

ICBF Weekly Update 4th January 2013

1 Important Dates

-  **Interim Sheep Board Meeting** – Tuesday 15th January, 14:00, Maldron Hotel, Portlaoise.
-  **Herdbook Genomics Meeting** – Thursday 10th January, 10:00 to 13:00, Maldron Hotel, Portlaoise.
-  **Industry Consultation meeting on BreedQuality** – 17th January, 14:00, Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise.
-  **ICBF Board Meeting** – Thursday 24th January, 10:30 to 14:00, Maldron Hotel, Portlaoise.

2 2013 Begins

As we start into 2013, it is clear that we have a huge amount of work to get through.

A subset of these includes:

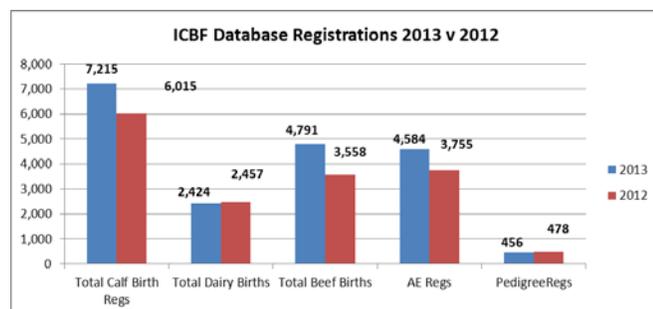
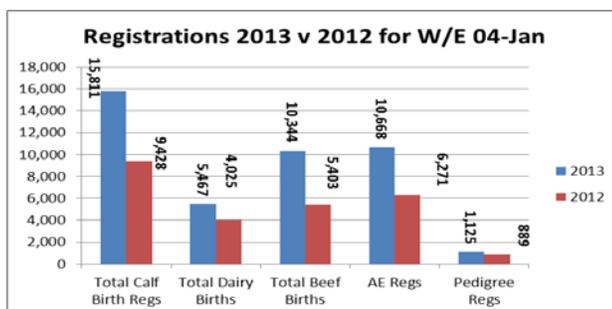
- The use of SNP chip technology for parentage verification and the routine genotyping of all pedigree males on both the dairy and beef side.
- The completion of the Sexed semen research trial.
- Continued roll-out of the new Euro-Star indexes.
- Supporting AHI's (Animal Health Ireland) initiatives, especially in relation to the compulsory BVD programme.
- Rolling out the new Gene Ireland Beef Programme
- Expanding the role of genomics in the Gene Ireland Dairy programme and the support of the various AI companies in that regard.
- Expanding the data collection and breeding information distribution infrastructure through HerdPlus.

Our sheep priorities are very much moving towards growing the use of the LambPlus and helping sheep farmers to make better use of the new Euro-Star genetic evaluations for sheep.

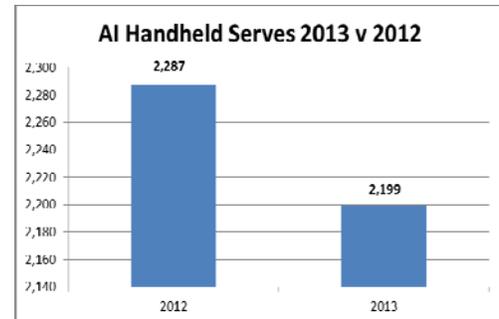
Our priorities reflect the superb opportunities that are created by the rapidly developing technologies in computing, genetics and statistics. We have to be focused on our mission – farm profitability – and be prepared to change from systems and structures developed in a different technological environment. At the same time, we must be cautious and ensure the promising new technologies really are able to deliver the benefits that enthusiastic promoters claim.

We have a very ambitious program for 2013. It builds on the breeding systems and extensive database built up over the last few years. We look forward to working with the breeding industry and Irish farmers and delivering increased value through our services and to overcoming the unexpected challenges that will inevitably arise in 2013.

3 Database



- The stats above are compiled with the assistance of DAFM AIM systems.
- In the Suckler scheme, the number of 2012 born calves with meal introduced is 552,596 with the number of animals weaned at 460,714.
- BVD test results continue to be received at ICBF and are being processed accordingly. Around 495,000 samples have been returned at this stage, with a 0.62% BVD Virus Positive rate.
- Good progress continues around the design of the Beef HerdPlus outputs to incorporate the new Euro-Star indexes, and the development work on these is continuing.
- The distribution of the 2013 Dairy personalised notebooks is continuing.
- The graph shows Inseminations recorded on AI Handhelds in 2013 compared with 2012.
- The total number of weights recorded since 1st January 2013 is 3935 and is broken down as follows:



Web	793
TruTest Files	283
Technician	110
Factory	1446
Farm Software	1092
Linear Scorers	38
Mart	173

4 Sheep Ireland

- ✚ Lambing has commenced on many pedigree sheep farms in the last number of days and this marks the beginning of another recording year for Sheep Ireland. Lambing performance information is critical to the genetic progress of our industry so it is critically important that all breeders record the event as accurately as possible.
- ✚ A successful lambing season is hugely reliant on a number and range of different factors. Ewe management throughout pregnancy, especially in late pregnancy is of great importance. Whether ewes have been managed appropriately or poorly, there will be ewes that lamb normally without incidence and interference from the farmer and those that require a high level of farmer intervention. The number of these problem ewes will vary greatly from farm to farm – why? The answer is not simple, management, ewe age, breeds used, conditions at lambing will all influence lambing performance, however genetics undoubtedly plays a major role.
- ✚ Farmers that maintain detailed flock records at lambing time and use these records to make culling and replacement ewe decisions reap the benefits of this effort each lambing season. Sheep Ireland's breed improvement programme attempts to apply this theory on a national scale collecting information across many flocks in many different breeds. Difficult births, lamb losses and the high labour input associated, cost the industry millions of euro annually – gradual improvements in this situation will add huge value to the industry.
- ✚ The New Year is bringing with it a number of exciting changes in Sheep Ireland – among them being the appointment of Michael McHugh to a part-time role to help in the continued development of our programme. Michael brings vast sheep experience with him to this role and his input will be invaluable as we try to take Sheep Ireland to the next level.

5 Genetic Evaluations

All proofs for the latest beef and dairy evaluations are now in the database and parental averaging and index calculations are in process. It is hoped that updated AI sire files for the beef indexes and the full bull search will be available on Monday evening.

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