Managing ewe body condition for a successful mating

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**TOPIC:** Reproduction

**ISSUE:** Body condition score (BCS) during reproduction

- **Solution name:** Managing ewe body condition for a successful mating
- **Country:** Italy
- **Dairy or/and meat sheep:** Dairy and Meat
- **Source of information:** Leaflet, scientific literature, practice
- **Level of solution:** Practical

**Aim:** to recover body condition in milked ewes in view of mating

**Description:**
- Lactating and milked ewes deplete their body condition during the first months of lactation when energy exported in milk overtakes energy intake.
- If body reserves of fat and protein are not recovered by the time of beginning of mating, concentration of lambings in targeted periods and fertility rate are at risk. To reduce this inefficiency it is suggested to assess ewe body condition at least three times before mating:
  - BCS1: during mid lactation (day in milk: 60) ewes are BC scored. Ewes with BCS < 2.5 are submitted to a 60 day recovery plan (e.g. + 200 g/day of maize grain up to mating or AI).
  - BCS2: ewes are scored again three weeks before mating or AI. If ewes score around 2.5, they are submitted to a dietary flushing, the length and type of flushing depending on the availability and quality of pasture (see solution: Feeding for reproductive efficiency: body condition recovery and flushing).
  - BCS3: at the introduction of rams or at the AI to check the effect of previous nutrition on ewe body condition.

**Expected benefits:** Increased fertility, concentration of lambings and prolificacy.

**Prerequisites and/or limits:** knowledge, training on BCS method, software to key and process BCS data and for grouping of animals. To this end, a prototype of a smart-phone based system to process BCS data coupled with ewe ID has been developed by “Sementusa” private firm in Sardinia and is nowadays under a validation procedure.