KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension Wildcat District

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It's All About the Bucks

As winter approaches and the fall breeding season for sheep and goats comes to a close, it is essential to assess the health of bucks and rams as they are relocated to their bachelor herds. They have been working hard, spending extra energy, and may need additional nutrients to regain weight.

Evaluate the body condition score of bucks/rams when moving them to determine if they require supplemental feed to gain weight. Body condition refers to the amount of fat an animal has. To determine the body condition score, producers can assess the fat cover of a goat or sheep by feeling the fat cover on the loin. After assessing the amount of fat, a body condition score can be given. For sheep and goats, body condition scores are assigned on a scale of one to five, with one indicating no fat cover and a five indicating excessive fat cover. A body condition score of 3 is considered ideal. To get a rough idea of what body condition scores feel like, make a fist with one of your hands. Your knuckles are what a body condition score of one will feel like, with little or no fat covering. The back of your hand is similar to what a body condition score of five feels like; you can no longer feel any bones due to fat covering. And the top of your finger is what a body condition score of three feels like, some fat cover, but you can still feel the bone. Figure 1 below illustrates the amount of fat cover each score represents.

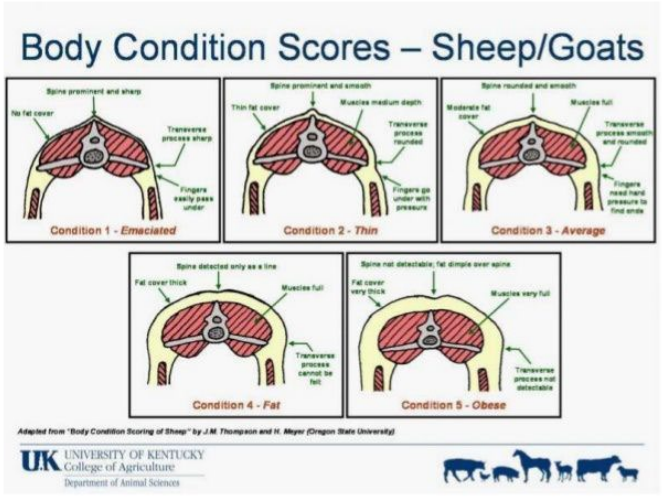

Figure 1. Body condition scoring chart for sheep and goats.

Animals that have lower body condition scores should be given supplemental feed to help them gain weight. When body condition scoring bucks/rams, it is also a great opportunity to deworm them if needed and trim their hooves. Getting bucks/rams back into ideal condition after breeding season will help them stay healthy and be ready for the next breeding season.

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