



**UPDATE – for period 27<sup>th</sup> January – 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2007**

## 1 Important Dates

- **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March.** Tully beef bull sale. Launch of new beef indexes, Show 11.00 am Sale 12.00 pm.

## 2 Board Meeting

Thursday's Board meeting made a number of important decisions including:

- To adopt the report of the **Beef Genetic Evaluation Roll-out** working group and to extend the term of the group to the end of 2007 in order to oversee the roll-out and review its success. A summary of the working group's *report is attached* at the end of this update. Feedback from the Board is that excellent progress has now been made on beef breeding with this roll-out being the culmination of many years work by a large number of different people and organisations.
- To adopt the report of the **Sire Advice** working group. The group recommended the provision of a sire advice service to dairy farmers on a "free" basis for the spring mating in 2007 and the group will be continuing to refine the service based on farmer feedback over the next eighteen months. Summary of the working group's *report is attached*. Board members were most appreciative of rapid progress made by the group and the way in which the needs of farmers had been understood and translated into a very useful service to help manage breeding.
- To adopt in principle the proposal for a **National Progeny Test program** for dairy and beef. Further financial analysis is to be conducted prior to the proposal being considered by the Audit & Finance Sub-Committee whose recommendations will be considered at the next Board meeting.
- The Board agreed to appoint a **Special Liaison** to work between the Board and ICBF's Herd Book members in an effort to identify and resolve issues limiting the effectiveness of the partnership that is ICBF. Subsequent to the meeting **Dr Doreen Corridan** has been appointed to this role and she is expected to report back to the next Board meeting.
- The Board has invited a delegation of representatives from the Pedigree Cattle Breeders Council to address its next meeting.
- The Norwegian Red Cattle Society of Ireland was accepted as a member of ICBF.
- Revision and updating of the Animal Evaluation Organisations licence is proceeding.

## 3 Tully

- Linear scoring of the December intake took place on the 30-1-07 and 31-1-07 and final blup figures will be up on the ICBF web site on the 6-2-07.
- A group of suckler beef farmers from Kerry will visit Tully on the 7-2-07.
- Applications for the May intake to Tully will be sent out to breeders before the 23-2-07.

## 4 Genetic Evaluations (Beef)

New evaluations for beef and calving performance are still on going.

## 5 Genetic Evaluations (Dairy)

All relevant files for the next routine evaluation have been sent to Interbull for inclusion in the international evaluations. Results are expected back from Interbull by Monday 12<sup>th</sup> February.



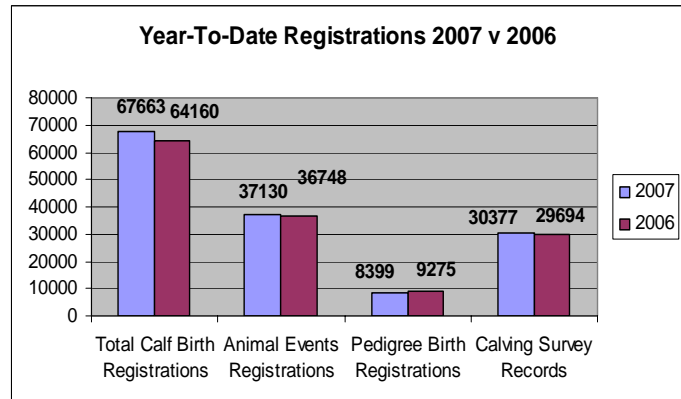
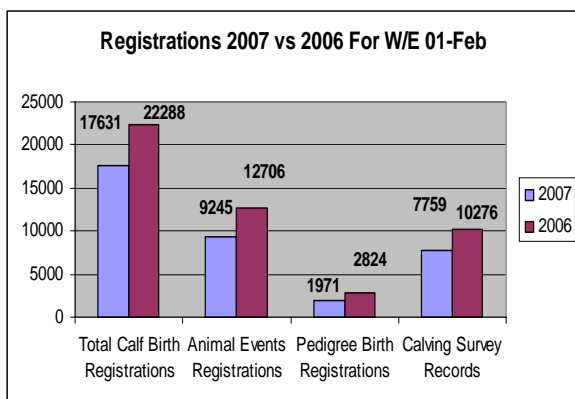
## 6 International Beef Genetic Evaluations

The conversion equation work is still in process. Using a multiple regression approach, conversions have been established for the calving traits (direct and maternal), the carcass traits (carcass weight & conformation) and the calf quality. Reliabilities have been calculated for these converted traits and for a population of about 500 Charolais sires and 500 Limousine sires born in France and used in Ireland.

## 7 HerdPlus

- **Open Meetings** - final meetings were held this week in Letterkenny, Knock and Limerick. Overall the series of meetings was a very worthwhile effort. The benefit lies in the two way communication - ICBF updating the farmer with the latest in breeding information and the farmers in turn giving feedback on our services.
- **Personalised Notebooks** are now with HerdPlus clients - farmers like the cows and their due dates preprinted on the book but in cases where we do not have insemination data it is less useful - feedback will be gathered for future releases.
- **Sire Advice.** HerdPlus staff were busy this week with final testing of the Sire Advice programme.

## 8 Database Update



- 185,867 inseminations have now been recorded on the AI handhelds. We are in the process of planning the rollout of updated software to all AI Handhelds currently in operation.
- Production of the personalised Animal Events notebook for farmers is continuing as farmers sign up to HerdPlus.
- Another very constructive meeting of the Sire Advice Working Group was held this week and the outputs from that meeting and other feedback are being incorporated into the program. Implementation and testing of these are being completed and release of the program will happen upon completion of these.

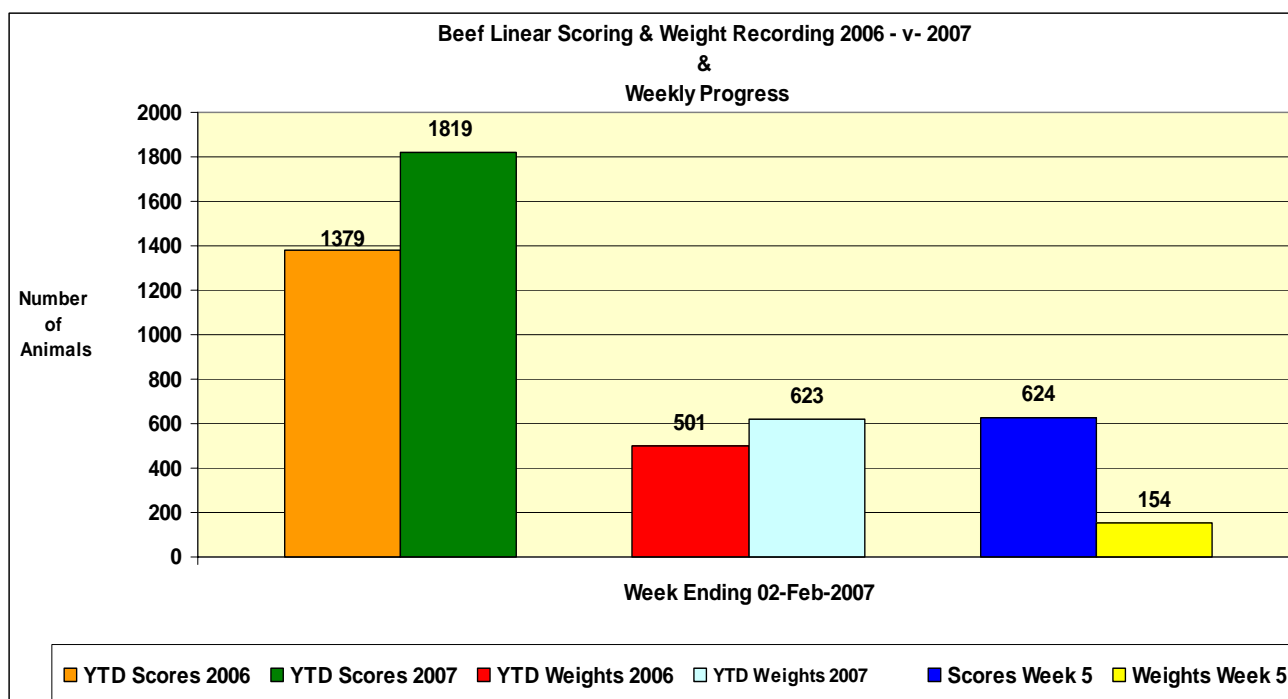


## 9 Milk Recording

### Weekly Processing

Milk Recording Organisation	2007 Herds Recorded Week 26/01/07 - 02/02/07
Progressive	210
SWS	74
Dairygold	39
Kerry	42
Connacht	8
Tipperary	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>

## 10 Beef Linear Scoring



Brian Wickham Ph.D. Chief Executive Irish Cattle Breeding Federation Soc. Ltd, Highfield House, Shinagh, Bandon, Co. Cork, Ireland, Phone office +353 (0)23 20222, mobile +353 (0)86 826 9911 Fax office +353 (0)23 20229 E-Mail [bwickham@icbf.com](mailto:bwickham@icbf.com) ICBF Web site [www.icbf.com](http://www.icbf.com) Assistant: Mary Madden. © Irish Cattle Breeding Federation Society Limited 2005.

## **Report from Beef Index Roll-out Group.**

### **1. Background.**


- A beef industry working group has been established by the ICBF Board (30<sup>th</sup> November 2006) with the objective of developing a plan for rolling-out the new beef indexes to the Irish beef industry.
- The following people from the Irish beef industry are involved in the working group; Andrew Cromie (ICBF & co-ordinator), Doreen Corridan (AI & pedigree beef farmer), Martin Ryan (pedigree beef farmer), Cathal McCormack (Macra na Feirme & pedigree beef farmer), Ger Brickley (Bord Bia & pedigree beef farmer), Justin McCarthy (Irish Farmers Journal & commercial beef farmer), Michael Doran (commercial beef farmer), Michael O'Driscoll (Galway Beef Development Program), Pierce Kelly (Teagasc) and Ross Evans (ICBF).
- As part of the development work, the group have met on 3 occasions to date (13<sup>th</sup> December, 5<sup>th</sup> January & 14<sup>th</sup> January). In addition, the group have held an open beef industry meeting (24<sup>th</sup> January), to establish feed-back from the wider industry on the proposed roll-out plan.
- The following is a summary of the key issues identified by the group to-date (including a proposed roll-out budget), to ensure effective roll-out of the new indexes.

### **2. Naming & Presentation of the Indexes.**

- To ensure simple and effective communication of the beef index message, five areas were identified in the context of the naming and presentation of the new indexes.
  - *Simple terminology.* The names of the indexes should reflect real events, e.g., calving, as opposed to abbreviations such as BCSI (for Beef Calving Sub Index).
  - *Euro-star approach.* The indexes should be presented in a way that allows farmers to quickly understand the value of an animal through a combination of profit values (€) and stars (percentile ratings). The concept of star-ratings has been introduced for each of the indexes, with 5-star meaning top 20% (akin to a 5-star hotel rating), whilst 1-star means bottom 20%.
  - *Within & across breeds.* The indexes should be presented in a way that allow easy comparison of bulls on both a within and across breed basis.
  - *Reliability of information.* The indexes should be presented in a way that allows quick and easy interpretation of whether the proof for a bull is of high, medium or low reliability. This approach should be equally applicable for both AI & young bulls so that farmers can quickly identify the AI & potential stock bulls that have indexes which are based on reliable data.
  - *Standard template.* The key indexes should be presented in a standard template across all AI, sales and herdbook catalogues, as well as in press advertising. This is to facilitate ease of interpretation by farmers and the industry.
- An example of the proposed template (including details of naming & presentation) is given in Figure 1 for the AI bull CF52.

- In addition to the Euro-star template, genetic information on all other traits (Euro-star and linear type traits), would be made available on the ICBF web-site and on individual animal reports for herd-owners. This information would be presented using a combination of Euro-star and bar-chart approaches. These various reports (Euro-star herd, Euro-star animal and Active Bull Lists) are currently being finalised by the beef index development group.

Figure 1. Euro-star information for AI bull CF52.



# CF52 Doonally New

Breed: CH      Owner: NCBC      DOB: Jan 97

**Euro-Star Rating (ICBF, Jan07)**

Star rating within breed		Index	Data rel	Star rating across breeds
*****	<b>Suckler Beef Value</b>	€145	H	*****
<b>Beef Value</b>				
**	Calving Traits	-€20	H	*
*****	Weanling Export	€123	H	*****
*****	Beef Carcass	€154	H	*****
<b>Replacement Value</b>				
*	Milk & Fertility	-€148	H	*
*****	Calf Quality	€351	H	*****
<b>Other key traits</b>				
**	% Difficult Calving	13%	H	*
***	Docility	100	H	***

**Key;** H = High data reliability (70%+) M = Medium data reliability (50-70%) L = Low data reliability (<50%)

© Irish Cattle Breeding Federation 2007.

### 3. Publication criterion.

- Bulls would appear on the ICBF Active Beef List provided that they met the following criterion;
  - Minimum of 70% reliability for Suckler Beef Value
  - Minimum number of straws available.
- Proofs for all AI bulls would be made available on the ICBF website (no reliability restriction).
- Proofs for individual animals (cows, young-stock & stock-bulls) would be made available to herd-owners through various reports (no reliability restriction).

#### **4. Elements of the roll-out program.**

- As part of the roll-out program, a number of elements have been considered, including;
  - *Branding.* In addition to the ICBF brand image for genetic evaluations, the indexes would be rolled out using an industry branded theme.
  - *Advertising campaign.* A major advertising campaign would be initiated and would run for a period of 12 weeks (February – May). The key advertising campaign would be in the Irish Farmers Journal and would include a weekly column on a key aspect of the new indexes. Additional campaigns would also be run in other national papers including the Independent, Examiner & Irish Farmers monthly. Local radio interviews (and advertising slots) would also be included as part of the advertising campaign.
  - *Educational Material.* Educational material would be provided at two levels; (i) farmer friendly material (for distribution to farmers through mail-shots and at meetings), and (ii) technical material for people working in the beef breeding industry (ICBF website). In addition a DVD (15 minutes) summarising Animal Events and the new indexes would be developed for farmer and industry distribution.
  - *Farmer & industry meetings.* Meetings would be organised with all relevant industry groups including AI organisations (for all field staff and technicians), herdbooks and farm organisations. In addition a number of regional mart events would be organised in conjunction with Teagasc regarding the new indexes, with a view to improving farmer understanding of the new indexes.
  - *Direct-farmer mail-shots.* Material would be sent to directly to farmers, including; (i) new Euro-star report for farmers, (ii) educational material, (iii) complimentary DVD and (iv) notice of farmer meetings.

#### **5. Key-dates in beef index roll-out.**

- Key dates in the proposed roll-out of the new beef indexes are as follows;
  - February 1                      ICBF board meeting
  - February 27                    Official launch of new indexes (in conjunction with results from Tully sale).
  - March 3                         Tully sale
  - March                            Full beef industry roll-out.

#### **7. Summary.**

- Excellent progress has been made by the beef index working group with positive feed-back received from the beef industry regarding developments to-date.
- We look forward to continuing in the months ahead and ensuring a high uptake in beef genetic information by Irish farmers in 2007.

**Report from Sire Advice Working Group. – 29<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2007.**

**1. Background.**

- A Sire Advice working group has been established by the ICBF Board (30<sup>th</sup> November 2006) with the objective of developing a plan for rolling-out a new Sire Advice program.
- The following people from the Irish beef industry are involved in the working group; Sean Coughlan (ICBF & co-ordinator), Doreen Corridan (Dairygold AI), Richard Whelan (IHFA and dairy farmer), Terry Dillon (Dairygold AI), Bernard Zwafrink (Dovea AI), Seamus Hughes (PG AI), Jim Dwyer (Dairy farmer), Jim Delahunty (Dairy Farmer), Philip Kinnane (Dairy farmer), Andrew Cromie (ICBF), John McCarthy (ICBF Software developer), Francis Kearney (ICBF Geneticist)
- As part of the development work, the group have met on two occasions to date (19<sup>th</sup> December, & 29<sup>th</sup> January).
- The program is in the early stages of its evolution, and will continue to evolve over the coming 18 months under the guidance of the Sire Advice working group

**2. The Key Decisions/Outputs from the working group are as follows:**

1. Two 'Program Options' will be available to the individual running the program
  - Standard (simple 3 step process to achieving a result)
  - Advanced (much more flexibility in choosing bulls and allocating them to cows)
2. Program can be run by AI organisations and Herdbooks for their members, and by farmers themselves through the AI, Herdbook and ICBF websites. The program can be run for all available bulls, from all sources, and across all breeds.
3. In all cases, a log-on to the ICBF database is required.
4. Minor tweaks and bug-fixes will take place though-out the AI season as required.

The group will through-out the Spring AI season gather feedback from users, and Sean Coughlan (as group co-ordinator) will collate the feedback and present it to the next meeting of the group in June 2007 for review, and agree the next stage of development.

Proposal is to run on a 'free-trial' basis this spring, then review demand. If the demand exists, review on-going sources of revenue to fund development and maintenance.

**7. Summary.**

- Excellent progress has been made by the Sire Advice working group with positive feed-back received from the industry regarding developments to-date.
- We look forward to continuing in the months ahead and ensuring a high uptake in the use of the Sire Advice software by Irish farmers in 2007.