

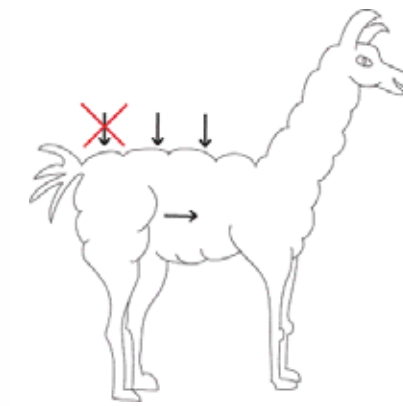
Body Scoring Llamas and Alpacas

By Jennifer Bowman, MS

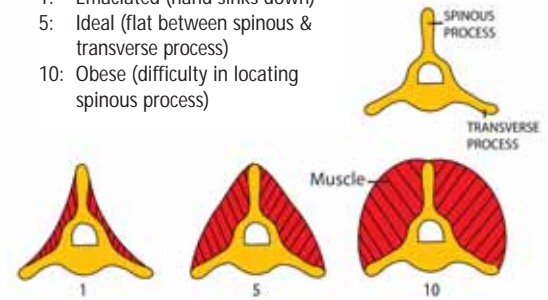
What is the body condition of your lamoids? Can you tell just by looking at your animal? What does body weight really tell you about your animals' nutritional status? Both the alpaca (1A, 1B) and the llama (2A, 2B) were reported as being in good condition based on visual inspection while still in full fleece.

After shearing, it is more evident that these animals represent the extremes of body condition scores.

Body scoring is a palpating skill that will allow you to evaluate the fat and muscle mass condition of an animal and assign it a value. This is a useful tool that helps you determine what dietary adjustments should be made to your feeding program. Camelid nutritional requirements vary based on development, work load, physiologic and environmental conditions. Regular body scoring of animals can be done



- SCORE CHART 1 – 10**
- 1: Emaciated (hand sinks down)
 - 5: Ideal (flat between spinous & transverse process)
 - 10: Obese (difficulty in locating spinous process)



quickly at the same time as other maintenance procedures, like vaccinations or toe nail trimming. Once proficient with this hands-on technique, you will find yourself body scoring animals as you walk past them.

Body scoring evaluates three locations: two along the back (withers/thoracic vertebrae and lumbar vertebrae) and one on the rib section behind the elbow. Do not evaluate directly over the pelvic area.

Locate the spinal vertebrae. The spinous process is the vertical structure on the center of the vertebral body and is the site of spinal muscle attachments. A line of connecting spinous processes feels like a ridge down the topline of the animal. The transverse process is the horizontal structure extending from each side of the vertebral column and is the site of spinal muscle attachments.

The first site for palpation is the region of the lumbar vertebrae, just in

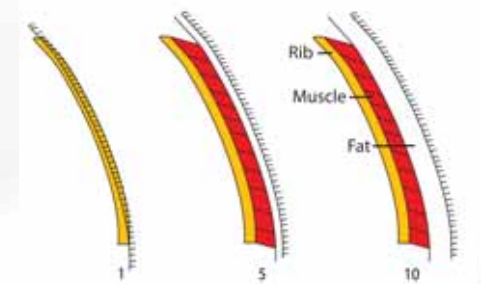
front of the stifle on the rear leg. Stand on the side of the camelid, place the tip of your middle finger on the spinous process and the heel of your hand on the transverse process. Nestle your hand flat against the skin allowing your hand to follow the contour of the underlying muscle mass. Ignore any amount of wool on the animal. A lamoid can be properly body scored despite the presence of an abundance of fiber. Score the animal from 1-10.

Repeat at the second site of palpation; the thoracic vertebrae.

Examine the muscle and fat overlying the ribs, behind the elbow.

Score 1 – 10

- 1: Emaciated – ribs protrude significantly
- 5: Ideal – feel ribs easily, without protrusion
- 10: Obese – can not find the ribs due to excess fat



TAKE HOME MESSAGE:
You must palpate your animals to understand their body condition.

CQ

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What body condition are your lamoids in? Can you tell by just looking at your animal? What does body weight really tell you about your animals, nutritional status? Both the alpaca (1A, 1B) and the llama (2A, 2B) were reported as good condition based on visual inspection while still in full fleece.