

Tissue tags arriving on farms this week

The 2016 BDGP tissue tags are arriving on farms this week. The tags are being sent out in a phased approach over the next three to four weeks. The genotyping element of the BDGP requires that each participating herd genotypes the equivalent to 60% of its reference number each year for the duration of the programme. A herd with a reference number of 20 will, therefore receive 12 tissue tags.

Tagging animals

The Allflex BVD tagger can be used to apply the genomic tags. A leaflet will be included with the tags giving clear instructions on how to apply them. It does not matter which ear the sample is taken from. Once tissue samples have been collected, they should be returned in the freepost envelope provided. Applicants are asked to return tissue samples within 28 days of receiving tags.

Health and Safety

It is critically important that farmers take the proper precautions when applying tissue tags. While applying tags is a relatively pain-free procedure, it does cause some momentary discomfort for the animal. It is therefore important that animals, particularly cows and stock bulls, are properly restrained when tags are being applied.

It is advised to restrain each animal in a head bail when applying tags so that the animal's head is kept steady. Applying tags to animals in a crush without the use of a head bail is not advised as the animal has too much freedom to move its head, which can result in tags breaking, damage to the animal's ear and increases the risk of injury to the farmer. Never apply tags to animals that are loose in a pen or field, regardless of how docile you think they are.

Dead, sold or dangerous animals

Applicants received notification a number of weeks ago of the animals that had been selected

for genotyping in 2016. An online option was made available to swap animals, which many availed of. If animals have died or have been sold in the meantime, or you find that that an animal is too aggressive to apply the tags safely, you can request to swap animals by calling 1850 625 626. A replacement hair card will be issued in such cases. Elective swapping of animals will not be catered for at this stage, ie a farmer would prefer to tag another animal for reasons other than dead, sold or dangerous.

If you have any queries on tissue tags or require a replacement hair card please call 1850 625 626.

BDGP training update

12,500 BDGP applicants have now completed the four hour mandatory training course. Some applicants that were invited to their first course were unable to attend and these applicants will be facilitated through an invitation to a second course. In some counties, invitations have already been sent for a second course to those that could not attend the first. It is essential that an applicant attends a training course.

Failure to attend a training course will result in penalties to future payments and the applicant may face expulsion from the programme. Applicants that fail to attend the first and second courses will not be invited to a third.

Each applicant will receive an invitation by post giving them 14 days' notice of a course. It is critically important that you attend the next offered course so as to complete this important requirement ASAP and to avoid potential issues with compliance later on.

Beef 2016

ICBF will be present at Beef 2016 at Teagasc Grange, Co. Meath next Tue 5th July. ICBF will be situated in marquee 17 along with the AI companies and beef breed societies. The theme of the marquee will be "5-star cows delivering more profit". We hope to see you there.



Fergal Lawlor pictured with one of his spring 2016 born heifers. She is sired by the Simmental AI bull Curaheen Tyson (TSO) and has a Replacement Index of €161. She is out of one of Fergal's best cows and will be retained as a replacement heifer to calve down in spring 2018 at 24 months.

Q&A

Q. When will I receive my tags?

The first batch of tags is arriving on farms this week. Tags will be delivered in a phased approach over the next 3 weeks. Please return tissue samples within 28 days of receiving tags.

Q. Can I switch animals?

You can switch animals if you have received tags for animals that are dead, sold or too dangerous to tag. This can be done by calling 1850 625 626. A replacement hair card will be sent for a different animal. Elective switching of animals i.e. where a farmer wants to switch animals for any other reason than dead, sold or dangerous will not be catered for at this stage.

Q. What do I do if I break a tag?

If you break a tag you can request a replacement hair card for that animal/animals. You can do this by calling 1850 625 626.

FARMER FOCUS: FERGAL LAWLOR, CO WATERFORD

"Weighing stock is very worthwhile"

Name: Fergal Lawlor, Knockaturney, Clonea-Power, Co. Waterford

Farming System: Suckler to weanling/store 4 and 5 Star Females:

Cows: 16 Heifers: 10

Stock Bull or AI: AI with stock bull mopping up

Replacement Strategy: Breed all of my own.

Fergal Lawlor runs a 25 cow spring calving suckler herd in Co. Waterford. We ask Fergal about his farming system, how he records herd data and how he found the BDGP training course.

What is the breeding strategy for your herd?

My main objective is to breed good quality replacements from my best cows. I use high Replacement Index AI bulls to do this.

I have a Terminal Charolais bull to clean up after a few rounds of AI. I've introduced roadways and paddocks over the last number years and this has made AI very easy.

I work full time off farm so it is important to have an efficient system. I sell my bull weanlings privately to the same farmer every year and he finishes them as U16 month bulls. Surplus heifers are sold through the mart at about 18 months. I aim to focus more on the replacement market with my surplus heifers going forward.

What is your routine around data recording?

I started using the pocket notebook this year. It's useful as it's easy to carry at calving time and data can be recorded on the spot while it's fresh in my head. I bought a weighing scales two years ago and I weigh animals frequently.

I record weights online and this gives me the



Fergal Lawlor

ADG's for all my calves. This tells me exactly how each of my cows are performing in terms of milk which is invaluable information to have. I record all of my data online.

Have you completed the BDGP training course?

I did it about 3 weeks ago. I was pretty comfortable with the material as I am very interested in breeding and have been following the Euro-Star system for a few years now.

I already had a good idea of the indexes of my stock and what I needed to do to meet the requirements as I login to my HerdPlus account quite regularly. There were still things that I picked up on the day and it was an enjoyable and worthwhile exercise.