

Fat scoring sheep and lambs

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Fat scores

Fat scores are based on actual soft tissue depth at the GR site (Figure 2). The GR site is situated 110 mm from the midline over the 12th rib. Scores vary from fat score 1 (leanest) to fat score 5 (fattest) – see Table 1.

Introduction

Manual fat scoring is a personal, practical skill that is best learnt by practice. It is of great benefit in managing feed and marketing sheep and lambs.

Manual fat scoring

To achieve a reliable score, have the animal standing in a relaxed state, preferably in a race or liveweight scales. The animal will not be bruised if it

Figure 1. The best site for assessing fatness is over the ribs.

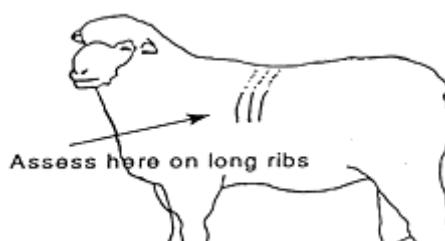


Figure 2. The 12th rib GR site

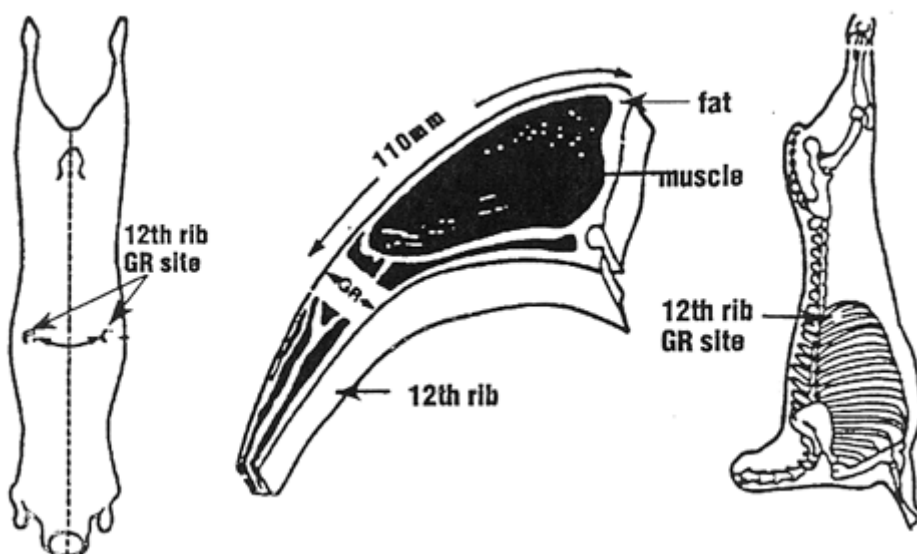


Table 1. Manual assessment criteria and GR tissue depth for each fat score

	Fat score				
	1	2	3	4	5
Manual assessment over the long ribs	Individual ribs felt very easily; cannot feel any tissue over the ribs.	Individual ribs easily felt, but some tissue present.	Individual ribs can still be felt, but can feel tissue.	Can just feel ribs and fluid movement of tissue.	Ribs barely felt; tissue movement very fluid.
GR tissue depth (mm)	0–5	6–10	11–15	16–20	>20

Note: Generally, at the same weight, ewe lambs will be fatter than wether lambs, which will in turn be fatter than ram lambs.

is assessed in the correct manner by palpation with the fingertips and thumb.

The scorer must work their fingers through the wool to skin level before feeling for fat cover over the bones. The best site to feel when assessing fatness is over the long ribs (Figure 1). This includes the GR site (Figure 2), where fatness is measured on the carcase.

Table 1 lists, for each fat score, the assessment criteria for manual fat scoring over the long ribs, and the GR tissue depth range measured on the carcase.

Acknowledgment

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