

Condition scoring sheep

To be used in conjunction with the **ATASA Condition Scoring models**, available for loan to ATASA members through Lead Ag Teacher, Sue Pratt.

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1. Introduce the concept of condition scoring by watching the video:

How to condition score sheep <https://youtu.be/1F5V-GcG1Qk?si=8oSbPPWaU0ylmeWW>

Practice with the CS models after each condition score is introduced in the video.

Reinforce the ideas by watching this video:

Sheep - how to score their condition in dry times

https://youtu.be/mrpJEGP_KXY?si=J8s4c0l1V6j2TJI3

2. Try a blindfold test with the CS models

3. Check out the *Lifetimewool* website:

[Lifetime Wool - more lambs better wool healthy ewes - Condition Scoring of Sheep](http://www.lifetimewool.com.au/conditionscore.html) <http://www.lifetimewool.com.au/conditionscore.html>

4. Organise for your students to practice with live sheep either at school or on a commercial property. Ensure a risk assessment has been completed and animal welfare is protected at all times.

Detailed guidelines on handling sheep for schools can be found at:

[Sheep – handling \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/animals-in-schools/animals-in-schools-species/sheep/sheep-handling)

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/animals-in-schools/animals-in-schools-species/sheep/sheep-handling>

In South Australian Department for Education schools, condition scoring requires Category 2 Approval. Please ensure all approvals are in place and check:

[Standard operating procedures for the use of animals in schools, preschools and child care centres. \(education.sa.gov.au\)](https://www.education.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/267454/standard-operating-procedures-for-the-use-of-animals-in-schools-preschools-child-care-centres.pdf)

https://www.education.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/267454/standard-operating-procedures-for-the-use-of-animals-in-schools-preschools-child-care-centres.pdf

Invite an industry expert such as a stock agent or sheep producer to demonstrate condition scoring with your students and guide them as they practice. If possible, start with a small number of sheep with a range of condition scores in a handling race to build understanding and confidence with the feel of each CS.

Use the mob record chart on page 4 to record mob results.

Comparisons can be made across a mob, age groups, pregnancy status (dry, single, twin, lactating), breeds, gender, seasons, feed types, feedlot and extensive.

Condition score can be used along with weight as a dependent variable in investigations using sheep.

5. **Extend the application of condition scoring** by exploring the Ewe Management Handbook which makes clear connections between condition score and ewe survival, twin rates and lamb survival:

[Lifetime Wool - more lambs better wool healthy ewes - Ewe Management handbook - HRZ](http://www.lifetimewool.com.au/tools/handbook.html)

<http://www.lifetimewool.com.au/tools/handbook.html>

Disclaimer: This curriculum resource is designed to support schools in delivering quality food and fibre content to students. It has been developed by Lead Ag Teacher Sue Pratt, AgCommunicators – a registered teacher with more than 30 years' experience in teaching agriculture and science. Prior to using this resource, teachers should conduct a risk assessment in line with their site's curriculum and safety guidelines and check all links are appropriate to the school's online policies. The risk assessment may include provision of specialised Personal Protective Equipment and review of the school's policies and procedures on chemical use.

How to 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 quite thin (virtually unsaleable).

Short Ribs

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



Backbone

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. Store condition- ideal for wethers and lean meat.

Short Ribs

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



Backbone

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. (Forward store condition ideal for most lamb markets now. No excess fat).

Short Ribs

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



Backbone

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.

Short Ribs

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



Backbone

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).

Short Ribs

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.

lifetimewool

more lambs, better wool, healthy ewes

