

ICBF Weekly Update 3rd February 2012

1 Important Dates

- ✚ **Herdbook Technical Breeding Consultation Meetings** – Tuesday 28th February, 10:30 to 13:00, Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise.
- ✚ **Breeding Consultation Meetings** – Wednesday 14th March, 10:30 to 17:00, Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise.
- ✚ **Sheep 2012** – Saturday 30th June, Athenry.

2 Interbull Workshop

This week Interbull held a workshop in Verona, Italy. It focused on international genomic evaluations in dairy cattle with a particular focus on facilitating the flow of genomic evaluations between countries. Attending were 80 people from the 30 animal evaluation organisations that participate in Interbull services. Andrew Cromie and Brian Wickham represented Ireland at this workshop.

Key outcomes included:

- ✚ The availability of a tested method (GMACE for short) for enabling countries to provide genomic evaluations to Interbull where they are combined over countries and then distributed to all participating countries for publication in the local base and scale. A few details have yet to be resolved but it is envisaged that these will be sorted and that test runs of GMACE will take place later in 2012. This represents a substantial step forward especially for countries that do not have their own genomic evaluation system for particular combinations of traits and breeds.
- ✚ Progress is being made in establishing a strong case for Interbull to host a database of SNP genotypes for use in genomic evaluations, parentage validation and research.
- ✚ Genomic technologies continue to develop very rapidly with the new Illumina LD chip being used more extensively than the older version due to its higher accuracy.
- ✚ Australian research recommends use of multiple breeds in training populations, with 800K SNPs and with an appropriate statistical method (Bayes B).
- ✚ A full pedigree model is now ready to replace the use of a sire maternal-grandsire model in the international evaluations computed by Interbull. Timing for implementing this change has yet to be finalized.

3 Euro-Star Review

A Euro-Star review group has been put in place to consider the further development of the Euro-Star system. This was based on a specific request from the last ICBF industry meeting (17 November 2011). The group is comprised of key people from across the Irish beef industry, as well as technical people from ICBF and Teagasc. The group had its first meeting last Thursday, where it instated Michael Doran as its chairman, and set clear targets regarding the delivery and completion of the project. Our goal is to have the work completed and presented back to the ICBF board, for its meeting on 3rd May.

One of the outcomes from last Thursday's Euro-Star review meeting was the desire to seek formal responses from industry stakeholders regarding the further development of the beef Euro-Star system (see [slides](#) in the publication section of www.icbf.com).

Specifically the group would like to get feedback on;

- ✚ What are the main categories of farmers that need information for breeding decisions, e.g., farmer breeding replacements, farmer breeding for terminal use etc?

- ✚ What information do they need, e.g., which indexes &/or sub-indexes, which traits, what other information would be useful?
- ✚ Does this differ depending on whether pedigree beef, commercial beef or dairy farmer?
- ✚ How should this information be presented?
- ✚ Can we develop a coherent industry strategy to support their breeding needs? What are the key elements of this strategy?

We are seeking submissions from all who are interested. If you wish to make a submission please send it to Dr. Andrew Cromie, preferably by email to acromie@icbf.com. The deadline for receipt of submissions is Monday 20th February, with these then being presented to the review group at its next meeting on Friday 25th February.

4 GENEIRELAND®

Beef

- ✚ The initial panel of bulls is almost finalised for the spring program.
- ✚ Catalogues will be sent to herd owners next week.
- ✚ Straws will be limited to 300 per bull.
- ✚ To order straws phone 1850 600 900 or 045 521573.

Dairy

- ✚ The programme commenced this week with letters being posted to last year's participants.
- ✚ Already there are 120 herds signed up.
- ✚ Potential bull lists and catalogues are available in the GENEIRELAND section of the ICBF website.

5 GROW®

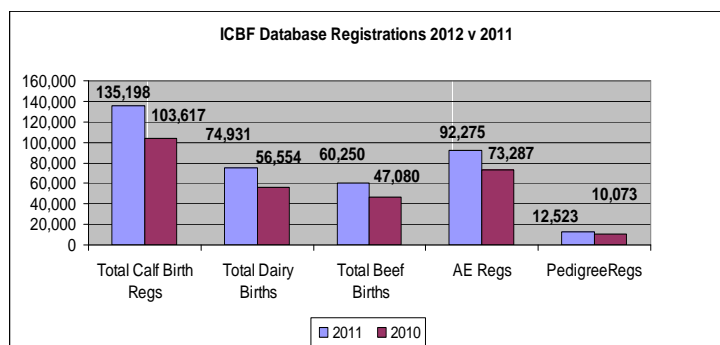
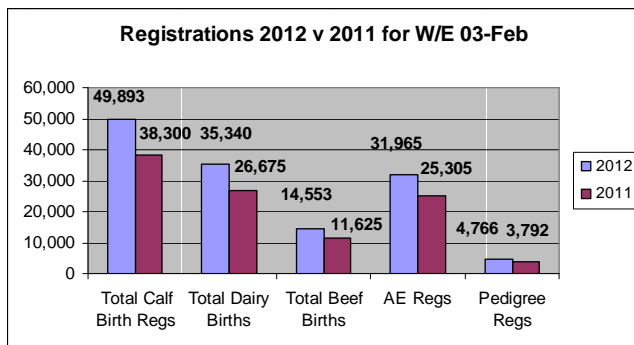
- ✚ 602 Pedigree animals were weighed and scored in December (up by 109 from December 2010).
- ✚ 407 Commercial animals were weighed and scored in December (up by 223 from December 2010).
- ✚ Ongoing dual scoring sessions are being held with the scorers.
- ✚ The table below gives summary statistics on the number of pedigree and commercial animals weighed and scored over the last 5 years.

Year	Pedigree cattle		Commercial cattle		Total		Percent weighed
	Scored	Weighed	Scored	Weighed	Scored	Weighed	
2007	10,875	4,531	3,621	3,461	14,496	7,992	55
2008	11,865	9,469	4,940	4,893	16,805	14,362	85
2009	8,892	8,054	5,835	5,793	14,727	13,847	94
2010	9,235	8,873	5,376	5,334	14,611	14,207	97
2011	8,866	8,748	5,421	5,411	14,287	14,159	99

6 Sheep Ireland

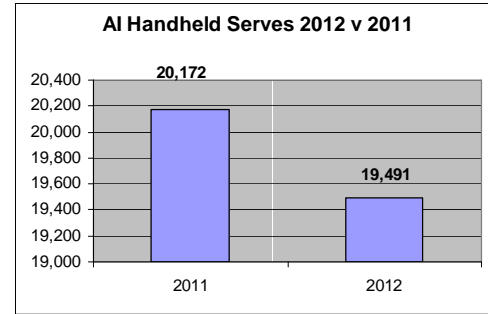
- ✚ Next Friday 10th February Sheep Ireland will be heading to Greenmount College in Co. Antrim to meet with the group of Northern based breeders that have been recording flocks on LambPlus since the outset of Sheep Ireland. This will be a great opportunity to receive their feedback on how the system works for them and hopefully identify more ways to improve and expand LambPlus among other interested northern breeders. There are some very large flocks currently recording with one entering over 550 lambs onto the system annually. This is hugely valuable data to be entering our evaluations so we hope our collaboration will continue and grow into the future.
- ✚ Over the coming weeks a major objective will be further education of our participating and new LambPlus breeders in relation to best recording practice. One issue which is continually a source of query is how to use the 'Group' option on our data recording sheets/screens. The foundation of any genetic evaluation is the ability to compare the performance of animals on an even playing field. Every attempt needs to be made where possible to strip away the effect of management, feeding, climate etc, not always easy to do. In our attempts to this, the identification of groups is of huge importance.
- ✚ On each LambPlus recording sheet/screen breeders will see a section for group number. It is of critical importance that when breeders are managing their ewes under different conditions subsequent to lambing that this fact is highlighted by assigning different group numbers to the different groups: 1, 2, 3 etc. When recording weights, again it is of huge importance that lambs being managed under different conditions are highlighted by different group numbers when recording performance information. For example lambs on grass only (Group 1) and lambs being creep feed meals (Group 2).
- ✚ When we receive weight information for lambs, we cannot possibly fairly compare creep fed lambs with grass fed only lambs. The allocation of group numbers is the only way to allow us carry out fair comparisons, which in turn lead to solid genetic evaluations for our target market, ram purchasers.

7 Database



- ✚ The stats above are compiled with the assistance of DAFF AIM systems.
- ✚ In the Suckler scheme, the number of 2011 born calves with meal introduced is 573,472 with the number of animals weaned at 4781,678.
- ✚ BVD test results continue to be received at ICBF and are being processed accordingly. Around 6195 herds have purchased a total of 401,226 tissue tags for BVD testing at this stage. Around 9,000 samples have been returned at this stage, with a 1% BVD PI Positive rate.
- ✚ The development of a new 'Bull-Tracker' report for pedigree herds is on-going and will be entering pilot testing over the next couple of weeks.

- ✚ We are working with the manufacturer of the blue-tooth weighing scales company with a view to further waterproofing the unit. A weight recording report has been designed, and building of this report is around 50% complete.
- ✚ Some further developments to further enhance the loading of genotype information to the database is continuing.
- ✚ The graph shows Inseminations recorded on AI Handhelds in 2012 compared with 2011.



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