

Welcome to the new BDGP page from ICBF

New 18-week series to help farmers with BDGP

This page will run for the next 18 weeks and will be dedicated to helping farmers participate in the new Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) as it rolls out over the next number of months.

- Each week we will cover:
- A key aspect of the new programme.
 - A profile of a participating BDGP farmer.
 - A Q&A section.
 - Key dates for your diary.

This week's article is on understanding the new BDGP report. Future articles will cover areas such as Euro-Star Indexes, replacement strategy on farms, and recording and reporting data.

Each article will be available on the *Irish Farmers Journal* and the ICBF websites for your future reference. We trust you enjoy the page and that it helps you have a positive experience regarding all aspects of the BDGP.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEW BDGP REPORT

New BDGP reports are currently being sent to all participating farmers within the BDGP.

So, what is the objective of the report, and how can farmers use the report to start making decisions regarding future replacement strategy on their farms?

The objective of the report is simple: to give farmers a clear understanding regarding the Euro-Star status of their herd. The scheme requirement

is that 20% of females (cows and heifers > 16 months) on farms should be: (i) genotyped; and (ii) be 4 or 5 stars on the ICBF Replacement Index on 31 October 2018, with this figure increasing to 50% for 2020.

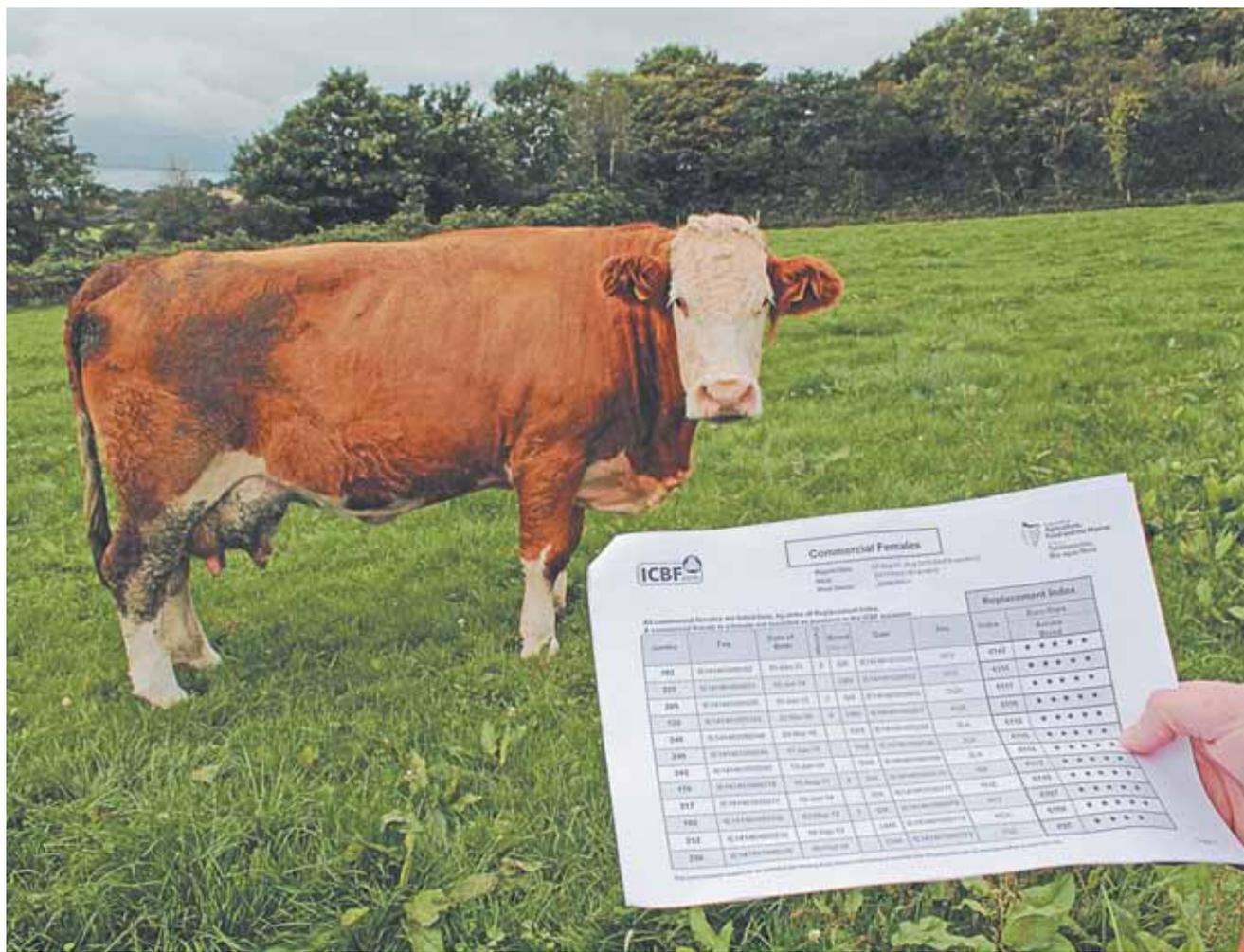
Over the next one to two years, we will be genotyping 4 and 5 star animals as a matter of priority so that farmers can quickly attain full eligibility status for their herds.

All breeding females and any breeding males are then listed on the report, so that farmers can quickly assess the Replacement Index of individual animals on their farm.

In addition to data on individual animals, the report also provides farmers with information on their number of reference cows (from DAFM), the number of 4 and 5 star animals that are required to meet replacement strategy requirements, and a breakdown of the animals on farm in relation to the age and Replacement Index status.

Having all of this information will then allow farmers make a more informed decision regarding their future replacement strategy. Is their existing strategy sufficient, or do they need to buy a new 4 or 5 star Replacement Index bull, or use some AI, or buy in more 4 and 5 star Replacement Index females?

All of these are questions which we will endeavour to answer over the coming weeks as we look to enhance your understanding of the BDGP.



Q&A

How can I find out the Euro-Star Indexes of my stock? All herds participating in the BDGP are currently receiving a report from ICBF detailing the Euro-Star Indexes of all of their stock. All participating herds will have received a report by next week. These reports are also available online by logging on to www.icbf.com.

How is a Euro-Star Index generated for an animal? When a calf is born, provided its ancestry is recorded, it receives a Euro-Star Index based on those of its parents (parent average). As data is recorded on an animal throughout its life (weights, docility, etc), its Index will start to change to reflect its own performance. The Euro-Star Indexes will be explained in more detail in the coming weeks.

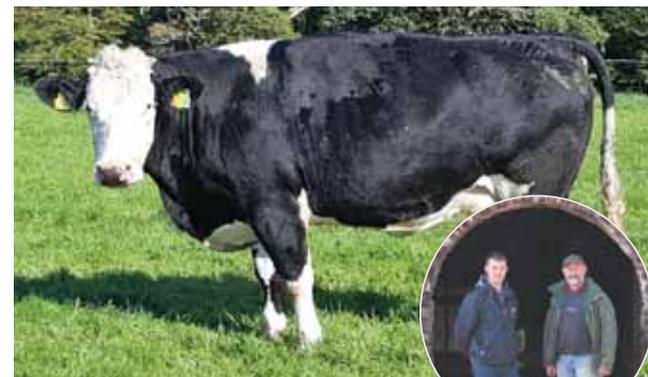
Why do some of my animals not have a Euro-Star Index? The most common reason for this is a missing sire. Missing sires, where known, can be entered online at www.icbf.com.

FARMER FOCUS: BILLY & NIALL NICHOLSON

'We're making more informed decisions'

Name: Billy & Niall Nicholson, Crosshaven, Co Cork.
Farming system: Suckler to beef.
BDGP cow reference No: 94
4 or 5 star females: 79 cows; 76 heifers
Stock bull or AI: All stock bulls: Two Charolais; two Limousin and one Simmental.
Replacement strategy: Breeding own replacements.

Why did you join the scheme? Obviously the financial support is significant for a herd of this size, but aside from the money, we feel that genomics will help to better equip us to make more informed breeding decisions and identify our best stock.
Do you feel it will deliver for the national suckler herd? The Indexes are based around key profit traits for commercial farming and what we're looking for here is a cow that will deliver these traits. Our cows must have milk, be fertile, have good calving ability and be docile. So yes, I feel the BDGP will deliver.
How did you find the BDGP Euro-Star report? We found it very straightforward and easy



One of Billy and Niall's best cows. Born in February 2008, this Simmental cross cow has a Replacement Index of €142 (5 stars). She calved for the first time at 23 months and has had six calves with an average calving interval of 369 days. Her current calf is achieving an ADG of 1.48kg.

to understand. The layout is very good.
What replacement strategy do you plan to implement in light of the scheme? We have been keeping replacements from high Replacement Index Simmental bulls and plan to continue this practice. Some of our best cows are sired by a Simmental stock bull called Lisnacran Sergeant. Sired by Hurtig and from a Hillcrest Champion cow, he has a Replacement Index of €124 (5

stars). We plan to sell surplus heifers as replacements.
When sourcing stock bulls do you take the Euro-Star Indexes into account? Big time. We try to get the catalogues for sales beforehand and mark out some potential bulls based on their Indexes. On the day of the sale we assess the bulls and narrow the selection even further. Some bulls may go outside of our budget, but we always get a bull that we are happy with.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

- Tuesday 1 September:** Screens available on www.icbf.com to record BDGP data.
- Wednesday 2 September:** Dispatch of forms for recording farmer survey data.
- Friday 4 September:** All BDGP Euro-Star reports posted.
- Monday 7 September:** Dispatch of the first batch of genotyping tags.
- Thursday 10 September @ 2pm:** Teagasc/ICBF, BDGP & Euro-Stars Information Open Day, Billy & Niall Nicholson's farm, Crosshaven, Co Cork.