



Update for period 25th November – 1st December 2006

1 Important Dates

- ✚ **Thursday 7th December.** 10:30 to 13:00. Tully and Linear Scoring Consultation meeting. Comfort Inn, Portlaoise.
- ✚ **Thursday 25th January.** 10:30 to 13:00. Board Meeting. Comfort Inn, Portlaoise.
- ✚ **Thursday 1st February.** 10:30 to 13:00. Board Meeting. Comfort Inn, Portlaoise.

2 ICBF Board meeting 30th November

Decisions taken by the Board included the following:

- ✚ To approve the Budget for 2007 following a recommendation from the Audit & Finance Sub-Committee.
- ✚ To endorse the recommendations from the Beef Genetic Evaluation Consultation meeting (see details below).
- ✚ To adopt the report from the Deloitte consultants.
- ✚ To appoint an independent expert, with skills in Finance and Investment decision making, to its Audit & Finance subcommittee. This expert to be responsible for ensuring the financial consequences of proposals being placed before the Board are fully evaluated before a decision is made. The expert will also be asked to monitor the financial health of ICBF.
- ✚ To establish working groups to address the implementation of the new beef indexes and to finalise the details of the design, operation and implementation of the “sire advice” service. The working groups will be led by Andrew Cromie and Sean Coughlan respectively. Members of these working groups will be appointed by the Chairman.
- ✚ To hold a meeting of the full Board to address all other issues identified in the Deloitte report. This meeting has been scheduled for January 2007.
- ✚ To keep all stakeholders fully informed of the actions being taken in response to the Deloitte report.

3 Tully

- ✚ 155 bulls have been sent for health testing for the December intake. Breeders were sent the health test forms on the 22-11-06. All bulls will enter Tully before the 15-12-06.
- ✚ A list of bulls that were sent for health testing for the December intake was sent out to breed societies on the 29-11-06.
- ✚ A group of beef farmers from Donegal will visit Tully on the 5-12-06.

4 Beef Genetic Evaluation Consultation Meeting

Background.

- ✚ A meeting to discuss developments in genetic indexes and genetic evaluations for Irish beef cattle took place on Wednesday 29th November 2006, in the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel. Some 30 people from a cross-section of the Irish beef industry attended the meeting.
- ✚ The objective of the meeting was to discuss the proposed implementation of new maternal indexes for the Irish beef industry. These new indexes are the final stage in the implementation of ICBF's beef breeding index project. This project was established in December 2003, with the goal of ensuring that Irish beef farmers had access to objective, profit-based information on which to make breeding decisions. A project team* involving Dr Peter Amer (Abacus Bio, NZ), Dr Roel Veerkamp, Dr Marco Poole (both Animal Sciences, Wageningen), Dr Donagh Berry (Teagasc, Moorepark) & ICBF staff, was



put in place to develop the new indexes on behalf of the Irish beef industry. A summary of each of the indexes, including traits and roll-out dates to the industry, are given in table 1.

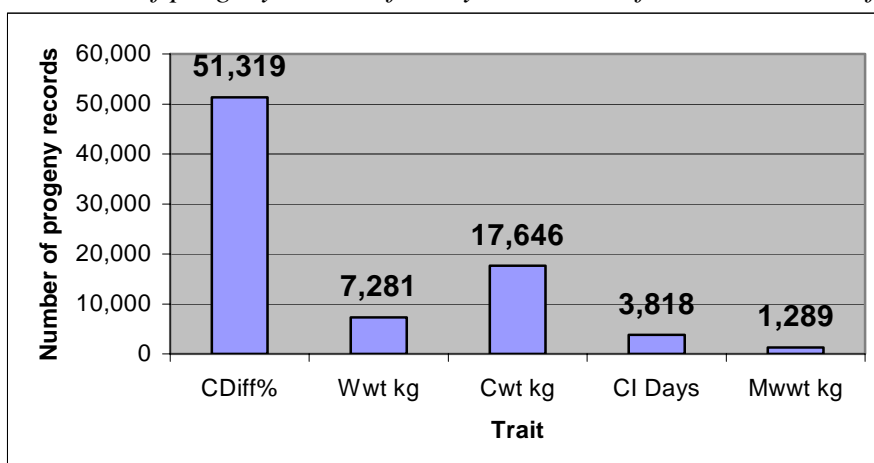
Table 1. Summary of Beef Index project; key indexes & roll-out dates.

Index	Traits	Roll-out
Beef Calving sub-index	Calving difficulty%, Gestation Length, Mortality	Feb-05
Dairy Calving sub-index	Calving difficulty%, Gestation Length, Mortality	Feb-05
Beef Slaughter sub-index	Carcass weight, carcass conformation, carcass fat, feed intake, weaning weight	Feb-05
Weanling Export sub-index	Weaning weight, calf quality	Feb-05
Maternal sub-index*	Weaning weight, survival, calving interval, calving difficulty & cull cow	Dec-06
Suckler beef index	Combination of above sub-indexes.	Dec-06

* Also includes "direct" traits.

- Each of the indexes is based on data recorded on Irish farms (e.g., calving difficulty & calving interval), from marts (weaning weights), from factories (carcass weight) and from Tully (feed intake). A summary of the key data recorded for "188" active AI sires is given in figure 1.

Figure 1. Number of progeny records for key index traits for 188 active beef AI sires.



- Records from these active AI sires represent some 5-10% of the total records evaluated for each of the given traits. A key point to note from figure 1 is the low number of records for maternal traits (i.e., calving interval & maternal weaning weight), relative to other traits such as calving difficulty and carcass weight. **The low level of recording of maternal traits in our national beef herd is a major obstacle to beef improvement and must be addressed.**
- A comparison of breeds (Table 2) indicates strong agreement between each of the relevant sub-indexes and the biological background of the breeds. For example, the traditional breeds are best for calving & maternal cow (i.e., milk & fertility), whereas the continental breeds are best for export, slaughter and maternal calf (i.e., quality calves). Ranking the breeds based on suckler beef (the total index that reflects calving, export, slaughter & maternal) suggests a higher ranking for the continental breeds, but considerable cross-over within the breeds in terms of suckler beef profit.



Table 2. Breed comparisons for suckler beef and relevant sub-indexes for 188 Active AI sires.

Brd	Sucker beef	Max	Calving	Export	Slaughter	Maternal_cow	Maternal_calf
AA	€45	€134	€6	€20	€1	€141	€22
BB	€94	€146	-€16	€94	€91	-€9	€166
CH	€124	€208	-€23	€107	€122	-€43	€258
HE	€42	€86	-€4	€29	€11	€126	€22
LM	€94	€155	-€11	€73	€78	€29	€159
SI	€113	€209	-€12	€46	€73	€125	€179
Average	€92	€209	-€12	€67	€75	€35	€160

Recommendations

There was broad agreement from the meeting with the proposed new indexes. As a result a number of recommendations were made regarding implementation, with a view to taking these to the board of ICBF. The recommendations were as follows;

1. ICBF should proceed with the implementation of the new beef economic indexes for the Irish beef industry (i.e., active beef bull lists, AI bulls & reports for herd-owners).
2. ICBF should establish a small industry working group (6-8 people), which would oversee the implementation of these new indexes to the industry. The group should comprise of individuals from each of the key sectors of the beef breeding industry (i.e., farmers, herdbooks, AI, Teagasc & ICBF).
3. ICBF should initiate a major campaign to increase the level of maternal data recorded on Irish beef farms. In doing so, every avenue for recording important cow ancestry & weaning weight data should be explored.
4. ICBF should put “on-hold” the implementation of the new across breed linear indexes until such times as the current sale season has finished. This is to avoid confusion amongst farmers. Expected time for rolling-out of these new linear type indexes is Spring 2007.

Acknowledgement

ICBF would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable contribution made to the beef index project by the collaborative partners; notably Dr Peter Amer & Dr Donagh Berry (development of relevant economic index's), & Dr Roel Veerkamp & Dr Marco Poole (development of systems for genetic evaluation of relevant beef traits).

5 Genetic Evaluations

Dairy

Official proofs were released at the beginning of the week and all files have been updated on the website including the bull search.

Beef

Most of the work this week focused on preparations for the beef industry meetings, the outcome of which are presented elsewhere in this update.

Presented information on new beef indexes at a Teagasc Discussion Group meeting in Kanturk.

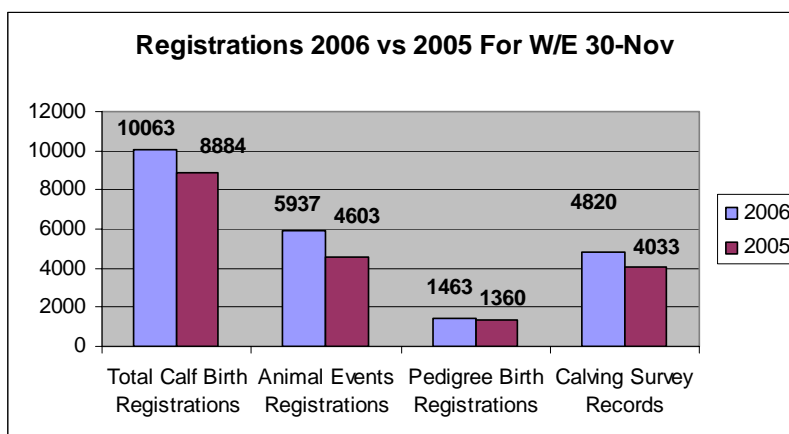


International Beef

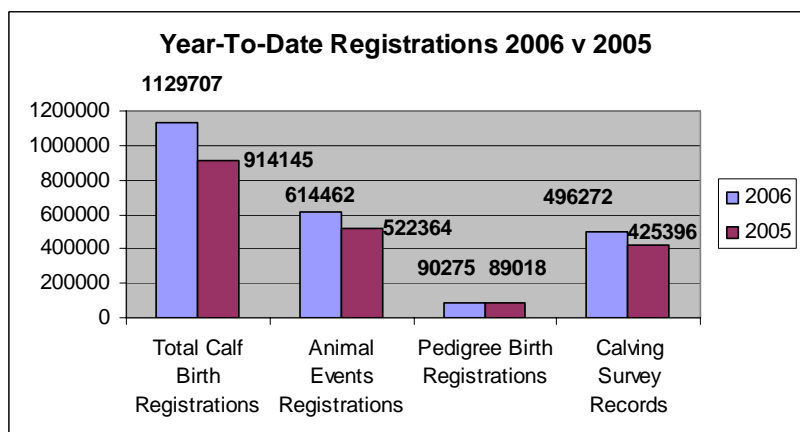
- ✚ Conversion equations are now available for Limousin and Charolais for calving and linear traits and were presented at the beef industry meeting. We are awaiting updated carcass information from France to calculate the equations for these traits.

6 Database Update

- ✚ 17 new herds added to the database last week.
- ✚ 163,872 inseminations have now been recorded on the AI handhelds.
- ✚ Dry-off sheets are coming in at a good rate and are currently being keyed. The online dry-off notification method is also getting steady usage this week. Some modifications to make this function more user-friendly have been completed and are now in place.



- ✚ The first batch of final fertility reports was issued this week, based on insemination data and pregnancy diagnosis information in the database. These will be run on a weekly basis incorporating the latest data available on the database.



- ✚ Work has continued on the 2006 Milk Recording Annual Reports, with testing taking place in a number of milk recording organisations.

- ✚ The first drafts of the personalised Animal Events notebook for farmers should be available at the end of next week. A trial run will be done, before a larger issue is completed.
- ✚ Meetings have been organised with two of the larger herd-books next week to get initial feedback on the work done on the front end for herd-books.

7 GENEIRELAND

- ✚ Herd sign-up for the winter program continues
- ✚ Breeding Charts and Inbreeding reports were sent out this week to herds already signed up
- ✚ Semen dispatch commenced last week

8 HerdPlus

- ✚ Steady stream of Sign-up forms continue to be received.
- ✚ Fertility Reports, for farmers that had sufficient amounts of insemination data, were created and put up on the website and posted for Herdplus Users. A lot of breeding charts have been received over the past week and we will run the fertility reports again this weekend to pick up the data from these.



- ✚ Preparations are being made to send out the final batch of letters next week, to farmers that have so far not received a Herdplus sign up mailshot.

9 Milk Recording Update

Milk Recording Herds and Cows Year To date 2006 versus Year to date 2005

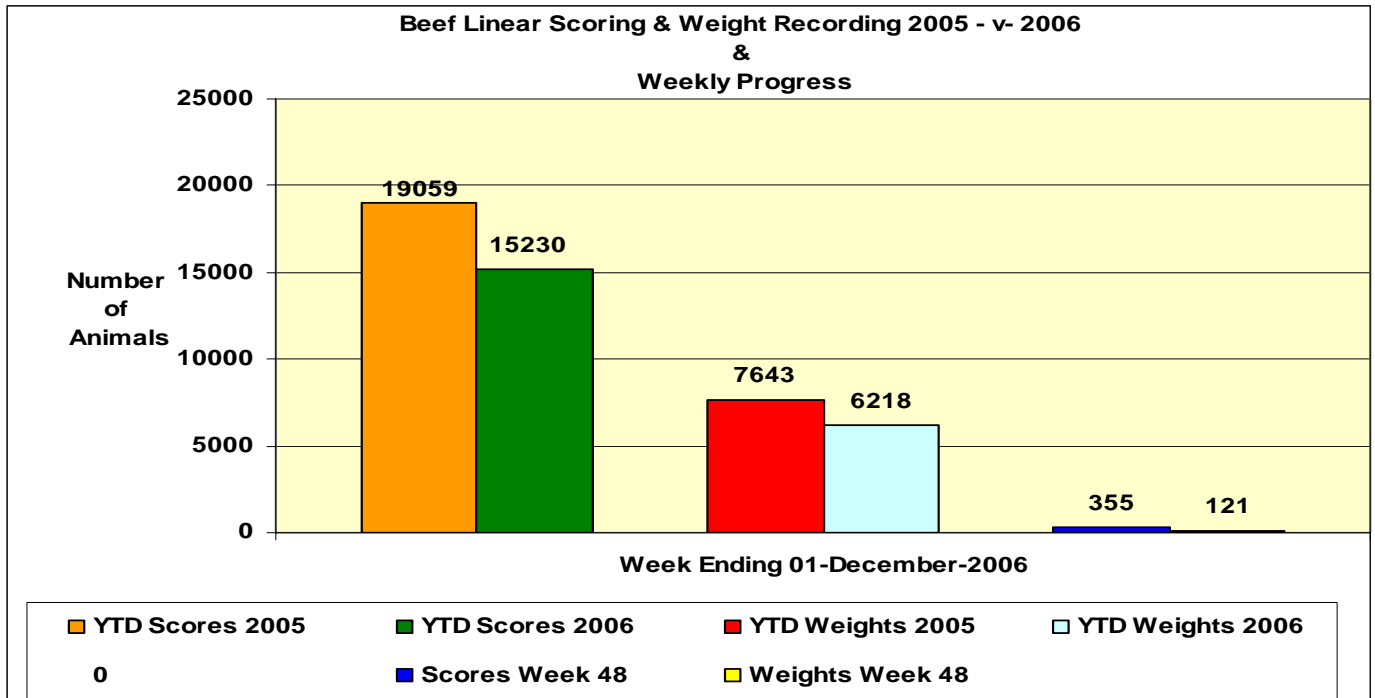
Milk Recording Organisation	YTD 2005 Herds Recorded 01/01/05 - 01/12/05	YTD 2006 Herds Recorded 01/01/06 - 01/12/06	Year on Year Herds Difference (%)	YTD 2005 Cows Recorded 01/01/05 - 01/12/05	YTD 2006 Cows Recorded 01/01/06 - 01/12/06	Year on Year Cows Difference (%)
Progressive	2,086	2,110	1%	153,523	161,117	5%
Dairygold	1,529	1,551	1%	98,792	104,290	6%
Kerry	1,065	1,075	1%	67,848	70,574	4%
SWS	937	958	2%	55,823	60,352	8%
Tipperary	142	168	18%	9,464	11,887	26%
Arrabawn	109	159	46%	7,163	11,069	55%
Connacht	110	140	27%	7,452	9,320	25%
Donegal	55	58	5%	4,700	5,274	12%
Total	6,033	6,219	3%	404,765	433,883	7%

Milk Recording Stats week ending 1/12/06

Milk Recording Organisation	2006 Herds Recorded Week 24/11/06 - 01/12/06
Progressive	334
Dairygold	167
SWS	154
Kerry	99
Tipperary	23
Donegal	9
Connacht	5
Arrabawn	3
Total	794



10 Beef Linear Scoring



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