

Dog Body Condition Score Guide

The WSAVA 9-point scale

Body Condition Score (BCS) is a hands-on and visual assessment of your dog's body fat and muscle, scored on a 9-point scale where 1 is emaciated and 9 is grossly obese. Scores of 4–5 are ideal for most dogs.¹

Score	Category	What to Look and Feel For
1	Emaciated	Ribs, spine, pelvic bones, and other bony prominences visible from a distance. No discernible body fat. Obvious loss of muscle mass.
2	Very thin	Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, and pelvic bones easily visible. No palpable fat. Some other bony prominences may be evident. Minimal loss of muscle mass.
3	Thin	Ribs easily palpated and may be visible with no palpable fat. Tops of lumbar vertebrae visible. Pelvic bones becoming prominent. Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.
4	Ideal (lean)	Ribs easily palpable with minimal fat covering. Waist easily noted, viewed from above. Abdominal tuck evident.
5	Ideal	Ribs palpable without excess fat covering. Waist observed behind ribs when viewed from above. Abdomen tucked up when viewed from the side.
6	Slightly heavy	Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering. Waist discernible viewed from above but not prominent. Abdominal tuck apparent.
7	Overweight	Ribs palpable with difficulty; heavy fat cover. Noticeable fat deposits over the lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent or barely visible. No abdominal tuck.
8	Obese	Ribs not palpable under very heavy fat cover, or palpable only with significant pressure. Heavy fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent. No abdominal tuck. Obvious abdominal distention may be present.
9	Grossly obese	Massive fat deposits over the thorax, spine, and base of tail. Waist and abdominal tuck absent. Fat deposits on neck and limbs. Obvious abdominal distention.

How to Check at Home

1. Feel the ribs — Run flat hands along both sides of the rib cage with light pressure. At an ideal score, ribs feel like the back of your hand through a thin layer of fat.
2. Look from above — Stand over your standing dog and look down. There should be a visible waist narrowing behind the rib cage.
3. Look from the side — The belly should tuck up from the bottom of the rib cage toward the back legs.

Coat can hide 1–2 points of body fat in thick-coated breeds, so always combine the visual check with hands-on palpation. If you're unsure where your dog scores, or if your dog's score has changed, bring it up with your veterinarian at your next visit.

1. World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) Global Nutrition Committee, "Body Condition Score — Dog."
<https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Body-Condition-Score-Dog.pdf>