

# Canine Body Condition Score (BCS)



■ Under ideal
 ■ Ideal
 ■ Over ideal

BCS/Body fat estimate	Lateral view	Dorsal view	Assessment criteria
<b>1</b> <b>Emaciated</b> <5%			Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, and pelvic bones evident at a distance; no palpable fat; obvious loss of muscle mass.
<b>2</b> <b>Very Thin</b> 5–9%			Ribs, spine, and pelvic bones are readily visible with no palpable fat; obvious loss of muscle mass.
<b>3</b> <b>Thin</b> 10–14%			Ribs easily palpable with no fat cover; dorsal lumbar vertebrae visible; pelvic bones becoming prominent; pronounced waist and abdominal tuck.
<b>4</b> <b>Healthy (lean)</b> 15–19%			Ribs easily palpable under minimal fat; waist obvious dorsally; abdominal tuck evident.
<b>5</b> <b>Healthy (ideal)</b> 20–24%			Ribs palpable without excess fat; waist visible behind ribs dorsally; abdominal tuck present laterally.
<b>6</b> <b>Overweight</b> 25–29%			Ribs palpable under slight excess fat; waist discernible but not prominent; abdominal tuck reduced.
<b>7</b> <b>Overweight</b> 30–34%			<b>Clinical obesity screening zone (BCS 7–9)</b> Ribs palpable only with firm pressure under heavy fat; waist difficult to see; minimal abdominal tuck; fat over lumbar area and tail base.
<b>8</b> <b>Obesity (descriptive)</b> 35–39%			Ribs not palpable under heavy fat; no waist or tuck; prominent lumbar and tail-base fat; possible abdominal distension.
<b>9</b> <b>Obesity (descriptive)</b> 40–45%+			Ribs non-palpable under massive fat; no waist or tuck; extensive deposits over thorax, lumbar region, tail base, neck, and limbs; abdominal distension.

Adapted from the 9-point BCS system (Laflamme 1997, Canine Pract 22:10–15). Body-fat values per 2021 AAHA Nutrition & Weight Management Guidelines (Cline et al. 2021; Mawby et al. 2004); ≈5% body fat per unit. Category terms follow the four-tier framework (underweight/healthy/overweight/obesity); AAHA uses "ideal" and "obese." BCS ≥7/9 is a screening threshold, not a diagnosis: BCS 7/9 is overweight; descriptive obesity begins at BCS 8–9/9. Obesity = ≥30% above ideal body weight (APOP). BCS is unreliable above ~45% body fat; use BFI, morphometry, or DEXA. Estimates vary ~±5 pp by sex, neuter status, and breed. © APOP · petobesityprevention.org