

Pocket notebooks and data recording

Herds participating in the BDGP programme will be receiving their "Animal Events Recording Notebook" (pocket notebook) over the next few weeks. The purpose of this notebook is to aid farmers in the recording of BDGP animal data in the field, prior to recording the data online or through survey forms. Farmers are encouraged to have these notebooks close to hand at critical times of the year such as the calving season, so that data can be recorded accurately as each animal event occurs.

What can I record in the pocket notebook?

The layout of the new notebook is similar to that of the animal events notebook which was issued as part of the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme. It will allow you to record all required data for the BDGP as well as some extra, optional data. Table 1 outlines each section of the notebook and the data which can be recorded. Sections 1-4 are designated to data required as part of the BDGP, while sections 5-6 will allow you to record extra data such as animal weights and AI dates at your discretion. Sections 7-11 are dedicated to non-animal data such as fertilizer, concentrates, slurry etc. which will be required to complete the carbon navigator.

Transferring data to the ICBF database.

The two methods by which you can record data on the ICBF database are either online or through postal survey forms. Data can be recorded online through www.icbf.com, www.agfood.ie or through a farm software package. ICBF &

DAFM are encouraging farmers, where possible, to record data online as it is quick, easy and saves on paper and postage costs. For farmers that wish to fill the postal forms, these will be sent out as data is required.

Importance of recording accurate data.

The Euro-Star indexes are shaped by the data which feeds into the ICBF database. A significant proportion of this data is recorded by farmers. Accurate Euro-Stars depend on accurate data being recorded.

Take a calf's date of birth for example. This piece of data is key to measuring fertility and milk; two key traits which the BDGP was designed to improve in the national suckler herd. An incorrect date of birth on a calf will mean an incorrect calving date for the cow which will give an inaccurate calving interval figure.

If the calf is weighed, its average daily gain (ADG) will be inaccurate due to the incorrect date of birth which will, in turn, give an inaccurate prediction of the cow's milk performance.

Happy New Year

This is the last in our 18 week series of BDGP pages. We hope you found the page informative and helpful. All pages will be available on the ICBF website at www.icbf.com. If you have any questions in relation to the BDGP, please contact ICBF with any breeding queries or DAFM with any scheme or payment queries. We would also like to wish all readers a happy and prosperous new year.



Tommy pictured with some of his weanling heifers. All animal breeding data is logged and recorded in the ICBF database on a regular basis. Tommy finds the Animal Events Notebook (inset) very useful for transferring data from the field to the computer.

Q&A

Q. My herd is quite small. Surely the data that I record will make little difference?

Every single piece of data, provided it is accurate, is important. A 20 cow herd recording all BDGP data can contribute over 200 pieces of data to the ICBF database annually. Add to this extra data such as birth weights, weaning weights and serve data and this figure grows to over 300. Therefore, data from every herd, no matter how small, is important.

Q. How do I switch to recording my data online?

Firstly, there are a number of places to record data online. All BDGP data can be recorded on www.icbf.com, www.agfood.ie or a farm software package. If you wish to start recording extra data such as weights and serve data this can only be done through www.icbf.com or a software package. To get login details please contact ICBF or DAFM depending on which website you wish to access.

FARMER FOCUS: TOMMY MOYLES

'Accurate data is critical to my herd'

Name: Tommy Moyles, Ardfield, Co. Cork.
Farming System: Suckler to beef.
4 and 5 Star Females: Cows 31; heifers 21.
Stock Bull or AI: Mostly stock bull with limited AI.
Replacement Strategy: Breed my own.

Tommy Moyles runs a 65 cow suckler herd in Ardfield, Co. Cork. Whether it's animal, grass or financial performance, efficiency is the name of the game for Tommy. Key to gauging efficiency is accurate and comprehensive data recording. Tommy routinely records all possible breeding data, from mature cow weights, to calf birth weights. We asked Tommy for an insight into why and how he records so much data.

Tell me about the breeding data that you record in your herd? All females showing signs of heat are recorded from when they begin cycling after calving to scanning. I have a whiteboard in the shed where the weanling heifers are wintered to record any heats shown there. This enables me to see how regularly a heifer is cycling. Animal docility is also recorded and difficult heifers are culled. I purchased a weighing scales a few years ago and weighing is now a frequent job on the farm. I also record calf birth weights.

How has data recording benefited your herd? It contributes to business decisions. Animals that don't perform in terms of fertility are sold. Margins are too tight in beef to carry animals that aren't working. I have a whiteboard



Tommy Moyles

near the calving area which allows recording of birth data, such as weight, height at shoulder and chest girth as well as the time of calving and if any assistance was required. I want to develop a herd where birth weights are low and growth rates are high with minimal assistance at calving.

Would you have any tips for farmers when it comes to data recording? Keep it simple and develop a routine. The ICBF notebook is a great help throughout the year, especially in a fragmented farm where you need to be sure you have the correct cow/calf pair sent to an out farm. I register calves with their correct date of birth once a week during peak calving. I register calves with their correct date of birth once a week during peak calving. It forms part of the calving routine.

Table 1: A list of the animal data which can be recorded in the new Animal Events Recording Notebook.

		BDGP	Optional
1. Birth Events	Sires	√	
	Calving Ease	√	
	Birth Size	√ (2016)	
	Calf Vigour	√ (2016)	
	Calf Weight		√
2. Calf Info	Docility	√	
	Quality	√	
	Scour	√ (2016)	
	Pneumonia	√ (2016)	
3. Cow Info	Docility	√	
	Milkability	√	
	Culling Reason	√ (2016)	
	Docility	√	
4. Bull Info	Functionality	√	
	Culling Reason	√ (2016)	
5. Weighing	Animal Weights		√
	Serve Dates		√
6. Breeding	Scan Results		√