Feline Body Condition System (BCS) Score

An evaluation of variability in visual assessment of BCS in cats

2022

Brief introduction

- Feline <u>B</u>ody <u>C</u>ondition <u>S</u>ystem (BCS) Score is an important clinical metric to assess appropriate body weight and distribution relative to the size of the cat.

- The Purina feline body condition was developed for veterinarians using more sensitive measures of feline obesity to create a 9-point scale that divides cats into three categories, too thin, ideal, and too heavy.

- The scale is very useful, but is subject to inter-observer bias

Goal of this Quiz: asses the degree of inter-observer bias in our study to account for variability in BCS reporting and more consistently align the true BCS with the feline microbiome profile.

The Purina BCS

- Visual evaluation can provide some information
  - Look at the cat from above
  - Look at the cat from the side

- Palpation is key to an accurate BCS system
  - Palpate the ribs and abdomen

1. Ribs visible on shorthaired cats; no palpable fat; severe abdominal tuck; lumbar vertebrae and wings of ilia easily palpated.

2. Ribs easily visible on shorthaired cats; lumbar vertebrae obvious with minimal muscle mass; pronounced abdominal tuck; no palpable fat.

3. Ribs easily palpable with minimal fat covering; lumbar vertebrae obvious; obvious waist behind ribs; minimal abdominal fat.

4. Ribs palpable with minimal fat covering; noticeable waist behind ribs; slight abdominal tuck; abdominal fat pad absent.
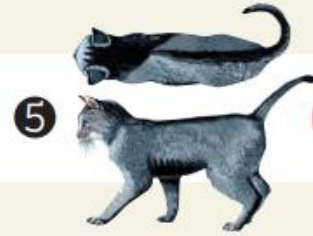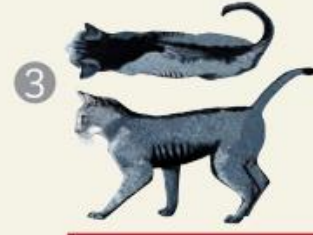
5. Well-proportioned; observe waist behind ribs; ribs palpable with slight fat covering; abdominal fat pad minimal.

6. Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering; waist and abdominal fat pad distinguishable but not obvious; abdominal tuck absent.

7. Ribs not easily palpated with moderate fat covering; waist poorly discernible; obvious rounding of abdomen; moderate abdominal fat pad.

8. Ribs not palpable with excess fat covering; waist absent; obvious rounding of abdomen with prominent abdominal fat pad; fat deposits present over lumbar area.

9. Ribs not palpable under heavy fat cover; heavy fat deposits over lumbar area, face and limbs; distention of abdomen with no waist; extensive abdominal fat deposits.

too thin

ideal

too heavy

How to Measure the BCS

- Reminder - General ranges for your score:
  - 1-4 too thin
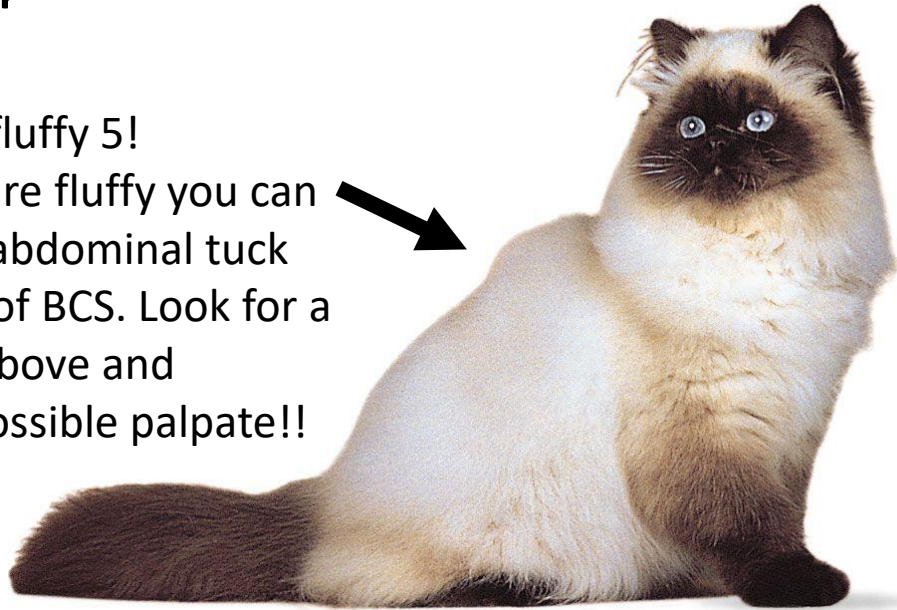 - 5 - 6 ideal
  - 7 -9 too heavy

- Things to look for:
  - The primordial pouch (fat pad) – This can be visible, but should not impede identification of the abdominal tuck and it should not be prominent.
  - The abdominal tuck – this is best viewed from the side and in cats that are BCS of 6+ it is difficult to discern
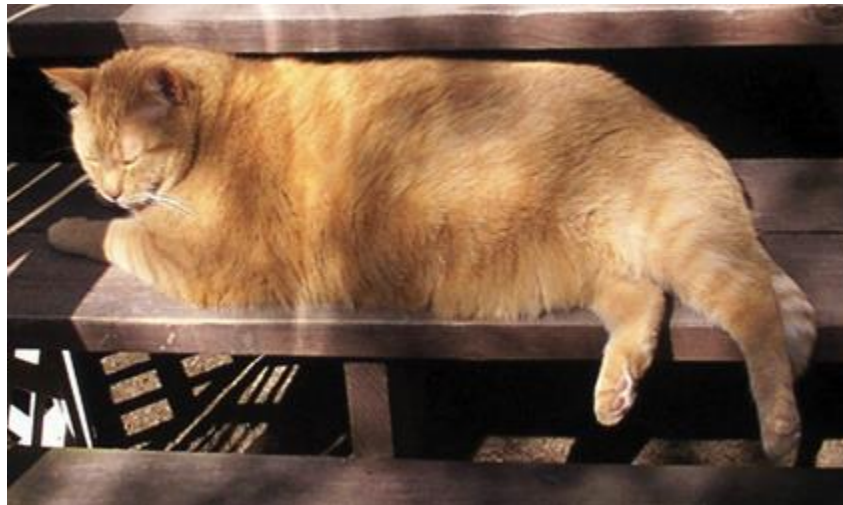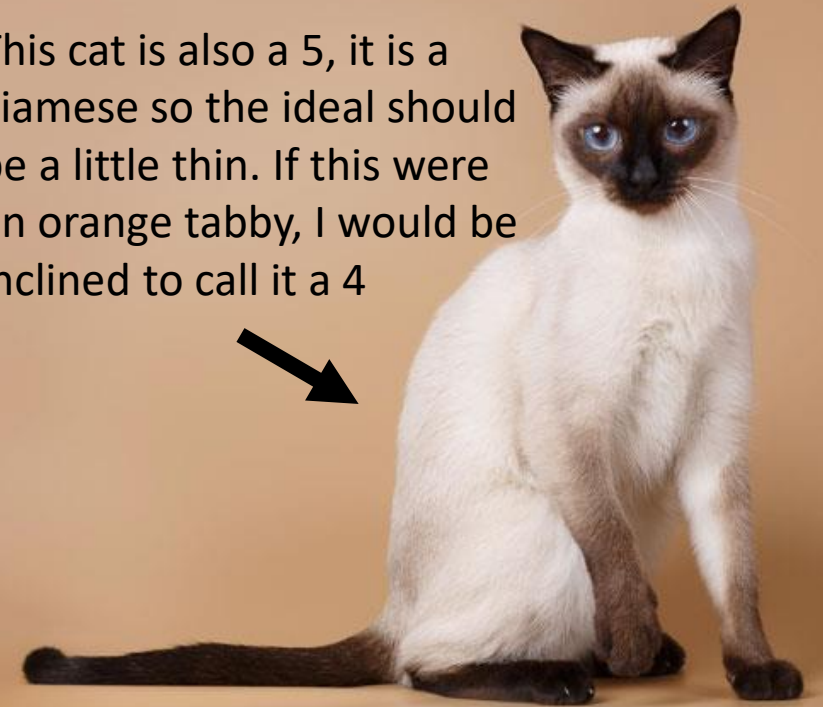 - A visible waist – This is best viewed when looking at the cat from above

Example BCS!

This cat is a fluffy 5!
When they are fluffy you can not use the abdominal tuck as a marker of BCS. Look for a waist from above and whenever possible palpate!!

This cat is also a 5, it is a Siamese so the ideal should be a little thin. If this were an orange tabby, I would be inclined to call it a 4

This cat is easily and 8 probably a 9... Where is the abdominal tuck?? It's all primordial pouch!!

It also has tiny head/big body syndrome. Skulls do not get fat so they can give you a good reference of the cats intended size.