Data recording forms arriving on BDGP farms

Data recording forms have started arriving on Beef Data and Genomic Programme (BDGP) farms this week. The forms are designed to facilitate the collection of valuable cattle breeding data. Having this data allows ICBF provide scheme participants with more accurate genetic evaluations (ie, Euro-Star index) for animals on their farms.

The following is a list of data that must be recorded as part of the BDGP.
- Calf docility and quality
- Dam docility and milk ability
- Stock bull docility and bull functionality

These are the same traits, that were recorded as part of the previous beef data programme, so herd-owners should have little problem completing the required data.

How to record? The approach to recording each trait is quite simple, with each farmer asked to assess animals on a one-to-five scale, with one indicating that the animal is very poor for the trait in question and five indicating that the animal is very good. A score of three indicates the animal is about average.

How to return the data? Herd-owners can return data in two ways, either using the FREEPOST envelopes provided or electronically via the ICBF or DAFM websites. At this stage, an increasing number of farmers are opting to record the data electronically as the option provides herd-owners with an excellent overview of the level of valid data recorded for their herd for each of the traits in question. We will be devoting a full article to this option in next week’s BDGP page.

Herd-owners are encouraged to return all data within 28 days of receiving their forms.

Q & A

Q. How do I register survey data online on www.icbf.com?
BDGP survey data can be recorded by logging on to “Online Services” at www.icbf.com.

Q. How do I register births online?
Calf births can be registered online at www.agfood.ie. Herds that have not used the service before must first register their details online. A letter will then be sent to you with your login details, which will allow you to access all relevant online services. Births can also be registered via farm software providers.

Q. How do you currently record animal data?
Currently, I register all my calves online at www.icbf.com.

How to return the data?
Herd-owners can return data in two ways, either using the FREEPOST envelopes provided (you will receive your form, then simply record the relevant data (calf quality and docility) on a notepad and then transfer to the forms once you receive them.

FARMER FOCUS: TOM GANNON

‘Al suits my farming system’

Name: Tom Gannon, Charlestown, Co Sligo.

Farming System: Suckler to beef

Stock Bull or AI: 100% AI

Replacement Strategy: Breeding all my own replacements.

Why did you join the BDGP? It’s hard to make money in suckling; hopefully there will be long terms gains from participating in the programme.

What replacement strategy do you plan to implement in light of the scheme?
I weigh all my calves twice a year. Based on weaning weights, I identify my milkiest cows. When I am selecting heifers to keep as replacements, I pick heifers from my highest Index, milkiest (cows with calves with the best weaning weights) and my quietest cows. The scheme isn’t going to change how I pick heifers; I am meeting the scheme requirements with this plan already.

What criteria do you use when selecting AI bulls?
I am an AI man for Progressive Genetics and do all my own AI. The farm is very fragmented but I calve the cows from September which allows me to AI most of the cows indoors. When I am selecting bulls to use, number one for me is high Replacement Index bulls with very good milk and docility, I am not picky about breed. Where I can, I try to use high-reliability bulls. I try my best to select bulls to suit each cow. AI suits my system and fits in well with the scheme.

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