

BDGP training

For many of the participants in the Beef Data and Genomics Programme, some of the elements of the programme, such as Euro-Star Indexes and genomics, are relatively new concepts. It is with this in mind that a training course has been included as a key requirement for all BDGP participants.

The purpose of this training is to ensure that farmers understand the various elements of the programme and will subsequently be best placed to meet the requirements. It will also help to deal with any individual queries which farmers may have. The training course is compulsory for all BDGP participants.

Training course outline

The training courses commenced on 30 March and are being delivered nationwide by Teagasc. Each course will last approximately four hours, commencing at 9.45am, breaking for lunch from 12.30pm to 1.30pm and concluding at 3pm. Courses will be delivered in a classroom-type environment at various Teagasc centres as well as other designated locations.

The course is broken into two sections, morning and afternoon. The morning section (2.5 hours) will cover:

- ➔ BDGP terms and conditions.
- ➔ Data recording requirements.
- ➔ Euro-Star indexes.
- ➔ Genomics.

The afternoon section (1.5 hours) will cover:

- ➔ Male and female requirements.
- ➔ Bull selection and interpreting a bull's Euro-Star Index.

Training material

The course will be delivered by trained tutors aided by PowerPoint slides, a training information booklet and a series of video clips. The video clips outline the data requirements of the BDGP, the Euro-Star Index system and genomics, as well as profiling four BDGP participant farmers, their cur-

rent situation in terms of 4- and 5-star replacements and what they plan to do to meet the 2018 and 2020 requirements.

These video clips are available to be viewed on the Teagasc website www.teagasc.ie. Each farmer will also be provided with their own BDGP Euro-Star report for the purpose of completing some exercises during the day. Farmers are not specifically required to bring any material with them, but a pen and paper may be useful to write down some information from the training.

Attending a course

All participating herds will be offered a course between now and 31 October 2016. Applicants will receive a written invitation by post, 14 days in advance of the course date. The applicant is then expected to confirm their attendance by phone or email as soon as possible after receiving the letter.

Contact details will be included on the invitation letter. A reminder text message will be sent to all applicants who have confirmed their attendance on the day before the course. Applicants will not be permitted to attend courses which they were not invited to.

A payment of €166 will be issued to each applicant on the completion of the training course.

Initial feedback

Feedback sheets are given out at the end of each course and initial farmer feedback has been positive, according to Vivian Silke, Teagasc BDGP Training Co-ordinator. Vivian stresses the importance of responding promptly to the invitation letter and applicants only attending courses which they have been invited to attend.

Vivian also said that applicants who are unable to attend the first training course offered to them will be invited to a course at a later date. Applicants may, however, have to travel a greater distance to these later catch-up courses so it is important to try to attend the first course offered.



Stock on Liam Molloy's Farm in Blain, Athenry, Co Galway.

Q&A

Q. How do I arrange to attend one of the BDGP training courses? As long as you have been confirmed as a participant in the BDGP by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM), you will receive an invitation to a training course before the end of October 2016. You are not required to do anything prior to receiving the invitation letter. If you are unsure as to whether your herd is still in the BDGP, then you need to contact DAFM on 076-106 4423 or email beefschemas@agriculture.gov.ie.

Q. My neighbour has been invited to a course next week. Can I go along to the course with him? No. You will not be permitted to attend a course that you have not been invited to. It is very important that all applicants strictly adhere to this. The relevant material will not be available for your herd for the purposes of training and you will not be credited with having completed a training course.

Q. Can a nominee attend the course on my behalf? Yes a nominee can attend. They must be a family member or partner.

FARMER FOCUS: LIAM MOLLOY

BDGP course helped enormously

Name: Liam Molloy, Blain, Athenry, Co Galway.
Farming System: Suckler to weanling/yearling.
Stock Bull or AI: 75% AI with 25% stock bull.
4 and 5 Star Females: Reference no 28 and actual numbers in herd at present 35.
Replacement strategy: Breed my own and buy in.

Liam Molloy runs an autumn- and spring-calving suckler herd in Blain, Athenry, Co Galway. The autumn-born progeny are sold off farm at 10 months of age and the spring-born progeny are sold off farm at six to seven months of age before the housing period.

Tell me about the BDGP Course you attended recently. I attended the course in Teagasc, Athenry, on 30 March. I got an invitation in the post two weeks beforehand. As I was busy on the farm, I forgot to respond to the letter but in fairness to the course administrators they rang me four days after I got the letter to confirm my attendance. I had a reasonable idea what the course was going to be about by reading the farming press and snippets on social media. I found the videos extremely helpful on how to record data properly and also they explained genomics well. The after dinner session was very interactive and made it real as I examined my own BDGP report and saw what targets I had to reach for 2018 and 2020.

Where do you sell your weanlings? For the last few years, my weanling bulls have been sold direct farm to farm to Richard Bourns of Lisbeg farms in east Galway where they are finished as U16 month old bulls. We agree a price per kg on my farm and they are weighed individually on



Liam Molloy

arrival at Lisbeg. I can see through the Herd Plus suckler cow reports how these U16 month bulls kill out post-slaughter and this gives me valuable information on AI bull selection for growth rate for each breeding season. The heifers are sold usually in Ballinasloe Mart.

What do you look for in a replacement female?

I like a good straight heifer that has excellent bone and good legs and feet. The winters can last up to seven months here in Ballymacward so cows have to be structurally sound for their long period on slats/concrete. Docility is very important also as I work on my own and have fragmented land. I will be concentrating on the Euro-Stars of all heifers from now on in conjunction with my eye. I recently bought some heifers at a catalogued special sale organised by Teagasc Galway in Tuam Mart which had Euro-Star Indexes available. I was able to purchase with my eye and the information in the sales catalogue.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

➔ Wednesday 27 April - Irish Grassland Association Beef Conference, Radisson Hotel, Limerick. Registration between 10:30-11:00 am. For more details go to www.irishgrassland.com or call 087-962 6483.