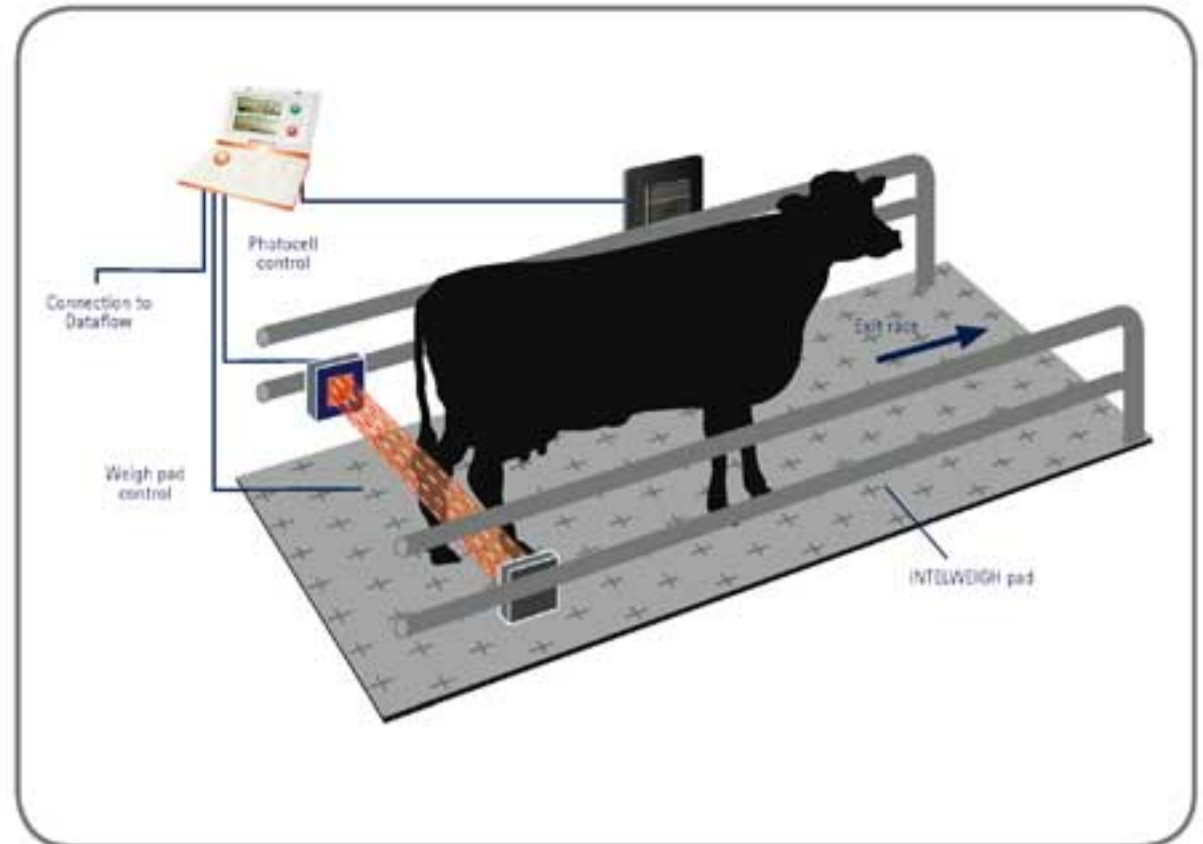




COW CONDITION

Cow condition is an important factor in maintaining health, production and fertility. Understanding your cows condition and how it relates to her stage of lactation is important to get the balance right. A change in environment, feed quantity and quality effect this balance. iDATAFLOW provides feedback on cow condition trends using *weight* and the ability to report *Body Condition Score (BCS)* of your cows.

Weight and *BCS* are also utilised in the feed ration calculation to 'lift' cows that need a little extra at the right time (see 7.1.9).



WEIGHT

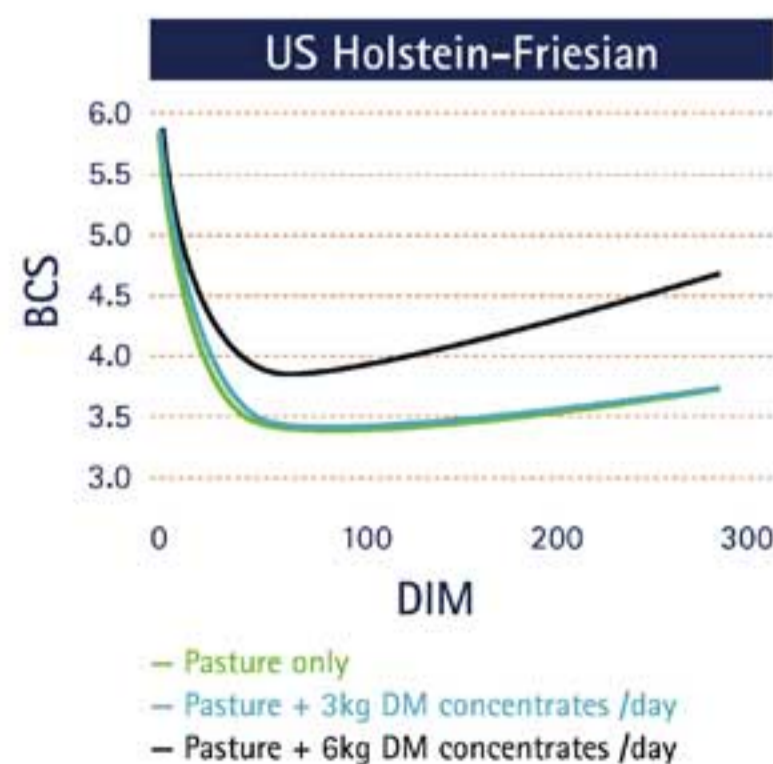
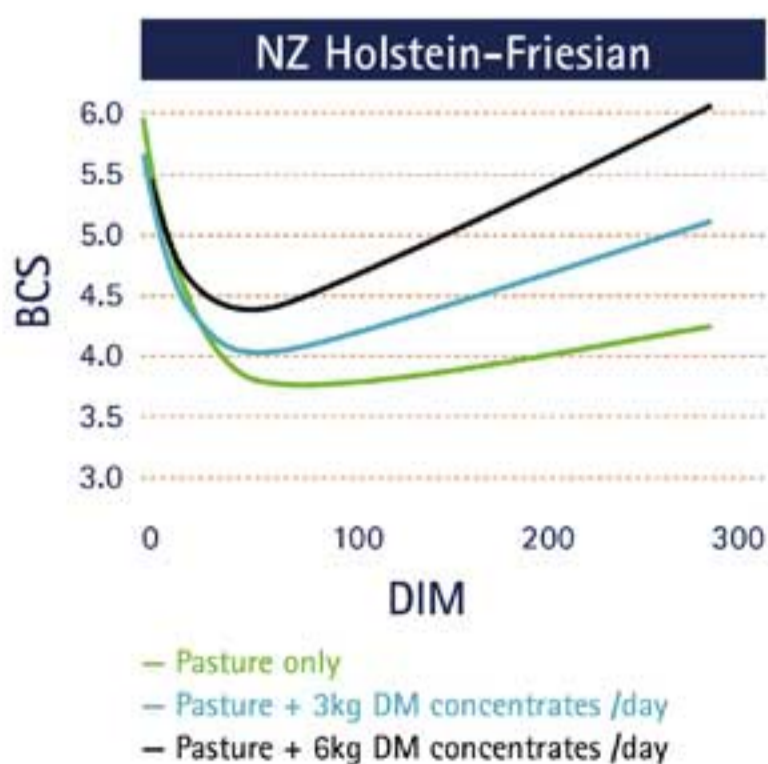
The *weight* information from the individual cow is collected daily from the walk over weigher that is generally located in the exit race. A robust platform with integral load bars calculate the *weight* of the cow. The data is transferred to the iDATAFLOW software for analysis and reporting.

CONDITION SCORE

Assessment of *BCS* gives a visual estimate of her body fat reserves. This provides a valuable reference to her production potential in the current lactation, feed requirements and previous level of feeding. The relationship between *BCS* at drying off and calving is important for your entire next lactation. Cows that are thin are generally less fertile and productive, alternately fat cows are typically at more risk of metabolic disease like milk fever or ketosis post calving. Entering *BSC* for each cow at critical times of the year allows you to monitor those cows that need extra attention.

KEY FACTS ABOUT COW CONDITION:

- *BCS* is most important at calving time and the mating period
- Additional feed can be given to those cows with low *BCS* prior to calving to ensure they are in prime condition at calving time
- We have little control over *BCS* in early lactation (first 6 weeks)
- The optimal *BCS* at calving is 5.0 for mature cows and 5.5 for heifers and second calvers
- Thinner cows produce less milk. However cows calving at a higher *BCS* of say 6 only produce slightly more milk but are at more risk to metabolic disease
- It will take 8 days longer for a cow at a *BCS* of 4 to cycle compared to a cow at a *BCS* of 5
- Pregnancy rate at first insemination for cows with a *BCS* of 5 will be 1-2% higher than those calving at a *BCS* of 4
- Empty rates are generally greater in cows that are thin in early lactation (2% for each *BCS* unit)



Source: DairyNZ. For more information and a copy of Condition Scoring Made Easy, go to www.dairynz.co.nz/toolsandresources