

## 1. Important Dates

- ✚ **Wednesday 21st January 2009.** Dairy Genetic Evaluation Consultation Meeting, Radisson Hotel, Cork Airport, 11:00 – 14:00. This meeting will focus on the use of genomic information in the 2009 evaluations.
- ✚ **Wednesday 21st January 2009.** Dairy GENIRELAND® 2009 review with participating AI organisations, Radisson Hotel, Cork Airport, 14:00 – 16:00.
- ✚ **Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2009.** ICBF Board Meeting, Portlaoise. 10.30am
- ✚ **Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2009.** Sheep Board Meeting, Portlaoise. 2:00pm

## 2. Our Priorities for 2009 – Brian Wickham

Late in 2008 we completed our planning and budgeting for 2009. This planning process is summarised in our Strategic Plan for 2009. Here are the main highlights of our plan for the year ahead.

1. <u>Genetic evaluations</u> - ensure ready availability of accurate genetic evaluations for all traits, breeds and animals (national & international) of significance to Irish farmers.	
1.1 Common to beef and dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance <b>calving interval &amp; survival</b> evaluations by making use of insemination data.</li> <li>• Enhance <b>Beef Performance trait</b> evaluations by making full use of calf quality data from suckler scheme.</li> <li>• Improve the methods for handling <b>heterosis &amp; recombination</b> in genetic evaluations.</li> <li>• Research &amp; develop <b>carcass cut evaluations</b>, based on images and carcass cut data.</li> <li>• Achieve a <b>reduction in turn-round time</b> of evaluations.</li> </ul>
1.2 Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research <b>culling index</b> for dairy cattle.</li> <li>• Research <b>test day model</b> for milk production traits.</li> <li>• Research &amp; implement systems for incorporation of <b>genomic data</b> into the EBI for domestic &amp; foreign bulls.</li> <li>• Research evaluations for <b>farmer satisfaction</b>.</li> <li>• Consult with industry and <b>implement enhancements</b> to EBI.</li> </ul>
1.3 Beef	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate fully in <b>Interbeef project</b>.</li> <li>• Research &amp; implement enhanced across breed <b>evaluation for Beef Linear Type Traits</b> to use foreign evaluations and docility data from the suckler scheme.</li> <li>• Support and participate in research by TEAGASC and UCD into ways of improving feed conversion efficiency.</li> <li>• Consult with industry and <b>implement enhancements</b> to Euro-Star indexes.</li> </ul>
1.4 Knowledge & information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and update the <b>genetic evaluation information</b> available through the <b>ICBF website</b>.</li> <li>• Provide <b>training and support</b> to field personal.</li> <li>• Hold <b>EBI competition for discussion groups</b> and provide full publicity to enhance farmer understanding of the EBI and the benefits for farm profitability.</li> <li>• Develop a <b>competition that enhances farmer understanding of the Euro-Star indexes</b> and the benefits for farm profitability.</li> </ul>
1.5 Service quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish <b>annual timetable</b>, in advance, for genetic evaluations and monitor performance against this timetable.</li> </ul>

1.6 Suckler Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish and implement strategy for ensuring participants in the scheme receive sufficient benefits to ensure they <b>become regular users of HerdPlus</b>.</li> <li>Ensure <b>DAF requirements</b> are fully met.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Uptake &amp; cost of services - double participation and substantially reduce unit cost of cattle breeding services to farmers.</b>	
2.1 Milk Recording Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete implementation of <b>review of milk recording services</b> provided by ICBF with the objective of improving service quality.</li> </ul>
2.2 AI Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete <b>roll-out of AI handhelds</b> in Kerry, and SWS areas.</li> <li>Implement <b>revised software</b> and updated system in advance of 2009 spring mating season.</li> <li>Implement revised <b>web-based information services</b> for AI companies (active bulls, AI codes, GENEIRELAND<sup>®</sup>).</li> </ul>
2.3 Herd Book Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and enhance <b>web based herd book (Taurus)</b> processing service.</li> <li>Ensure <b>services to herd books</b> are of high quality.</li> </ul>
2.4 HerdPlus <sup>®</sup> Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Expand usage</b> by dairy &amp; beef herds.</li> <li><b>Enhance service</b> features to ensure customers are highly satisfied and the service is attractive to new customers.</li> <li><b>Maintain high quality GROW service</b> to beef herds and expand into commercial suckler herds.</li> </ul>
2.5 Farm Advisor service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review marketing of <b>HerdPlus<sup>®</sup> services to advisors</b> and implement findings.</li> <li>Enhance <b>services to Discussion Groups</b>.</li> </ul>
2.6 Health and disease service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Support initiatives</b> to establish whole herd health scheme.</li> <li><b>Support Teagasc research</b> initiatives for dairy and beef herd health.</li> <li><b>Lead in development and provision</b> of herd health information services for beef and dairy breeders.</li> <li><b>Implement prototype</b> herd health service for breeders supplying bulls to Tully.</li> </ul>
2.7 Promotion of best practice in cattle breeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a revised <b>promotion campaign</b> to ensure farmers follow <b>best practice</b> in all aspects of <b>cattle breeding</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Breeding Schemes - ensure the cattle breeding industry delivers optimal economic returns for Irish cattle farmers from genetic improvement.</b>	
3.1 GENEIRELAND <sup>®</sup> Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Expand GENEIRELAND<sup>®</sup> web based procurement</b> service to meet needs of AI Companies and Breed Associations with active breed improvement programs.</li> </ul>
3.2 GENEIRELAND <sup>®</sup> Progeny Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch and operate <b>modified GENEIRELAND<sup>®</sup> progeny test in 2009</b>.</li> <li><b>Operate 2009 phase</b> of 2006, 2007 and 2008 GENEIRELAND<sup>®</sup> beef and dairy progeny test schemes.</li> </ul>
3.3 GENEIRELAND <sup>®</sup> - Tully	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure <b>best practice</b> is followed to minimize risk of bulls failing health criteria for entry to AI.</li> <li>Ensure <b>bulls tested at Tully</b> are only those that are actively involved in <b>GENEIRELAND<sup>®</sup> procurement</b> for a breed improvement program of an AI company and Breed Association.</li> </ul>

3.5 Genomic Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide <b>active leadership</b> to the cattle industry in the harnessing of DNA technologies for the benefit of farmers and the breeding industry.</li> <li>• Establish a Genomic Selection task force with the Irish cattle breeding research community to deliver cost beneficial services which exploit developments in DNA based technologies.</li> <li>• Establish a <b>DNA bank</b> for use in future cattle breeding research.</li> <li>• Secure <b>DNA samples</b> (or 50K Illumina chip results) for use in genomic research from all dairy bulls with accurate genetic evaluations in Ireland.</li> <li>• Secure a facility for <b>DNA storage, extraction and genotyping</b> on a long term basis to underpin both research and the provision of DNA based services.</li> <li>• Extend the <b>ICBF database</b> to support research into genomic selection and the provision of DNA technology based services to the breeding industry.</li> <li>• Review the <b>optimal breeding scheme</b> for beef and dairy utilizing DNA technologies and use the results as the basis for decisions on the 2009 and subsequent G-EN-IR-ELAND<sup>®</sup> schemes.</li> </ul>
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**4. Service development - develop and market a range of information services that compliment the services provided by members.**

4.1 Cattle trading information services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop information <b>service for cattle sales</b> in association with service providing members.</li> </ul>
4.2 Research and technical services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support <b>genetic conservation</b> programs.</li> <li>• Provide data &amp; technical <b>support for research</b> conducted by Teagasc &amp; Universities.</li> <li>• Contribute expertise and support to <b>EU funded FP6 &amp; FP7 projects</b> including Ovultest, Eureca.</li> <li>• Establish longer term <b>funding mechanism for industry good and national good benefits</b> of database and genetic evaluation system.</li> </ul>
4.3 Key performance indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop <b>information service for provision of key performance indicators</b>.</li> </ul>
4.4 Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Review website</b> design to facilitate access to information.</li> <li>• Implement search function.</li> <li>• Review Weekly Update.</li> <li>• Implement system of metrics to provide useful information on website usage.</li> </ul>

**5. Sheep - achieve the greatest possible improvement, from genetic and other factors, in the profitability of the national sheep flock for the benefit of Irish farmers and the sheep industry.**

5.1 Sheep Services	Implement the 20 recommendations adopted by the Interim Sheep Board.
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**3. Lambplus<sup>®</sup>**

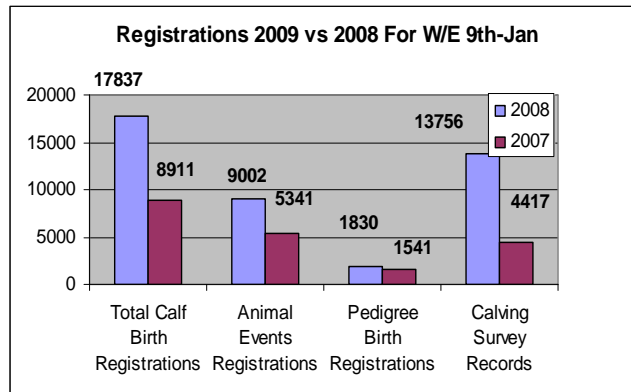


- ✚ The Lambplus <sup>®</sup> Screens for recording Lambing, Rearing & Mating data are nearing completion.
- ✚ Flock owners signed up to Lambplus<sup>®</sup> have been in touch with very helpful comments as to how the inventory screen which is live could be improved.
- ✚ DNA samples have been collected from all of the rams in the MALP scheme.

- ✚ These are now being sent to the relevant laboratories for processing.
- ✚ Work is underway to put together a team to carry out the scanning & weighing service for Lambplus ® clients.

#### 4. Database

- ✚ 3,744 inseminations have been received so far in 2009, compared with 4,192 in 2008 for the same period.
- ✚ The AI 2009 software migration has begun, and the Munster AI group will be migrated by Wednesday next week. The other organisations will follow, with the intention being that all organisations will be migrated by the end of January.



- ✚ There continues to be a lot of activity in the Suckler Scheme. The number of calves with a meal feeding introduction has increased to 714,000, with just over 592,000 of these having been weaned. The focus will now begin to switch to the registration of 2009 births, and Animal Events notebooks will be distributed in the coming weeks.
- ✚ The revamp of the Milk Recording system continues. The specifications have been completed, with a final review to happen with PG prior to the beginning of programming.
- ✚ This week, work has continued on the Sheep application, specifically around the lambing recording screens.

#### 5. Genetic Evaluations

##### International

- ✚ ICBF staff T. Pabiou visited the German company E+V Technology, located in Oranienburg, and specialised in automation in the food industry. E+V Technology are the creator of the VBS2000 classification machine for beef carcasses used in 25 plants across Ireland, and are currently working with ICBF and Teagasc in predicting meat cuts from the digital images taken after slaughter. The purpose of this successful visit was to understand the specific methodology used, and to appreciate the first results. The completion of this phase of the project is forecasted for spring 2009.

##### Dairy & Beef

- ✚ Routine genetic evaluations are currently conducted for all dairy and beef traits. A dairy consultation meeting will be held on the 21st January at Cork Airport; draft agenda is mentioned in this update.

#### 6. Tully

- ✚ Individual feed intake performance started on 26-12-2008 after all bulls were on ad-lib concentrates and received a health free status from bloods which were taken during the acclimatisation period.
- ✚ Breakdown by breed of bulls (52 in total) now on performance test:

Breed	AA	AU	BB	CH	LM	PT	SA	SI	SH	HE
No. of Bulls	4	7	1	5	26	2	2	2	1	2

- ✚ Bull owners have received letters containing the initial live-weight and latest Suckler Beef Value as well as a breakdown of the indexes of their bull(s) and other bulls within Tully Bull Station.
- ✚ All bulls have been linear scored by Karl O' Connell.
- ✚ To date all bulls have received vaccinations and bolster vaccinations for RSV, PI3, Pasteurella and Blackleg, as well as been treated for lice, fluke and stomach worms.

## 7. HerdPlus



### Dairy Cow Reports / Personalised Pocket books / Expected Calving Reports

- ✚ HerdPlus office is sending out the 2009 HerdPlus Dairy packs to all their clients.
- ✚ Of the 3,500 dairy clients in HerdPlus, 2,500 have been sent the pack so far with remainder being dispatched next week. Each pack contains following;
  1. Dairy Cow Report (New 09)
  2. Personalised pocket book
  3. Expected Calving Report

### Milk Recording Annual Reports

- ✚ ICBF will be generating Milk Recording Annual Reports in the next few weeks. The report is triggered if sufficient "dry offs" are in the database for the herd.
- ✚ To prompt farmers, ICBF sent text reminders to all Milk Recorded herds to get their 2008 dry offs in as soon as possible.

## 8. TV Program

Below as appendix 1 is a press release announcing a new TV program with a farming focus. We understand that it will feature a range of cattle breeding questions.

## 9. Change in our phone numbers

The ICBF phone numbers have changed. Our new numbers have "88" added to them after the area code (023). Please amend your files as soon as possible. The old numbers will continue to work until May of 2009.

Old Number (example)	New Number (example)
Phone: 023 20222	023 <b>88</b> 20222
Fax: 023 20229	023 <b>88</b> 20229



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## Appendix 1. Press Release for new farm program on TV.

### 2009 Press Release – ‘Feirm Factor’

‘Feirm Factor’ begins on TG4 on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January at 9.30pm.

12 farmers will battle it out for the Title of Ireland’s Top farmer and One will drive away in a Land Rover Discovery!

In a Groundbreaking New 8 part Television Series, the people of Ireland will be given a unique insight into the world of today’s Irish farmer. After hundreds of applications the hopefuls were reduced to the 12 best, hailing from all corners of the country, each with their own personal skills and attributes and all of whom are ready to be tested to the best of their abilities.

Each week the farmers will battle it out in a carefully selected series of tasks and missions which will enlighten and introduce viewers into the extensive and backbreaking world of the Irish farmer.

From Cattle Dosing to Herding Pigs, Fencing, Welding, Cooking, Computing, Tractor Skills, Weighing and selling animals as well as testing their Business acumen and Market sense, this is just a fraction of the multitude of duties the contestants will be assigned throughout the programme.

Based in the Various Agricultural Colleges Nationwide the Farmers will be assessed by 3 Judges in the form of TV Personality, Farmer’s daughter and Anchor Presenter Maura Derrane, former Minister for Agriculture, Alan Dukes and Cork based dairy farmer, Seán O Lionáird. It is they who will decide each week who stays in Feirm Factor ...

A selection of Guest Judges will be making appearances each week, offering their own expertise and experience to the contestants whilst helping the three main judges make their final elimination decisions.

Not only is the show a wonderful platform for Ireland’s farming talent, but the series beautifully acts as a showcase for mother Ireland Herself. Feirm Factor will travel to Cork, Kilkenny, Limerick, Galway, Tipperary, Cavan and Dublin, while also bringing us some of the biggest Events in the Irish Farming Calendar from the Ploughing Championships to the Ballinasloe Horse Fair, Farmers’ Markets to the Botanical Gardens before announcing the shows Champion in Charleville Castle Co.Offaly.

In the exciting finale, the remaining top 3 Farmers will travel to the home of the Land Rover Experience in the UK where they will be assessed on Land Rover Discovery based tasks before returning home for the Final Showdown.

The series will be a roller coaster through the farmyards and Agricultural Colleges of Ireland. It will be an exploration into Ireland’s oldest and most necessary profession, infusing traditional farming with the modern farming businesses of today.

Whatever you believed you knew about farming forget it, prepare yourself to be acquainted with a world you thought you understood but in reality knew nothing about. For viewers, Feirm Factor is the most fun you can have on a farmyard without getting your Wellies out!



Judges Alan Dukes, Maura Derrane, Seán O Lionáird and Competitors. 'Feirm Factor' begins on TG4 on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January at 9.30pm.

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