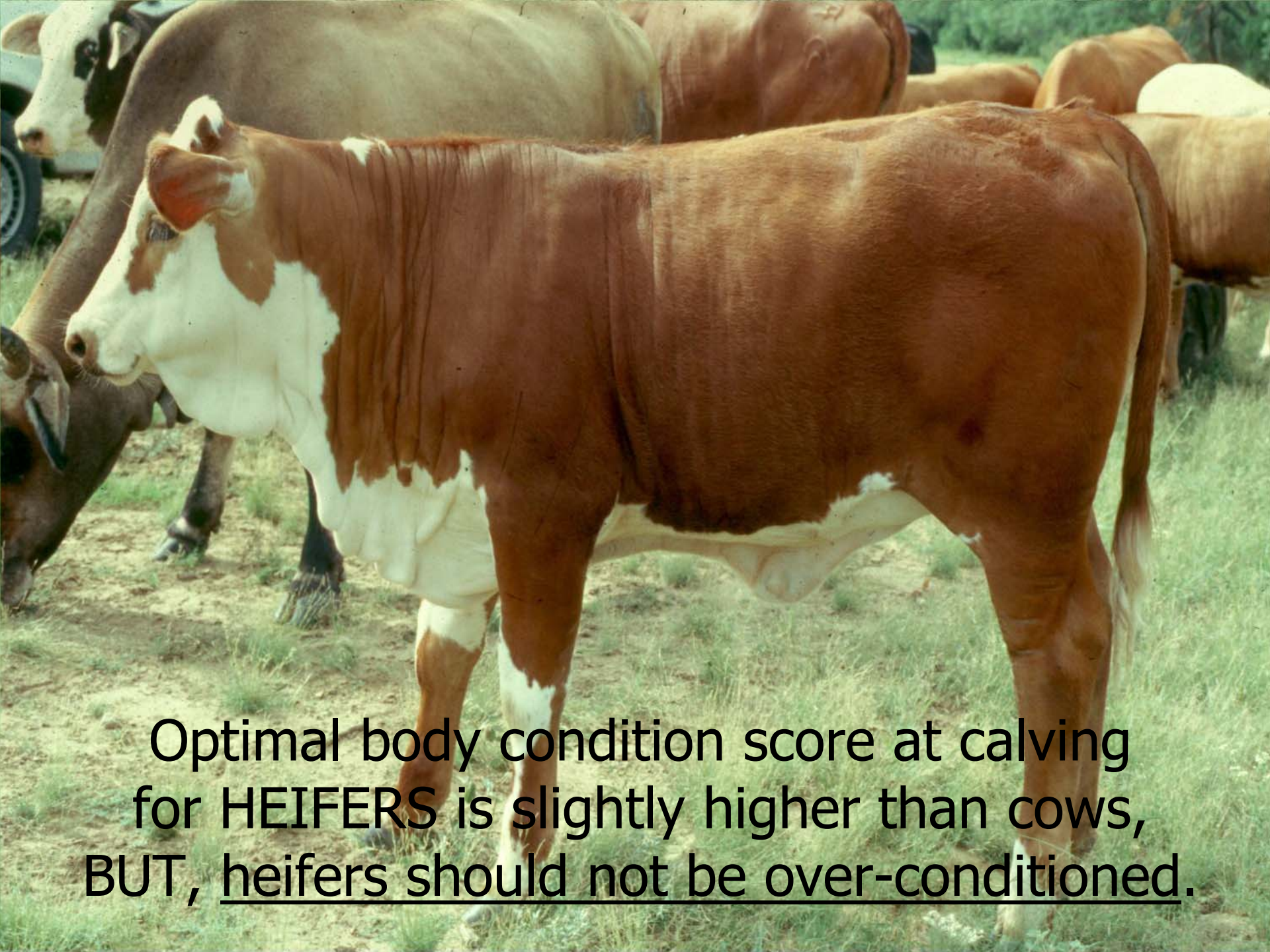
rules

**25 year old Longhorn cow  
- had just weaned her 23<sup>rd</sup> calf**



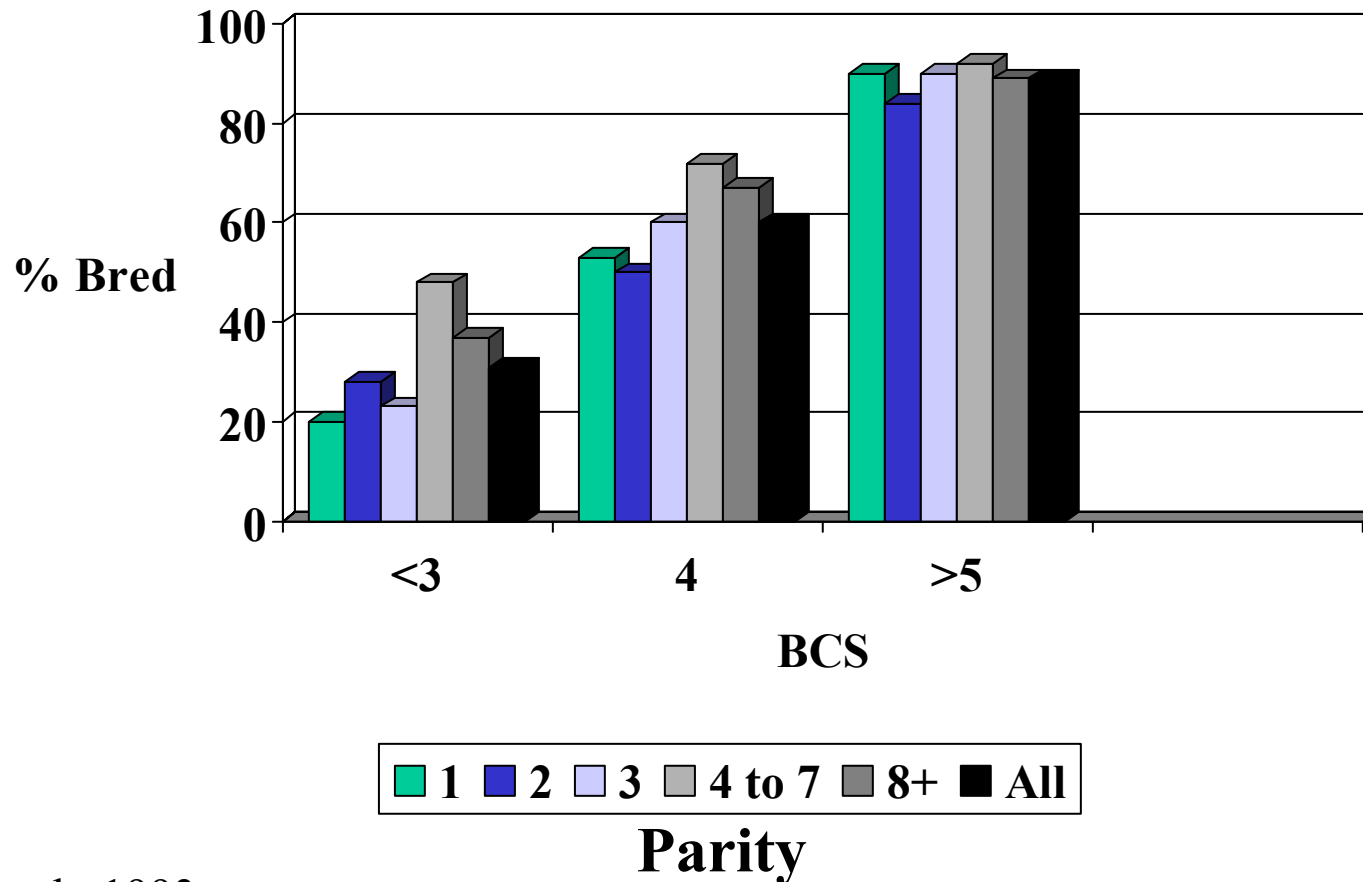


**Adjust the 1 to 9 BCS system to fit the cows in your operation.**



Optimal body condition score at calving for HEIFERS is slightly higher than cows, BUT, heifers should not be over-conditioned.

# Relationship of Parity and BCS to Pregnancy Rate





# Optimal BCS for heifers - 6



A black cow is standing in a grassy field under a clear blue sky. The cow is facing left. The text is overlaid on the cow's body.

Fat heifers often experience:

reduced conception rates

lower milk production potential

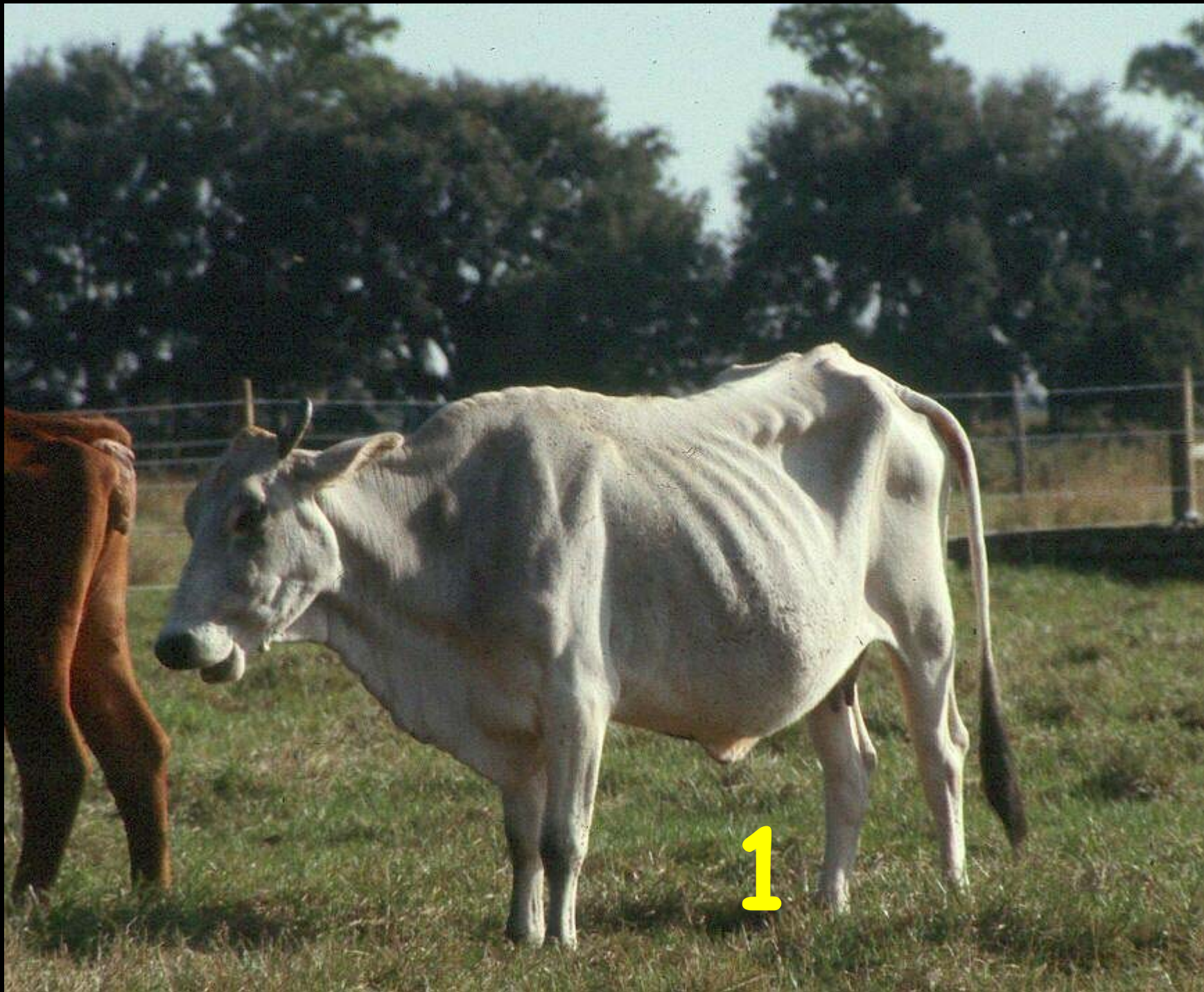
# Exam Time

Look at the following slides and make your assessment of the cow's body condition. Then left-click to reveal the condition score.















4









# Body Condition Score

## Summary

1. Related to reproduction
2. Reflects nutrient intake
3. Indicator of forage

availability  
quality



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Extension Livestock Specialist  
Texas Cooperative Extension

for  
more  
information

**<http://animalscience.tamu.edu>**