

BODY CONDITION SCORING GUIDE

Beagle & Corgi · 1–9 Scale · How to assess, what to look for, and what to do

Body condition scoring (BCS) is the most reliable way to assess whether your dog is at a healthy weight. Unlike scales alone, BCS accounts for body composition — the ratio of fat to muscle. Assess your dog monthly using the three-point method below, then find the matching score in the grid to identify what action, if any, is needed.

HOW TO ASSESS — THE THREE-POINT METHOD

<p>RIB CHECK</p> <p>Place both hands on the ribcage, thumbs on the spine. Slide fingers along the ribs. You should feel each rib distinctly — like running fingers over the back of your own hand. If you can't feel them without pressing hard: overweight. If you can see them: underweight.</p>	<p>WAIST CHECK</p> <p>Look down at the dog from directly above. There should be a visible hourglass shape — a clear tuck behind the ribcage. No tuck at all means overweight. An extreme tuck with visible hip bones means underweight. The ideal waist is gentle, not dramatic.</p>	<p>SPINE & HIP CHECK</p> <p>Run fingers gently along the spine and over the hip bones. You should feel vertebrae with light pressure — not see them from a distance, and not need to press hard to find them. Prominent visible bones = too thin. Unable to feel them at all = too heavy.</p>
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THE 1–9 SCALE AT A GLANCE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
UNDERWEIGHT			IDEAL RANGE (target: 4-5)			OVERWEIGHT		

SCORE-BY-SCORE REFERENCE

Each card describes what you will see and feel at that score, and what to do about it. The coloured top border matches the score's position in the spectrum above.

<p>1 EMACIATED</p> <p>Ribs: Ribs, spine, and pelvis all visible from a distance — no fat cover whatsoever</p> <p>Waist: Extreme hourglass; abdomen severely tucked</p> <p>Feel: All bones sharp under immediate fingertip contact — no detectable fat</p> <p style="background-color: #c0392b; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Veterinary referral urgently required</p>	<p>2 VERY THIN</p> <p>Ribs: Ribs and lumbar vertebrae easily visible; pelvic bones prominent</p> <p>Waist: Obvious waist and abdominal tuck clearly visible</p> <p>Feel: Minimal fat detectable; bones very prominent under fingers</p> <p style="background-color: #c0392b; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Consult vet — rule out illness before increasing food</p>	<p>3 THIN</p> <p>Ribs: Ribs easily felt with minimal fat cover; tops of lumbar vertebrae visible</p> <p>Waist: Waist clearly visible from above; abdominal tuck evident</p> <p>Feel: Very little fat between skin and ribs</p> <p style="background-color: #f1c40f; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Gradually increase daily ration; monitor weekly</p>
<p>4 LEAN-IDEAL</p> <p>Ribs: Ribs easily felt; slight fat cover present — not protruding visually</p> <p>Waist: Waist visible from above; mild abdominal tuck from side</p> <p>Feel: Thin layer of fat — ribs felt with gentle fingertip pressure</p> <p style="background-color: #27ae60; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Good — monitor to ensure weight stays stable</p>	<p>5 IDEAL</p> <p>Ribs: Ribs not visible but easily felt; well-proportioned fat cover</p> <p>Waist: Waist visible from above; abdomen tucked when viewed from side</p> <p>Feel: Ribs feel like knuckles through a light covering — present, not protruding</p> <p style="background-color: #27ae60; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Maintain current feeding — this is the target</p>	<p>6 SLIGHTLY HEAVY</p> <p>Ribs: Ribs felt with slight pressure; small fat deposits beginning over lumbar area</p> <p>Waist: Waist visible from above but not prominent; abdomen flat</p> <p>Feel: Ribs require moderate pressure to feel clearly</p> <p style="background-color: #f1c40f; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Reduce daily ration by 10%; increase exercise slightly</p>

<p>7 OVERWEIGHT</p> <p>Ribs: Ribs difficult to feel under fat deposits; lumbar area noticeably rounded</p> <p>Waist: Waist barely discernible from above; no abdominal tuck</p> <p>Feel: Significant fat layer — ribs require firm pressure to detect</p> <p style="background-color: #d4af37; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Consult vet for a weight-loss plan; reduce treats immediately</p>	<p>8 OBESE</p> <p>Ribs: Ribs not palpable under heavy fat cover; fat deposits visible on neck and limbs</p> <p>Waist: Waist absent; abdomen level with chest or distended</p> <p>Feel: Thick fat layer — ribs very difficult to feel even with firm pressure</p> <p style="background-color: #c0392b; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Veterinary weight-loss programme required</p>	<p>9 SEVERELY OBESE</p> <p>Ribs: Ribs buried under massive fat; large deposits on neck, spine, and all limbs</p> <p>Waist: No waist; abdomen pendulous and enlarged</p> <p>Feel: Ribs cannot be felt; massive fat deposits present throughout body</p> <p style="background-color: #c0392b; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Urgent veterinary referral — health risk is serious</p>
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BREED-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

<p>CORGI — Target BCS: 4–5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corgis carry weight deceptively well — their dense double coat can hide a BCS 6 or 7 that feels like a 5. Always feel the ribs rather than rely on visual assessment alone. - Obesity in Corgis dramatically increases IVDD (intervertebral disc disease) risk. The long spine carries disproportionate load at excess weight — every extra kilogram matters. - A BCS of 5 in a Corgi should show a clear waist from above and a visible abdominal tuck from the side. If you can't see either, check the ribs again. - Corgis are food-motivated and will not self-regulate. Measure every meal — do not free-feed. - Healthy adult weight range: 10–14 kg depending on sex and frame. Weigh monthly and record it. 	<p>BEAGLE — Target BCS: 4–5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beagles are hardwired to eat past satiety — they will eat until they are ill if allowed. Portion control is the owner's responsibility, always, for the dog's entire life. - A Beagle at BCS 5 should have a visible waist and ribs that are easily felt with gentle fingertip pressure. If you need to press firmly, they are likely overweight. - Beagles tend to accumulate fat on the abdomen and flanks first — check these areas specifically alongside the standard rib check. - Excess weight in Beagles contributes to joint stress, reduced scent sensitivity, lethargy, and a measurably shorter lifespan. - Healthy adult weight range: 9–11 kg for females, 10–12 kg for males. Weigh monthly and record it.
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QUICK ACTION GUIDE BY SCORE

BCS 1–2	Veterinary referral urgently required — do not simply increase food without ruling out illness
BCS 3	Gradually increase daily ration by 10%; reweigh in two weeks and assess again
BCS 4–5	Ideal range — maintain current feeding amount and exercise routine
BCS 6	Reduce daily ration by 10%; add 10 minutes of exercise daily; recheck in 4 weeks
BCS 7	Consult your vet for a formal weight-loss plan; eliminate all treats immediately
BCS 8–9	Urgent veterinary referral required — obesity at this level is a medical condition

This guide is produced by the Pember Diamonds Knowledge Network — Pember Diamonds (Corgis), Tanydd Corgi Crew (Corgis), and Tamboeckey Beagles. It is intended as practical guidance for dog owners and does not replace individualised veterinary advice. If you are concerned about your dog's weight or health, consult your veterinarian.