

Too Thin



1

Prominent ribs, backbone and spine of shoulder blade. Abdomen tucked in under transverse processes of lumbar spine. No palpable fat on ribs, sternum (breastbone), or sacrum. Eyes and temporal muscles may be sunken in. Evident loss of muscle mass on back, thigh and shoulder muscles. Severe energy deficit. Too thin to start or continue race.



2

Prominent ribs, backbone and spine of shoulder blade. Abdomen somewhat tucked in under transverse processes of lumbar spine. No palpable fat on ribs, minimal on sternum (breastbone), or sacrum. Minimal loss of muscle mass on back, thigh, and shoulder muscles. Less convex curves on muscles. May be slight temporal muscle atrophy. Pronounced energy deficit. Too thin to start or continue race.



1



2

Watch BCS! Borderline



3

Intercostal room/ribs less obvious, backbone and spine of shoulder blades even with muscles, possibly some prominence. Some palpable fat, mostly over dens of sacrum. No or minimal layer of fat on ribs. No or minimal loss of muscle mass. Convex curves on muscles. Watch BCS closely. Ensure good energy intake.



3

OK

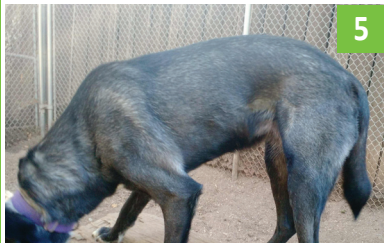


4

Some muscular prominence over bones on backbone and spine of shoulder blade. Good convex curves on muscles. Slight palpable fat on ribs. Dens of sacrum filled out. Ideal weight.



4



5

Good muscular prominence over bones on backbone and spine of shoulder blade. Good convex curves on muscle. Palpable thin layer of fat on ribs. Sacrum partially filled out. Ideal weight.



5



6

Good muscular prominence over bones on backbone and spine of shoulder blade. Good convex curves on muscles. Fat clearly palpable on ribs, sacrum filled out, hip bones less prominent. Good starting weight in cold conditions especially longer races.



6

Overweight



7

Less likely to see on races. Some muscular prominence over bones on backbone and spine of shoulder blade. Curves on muscles more difficult to determine. Fat covering over most of body. Somewhat overweight for racing dog, but OK especially starting distance race in cold conditions. Not ideal for sprint dogs or in warm temperatures.

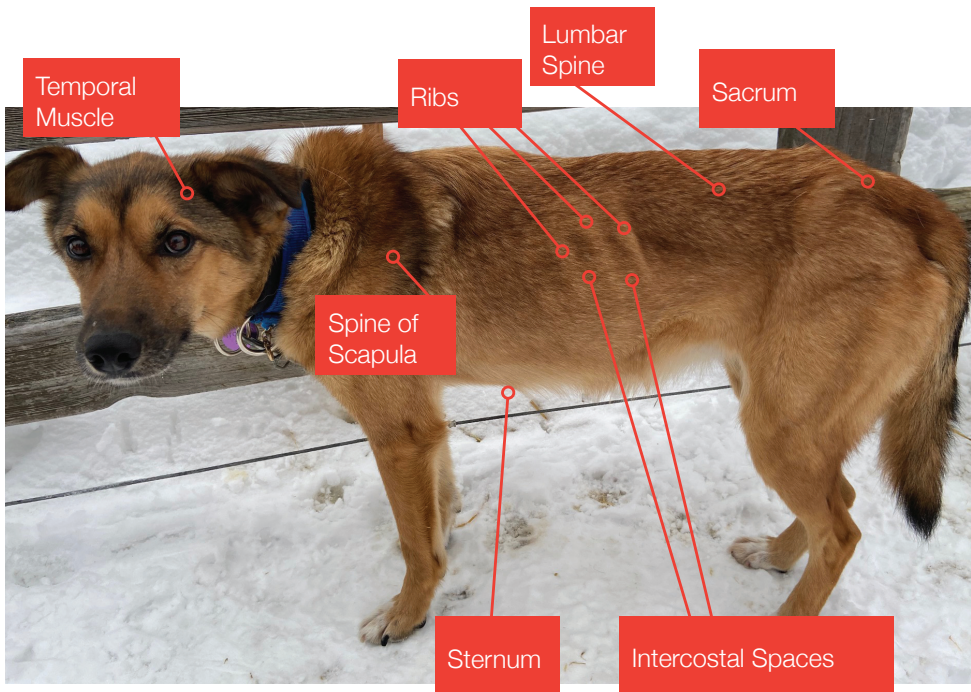


7

8

9

Not suitable for racing.



The chart presented here is designed specifically for racing sled dogs.

It is also important to use standard scoring charts and methods of evaluation across races and time. If one race uses a 5-point chart, while others use a 9-point chart, it will be very confusing for mushers as well as veterinarians and other race personnel. At this time, the 9-point chart is the most commonly seen one at races. The chart presented here is designed specifically for sled dogs.

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Assessing body condition is important in evaluating the ability of athletic dogs to compete well and stay healthy. Both poor body condition and poor muscle conditioning detract from athletic performance. However, the terms are not synonymous. Poor muscle conditioning, resulting from inadequate exercise and a poor training/conditioning program, can be seen in thin, appropriate, or overweight dogs. The dog may have adequate body energy reserves, but not be able to perform athletically as the muscles have not been properly developed.

Body condition reflects the energy balance in the dog. A thin dog may have well developed muscles if it has had good exercise and conditioning, but be thin, i.e., a low body condition score, because it wasn't fed enough calories to meet energy demands. Ideally, the dog should be ingesting enough calories to meet energy requirements for normal maintenance of body functions, thermoregulation,

and exercise demands. A negative energy balance occurs when the dog is not taking in enough calories to balance expenditures. In this case, the dog will utilize body fat stores for energy, and when those deplete, will utilize muscle tissue as well for energy. Dogs can lose body condition very rapidly especially in cold weather, strenuous exercise, or once fat stores are depleted.

Decreased body condition, from a negative energy balance, may decrease immune function, athletic performance and make the dog more susceptible to injuries or illness.

During pre-race vet checks as well as during races, veterinarians and mushers should consider body condition when assessing whether dogs are fit to race or continue to race. Due to the heavy haircoat of many arctic breeds, it is important to feel every dog, manually palpating under harness and coats if present, to properly assess body condition.