






CATTLE DUNG SCORING

Looking at your animals' dung will help you to work out how well they are digesting available grass, whether the grass has recovered and if it has a good balance of protein, fibre and energy/carbohydrates. Observe freshly dropped dung and give it a score according to the table on the next page. Note: water quality can affect dung scoring. If the water quality is poor the animals can be dehydrated, which will affect the consistency of their dung. This makes it harder to assess the influence of feed quality and quantity.

Score 1		<p>Watery - This dung is very liquid with a consistency between water and pea soup. Dirty rumps are seen. The dung may actually “arc” from the rump of the cow. Excess protein or starch, or lack of fibre, can lead to this score. With planned grazing the usual cause is grass plants that are very young and not recovered. Animals are at high risk of metabolic diseases. As the animals are using energy to process excess non protein nitrogen they are at risk of rapidly losing condition and having associated health problems.</p>
Score 2		<p>Custard-like - Dung appears runny and does not form a distinct pile. Dirty rumps are seen. Dung will measure less than 2.5 cm in height and will splatter when it hits the ground or concrete. With planned grazing the usual cause is grass plants that are young and not recovered. Animals are at risk of metabolic diseases and using energy to process excess non protein nitrogen.</p>
Score 3		<p>Pie-like - This is the optimal score! The dung has a porridge-like appearance, will stack up 4 to 5 cm, will appear like a pie with a small depression or dimple in the middle. The dung make a plopping sound when it hits the ground and animals will have clean rumps. With planned grazing this indicates a good match between the grass being selected and rumen conditions. Animals are at low risk of metabolic diseases and health is generally good.</p>
Score 4		<p>Firm - The dung is thicker and stacks up over 5 cm. With planned grazing this indicates that grass being selected is lower in protein and energy, and higher in fibre than is optimal for current rumen conditions. Usually seen when putting animals onto older feed. Animal performance may be lower until the rumen adjusts or younger grass is provided.</p>
Score 5		<p>Biscuit-like - This dung appears as a firm biscuit-like stack. With planned grazing this generally indicates that grass being selected is low in protein and energy and high in fibre. Usually seen when putting animals onto very old feed or leaving them to “clean up” plant material that would be best trampled onto the soil surface. Animal performance is usually low. Dehydration would contribute to this score. Cows with a digestive blockage may exhibit this score. Animals are at risk of rapidly losing condition and having associated health problems.</p>

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