

All data for 2015 calves now due

All calves born to the 31 Dec 2015 have now reached the minimum of 5 months of age required to record the relevant BDGP surveys. Calf quality and docility must be recorded on all calves born in 2015. For calves born from 1 Jan 2016 the number of instances of scour and pneumonia must also be recorded.

ONLY COMPARE ANIMALS TO THEIR HERDMATES

It is very important that you only compare animals to their herd-mates when completing the surveys. Take assigning docility scores as an example. While, on average, calves in your herd may be quieter than calves in most other suckler herds, it is the individual calf's docility relative to other calves in the same herd that is important. Within all herds there should be variation in the docility scores. There should never be an instance where all calves in a herd are assigned the same docility score. The same applies to all other traits e.g. cow milkability, cow docility, calf quality, etc.

USE YOUR NEW POCKET NOTEBOOK

All herds participating in the BDGP were issued with new Animal Events Recording (Pocket) Notebook to help with recording data in the field. 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 allows 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 provider. 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 at farm level. 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.

If you require a new Pocket Notebook or any more information on the animal surveys or data recording best practise, please contact ICBF on 1850 625 626 or email query@icbf.com.

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

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



Emma and Shane Gleeson, with some of the suckler herd grazing headlands after the recent cut of silage in Portnard, Cappamore, Co. Limerick

Q&A

Q. I never received a pocket notebook or I lost the one that I received?

If you have not received a pocket notebook or need a replacement notebook you can contact ICBF on 1850 625 626 or email query@icbf.com.

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.

Q. Do I have to be in HerdPlus to record BDGP data on the ICBF website?

No, once you are participating in the BDGP you can record data on the website www.icbf.com.

FARMER FOCUS: SHANE GLEESON, CAPPAMORE, LIMERICK

Important to submit accurate data

Name: Shane Gleeson, Portnard, Cappamore, Co. Limerick

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

Cows: 23

Heifers: 17

Stock Bull or AI: Stock Bull.

Replacement Strategy: Buying in up to now.
Starting to breed my own

Shane Gleeson runs a 40 cow suckler herd in Cappamore, Co. Limerick. We ask Shane about his farming system and what his routine is for recording on-farm BDGP data.

What is the breeding strategy for your herd?

I operate a spring calving herd, selling weanlings in the autumn. I have two stock bulls. The Limousin bull is 5 stars on both the Replacement and Terminal Index and the Parthenaise bull is 5 stars on the Terminal Index.

I was buying in all replacements in the past, but I kept five heifers that are 4 & 5 stars on the Replacement Index this year. I intend to change my system from selling weanlings to taking animals through to beef. The 2 cows in the photo are the best performers in the herd.

They may not be much to look at, but they calve every year at the same time and wean the best calves in the herd. They also happen to be the two highest Replacement Index cows in the herd.

What is your routine around data recording?

I use the pocket notebook to record the data initially at calving time and weaning. As the BDGP survey forms come in the post I fill them in and send them back. I always take the time to com-



Shane Gleeson

plete them as accurately as possible. If you want to have more accurate indexes on your stock then you have to submit accurate information to ICBF.

Have you completed the BDGP training course?

I haven't completed it yet, but I look forward to doing it. Going forward I see suckler farming becoming as technical and specialised as dairying and up skilling farmers is going to be a vital part of this.

It's a low margin sector so I think suckler farmers have no option but to become more efficient. I am a member of the Cappamore suckler discussion group run by Pat Blackwell and I have found this to be of great benefit to the improvement of my own farming system.