

What can scoring do for you ...?

Scoring dairy herds can contribute significantly to good husbandry and management of the cows as well as profitability. At Westpoint we have 2 qualified veterinary nurse technicians who perform all of our scoring and work closely with our team of vets. Technicians are out on farm daily getting involved in herd level management with our clients. We use several scoring techniques for different animal health traits to assist in achieving the best performance. Ideally we look at the cow's body condition at all stages of her productive cycle (BCS), mobility (MS), rumen health (RHS), nutritional status (NB) and follow the crucial development of the youngstock from birth to breeding. This has a relatively low time and cost input for the farmer but can yield substantial rewards.

BCS – is a method for assessing the condition of livestock at regular intervals. The purpose is to achieve a balance between economic feeding, production and welfare. It is particularly useful as an aid for transition cow management. The objective is to ensure that cows calve down safely and are suitably prepared for a productive lactation. BCS is a vital indicator of excessive weight loss which can lead to metabolic disorders and other welfare problems that could otherwise be avoided.

RHS – for this we look at the percentage of cows lying and cudging, the average chewing process for the herd, rumen fill, faecal consistency and content. We then look at the ration, both a fresh sample and a sample taken once the cows have fed to look at the ration components and whether the cows are filtering the diet and therefore changing the actual intake of the herd. This can be used in conjunction with the BCS and NB to evaluate the herd's overall nutritional status and adjust any discrepancies early.

NB – regular blood samples are taken from pre- and post-calving cows, to monitor energy balance. This can help deficiencies and inadequacies to be addressed promptly.

MS – this allows the whole herd to be assessed and individual cows to be picked out for treatment with the foot trimmer or for veterinary attention. The dairy industry is estimated to be losing an average of £15,000 per average herd to lameness; therefore this can make a real impact to the reduction in costs related to lameness.

Calf scoring – we regularly score calf health parameters to identify and allow prompt treatment of respiratory and scour cases, thus avoiding long term damage, impaired growth rates and production losses. We also monitor the growth rate from birth to 6 months, take blood samples to assess the quality of the colostrum being given and look at the effects of these factors on the overall rearing system. This allows us to suggest adjustments to the calf rearing on farm to produce the best production animals and optimise the profitability per animal.

All of the scoring will be reported to the farmer and their vet and can be used either individually for a particular element of the cow's health, or as part of a multi modal approach to either the individual animal or the whole herd. For dairy cows these aspects of health and welfare are key to a successful herd.

If you would like to discuss how any of the scoring services may be of benefit to you and your herd, please give us a call.

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