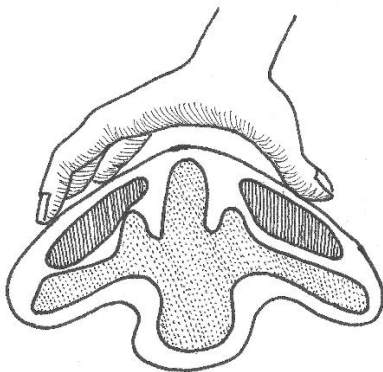
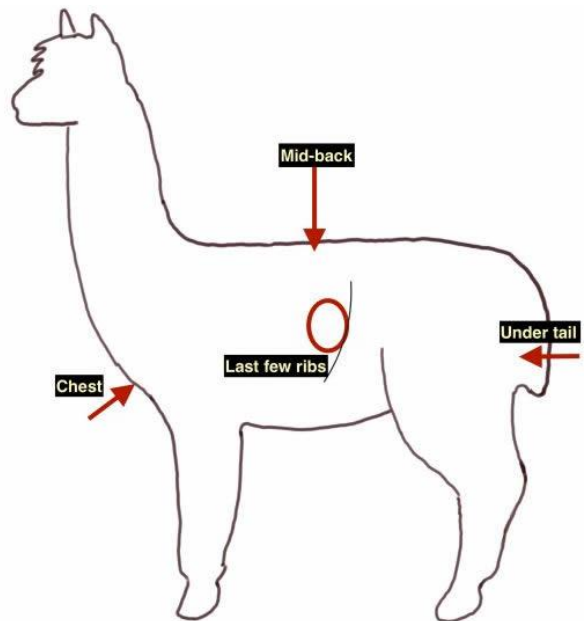


Body Condition Scoring

Keeping alpacas in good condition is essential for healthy reproduction as well as minimizing variations in the diameter along the length of the fibre staple. Sudden changes in diet can result in sickness, fetal stress and tender fleece. Seasonal changes in dietary quality and quantity make it essential to monitor your animal's body condition. Body condition scoring is a way to give a more accurate picture of the animal's condition to enable ability to optimise nutritional management of each alpaca.

How to make an assessment

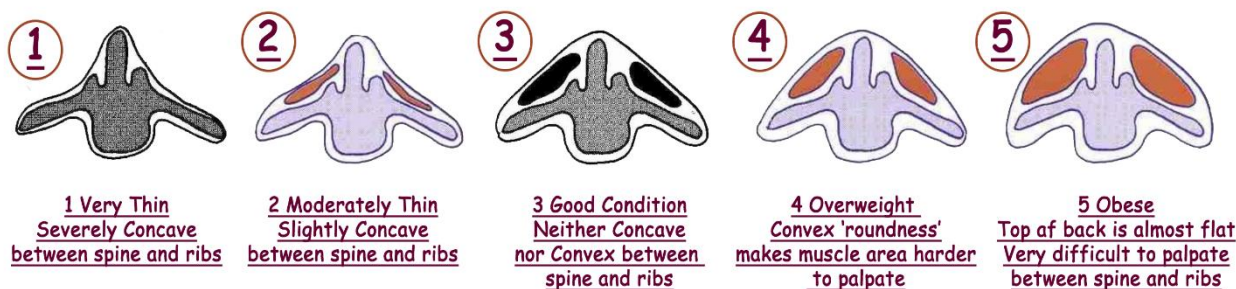
- The most used area is over the central backbone near the last ribs.
- Do NOT make assessment over the pelvis as this area often feels bony, even with obese alpacas.



- Place fingers on the centre of the back, either side of the vertebrae feeling for muscle coverage.
- Palpate the area with fingers and thumb making an appraisal of the muscle mass
- It should reveal a firm, slightly convex body shape.
 - Bulging would indicate an overweight animal whereas concave tone indicates underweight condition

- Body Condition Score is based on a scale of 1 to 5, with alpacas in very poor condition scoring 1 and obese alpacas scoring 5
- To confirm an estimate, palpate the area over the ribs at the point of the elbow. In an animal with BCS 2.5 the ribs will only just be felt; an animal with impalpable ribs is very fat.

Disclaimer: This advice is of a general nature. Seek veterinary or expert advice for your circumstances.



The table below shows the appropriate Body Condition Score for animals depending on their physiological state

ALPACA	BODY CONDITION SCORE
Wether	2.5-3.5
Non-pregnant mature female	2.5-3.5
Mature male	2.5-3.5
Pregnant female	3-3.5
Working male	2.5-3.5
Growing (<15 months)	3-3.5

- Practising the technique whenever alpacas are handled will help make assessments more consistent. Each assessment should not take any longer than about 5 seconds.
- ***There is no substitute for hands-on appraisal.***

The nutritional status and condition of alpacas can be assessed without the need to purchase expensive weighing equipment. Live weight scales will accurately give weight changes within individual alpacas. However, inaccuracies can occur due to females being in late pregnancy or when there are variations in gut fill between weighing. Visual assessment of the condition of alpacas is often misleading as fleece and later stages of pregnancy can hide their true status. Overweight alpacas may be at risk with heat stress, infertility, difficult births, poor lactation and neonatal mortality. Emaciated alpacas can be susceptible to embryonic loss, stillbirths, poor lactation and underweight neonates.

Variations in frame sizes from one alpaca to another means it is not always accurate to compare the weights between individuals. Mature females should weigh between 60-75kg and males can weigh up to 100kg. (Averages are 70kg for adult females and 85kg for adult males).

If a low BCS is only due to a shortage of feed (and is not due to other factors such as ill health) alpacas with unlimited access to good quality pasture can take 3-6 weeks to gain one score.

Disclaimer: The advice given here is of a general nature. More detailed information for your area may be provided by an agronomist, veterinarian or other expert with local knowledge.

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