




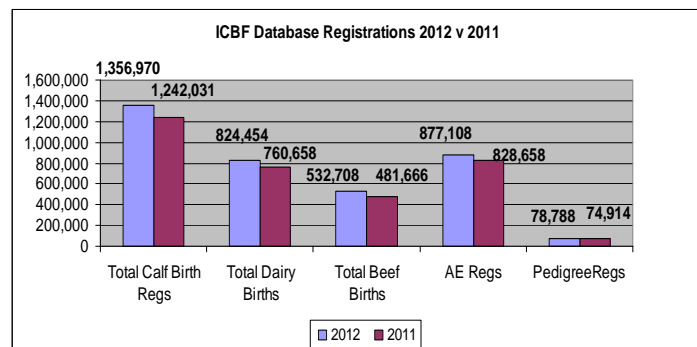
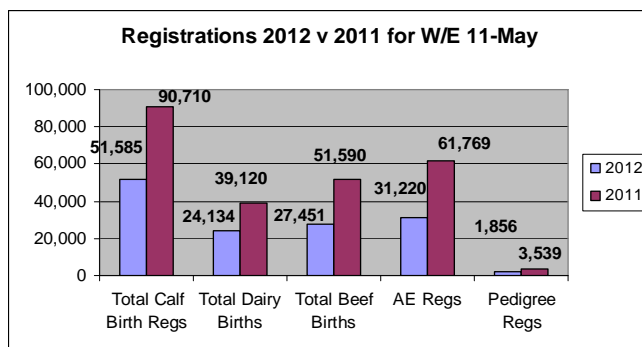








## ICBF Weekly Update 11<sup>th</sup> May 2012

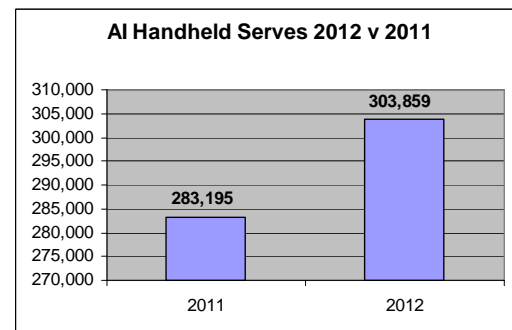
### 1 Important Dates

-  **Sheep Farm Walk** – Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May Gordon Johnson’s Farm, Tyrellspass, Co. Westmeath.
-  **ICAR 2012 Conference** - [www.icar2012.ie](http://www.icar2012.ie) – Monday 28<sup>th</sup> May to Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June, Cork.
-  **ICBF Board Meeting** - Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June, 10:00 to 14:00, Portlaoise.
-  **Interim Sheep Board** – Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June, 14:00 – 16:30, Portlaoise.
-  **Sheep 2012** – Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> June, Athenry.

### 2 Database



-  The stats above are compiled with the assistance of DAFM AIM systems.
-  In the Suckler scheme, the number of 2011 born calves with meal introduced is 612,121 with the number of animals weaned at 541,079.
-  BVD test results continue to be received at ICBF and are being processed accordingly. Around 558,000 tissue tags for BVD testing have been purchased at this stage. Around 354,000 samples have been returned at this stage, with a 0.60% BVD Virus Positive rate.
-  The current trial weight recording cell operating out of Tully is now running the latest version of the new weight recording infrastructure, including the ‘forward predicting’ of weights. A newly designed ‘split platform’ is being trialed this week. The split platform will remove the need to have a trailer to carry the weighing equipment.
-  The on-going developments to further enhance the loading of genotype information to the database are continuing. This process is now nearing completion, and significant progress has been made in the speeding up of loading and extracting genotypes from the database.
-  The graph shows Inseminations recorded on AI Handhelds in 2012 compared with 2011.



### 3 Genetic Evaluations

Pedigree files have been prepared and sent to the INTERBULL centre as part of the INTERBEEF project. Animals in the beef performance evaluation with a weaning weight record and their ancestors have been sent (500,000 animals). Resolving of pedigree issues between countries will now begin on these animals.

#### 4 GENEIRELAND® Dairy

- The programme will be complete when the Norwegian Red bull is available next week. 33 herds are awaiting straws from this bull to complete their mixed packs.
- 620 herds took 23,942 doses, across 53 bulls. There were straws dispatched of 7 Friesians, 42 Holstein-Friesians, 2 Jersey's and 2 Crossbred Jersey's.

#### 5 Sheep Ireland

- This Sat 12th May Sheep Ireland will be in attendance at the Texel open day at Belclare, Westport on the farm of Teresa & Jimmy Garrivan. This open day precedes the societies AGM which also takes place in Westport later that day. The day will be a great opportunity to speak with breeders and discuss some recent developments with the LambPlus service. We hope to do a live demonstration of the society's new on-line flockbook so hopefully our technology will not let us down on the day.



- Our intention to hold three LambPlus sales in 2012 is currently being reviewed. We are currently gathering opinion from as many sources as possible to determine the best way forward. One thing is for certain that a LambPlus sale is a great way to promote the Euro-Star and display all that is good about high genetic merit rams and the potential benefits that they can deliver to the wider sheep farming community. Our revised plan will be finalised in the coming days and all breeders will be notified immediately once this happens.
- There has certainly been a huge amount of discussion centering around these sales, but it has become very clear that LambPlus breeders are anxious to stick with and progress the status of breed improvement in this country. This is hugely encouraging and we have no doubt that no matter what happens with LambPlus sales into the future that breed improvement will win out in the end. This is the objective of us all.

#### 6 Milk Recording

National Milk Recording Statistics - Herds, Cows & EDIY 11/05/12						
Milk Recording Organisation	Total Herds Recorded YTD 11/05/12	No. EDIY Herds YTD 11/05/12	% Herds EDIY	Total No. Cows Recorded YTD 11/05/12	No. EDIY Cows YTD 11/05/12	% Cows EDIY
Munster	3,475	956	28%	245,332	71,686	29%
Progressive	2,214	808	36%	172,722	62,380	36%
Tipperary	104	34	33%	7,826	2,521	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,793</b>	<b>1,798</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>425,880</b>	<b>136,587</b>	<b>32%</b>

Recorded Cows by Milk Recording Organisation - Year on Year Comparison			
Milk Recording Organisation	YTD 2011 Cows Recorded 01/01/11 - 11/05/11	YTD 2012 Cows Recorded 01/01/12 - 11/05/12	2012 vs. 2011 Year on Year Difference (%)
Munster	236,446	245,332	3.6%
Progressive	162,307	172,722	6.0%
Tipperary	9,473	7,826	-21.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>408,226</b>	<b>425,880</b>	<b>4.1%</b>

## 7 Sheep Farm Walk – Irish Grasslands Assn Press Release

This year's Irish Grassland Association Sheep Conference and Farm Walk heads west from previous year's events. The farm walk will be held on Tuesday 22 May 2012 on the farm of Gordon and Yvonne Johnston. Gordon and Yvonne are farming just outside Tyrellspass in Co. Westmeath and are active members of the IGA. They are also involved in Sheep Ireland Breed Improvement Programmes and are members of the Offaly Lamb Producer Group.

Mullinahone Co-op and Sheep Ireland have been great supporters of previous IGA Sheep Conference's and Farm Walk's and have kindly agreed to sponsor this year's event. We are delighted to have both companies involved and look forward to working with them. Speaking at the launch of the event, Liam Egan, Mullinahone Co-op said the company was delighted to come on board with the IGA for this year's event. Eamon Wall, Sheep Ireland, commented that Gordon and Yvonne have been great supporters of sheep breed improvement programmes and stated that the farm will be a great setting for flock owners to witness and gain practical lessons in running a successful sheep enterprise.

Farming activities on the farm have changed markedly over the last decade. The construction of the new M6 motorway split the main block of farm land in two. Prior to this farming enterprises included a 50 cow suckler herd and a flock of 200 ewes. The new roadway greatly disrupted farm infrastructure and made running of the suckler herd increasingly difficult. A decision was taken to exit suckling and concentrate on sheep.

Sheep numbers increased to approximately 500 head. This can be broken down into a commercial flock of 450 ewes and a flock of 50 pedigree Vendeen ewes. Breeding in the commercial flock has also developed during this timeframe into Lley cross Texel ewes. Performance of the flock is very impressive with mature ewes this year scanning about 2.1 lambs per ewe and turned out to grass with approximately 1.9 lambs per ewe.

Grassland management and feeding ewes correctly is high on the agenda. Last year the weaning rate was over 1.5 lambs per ewe, including ewe lambs. Strong performance on the farm can be attributed to attention to detail and doing the simple things right. Ewes are lambing in three groups to spread workload and make best possible use of available housing. Two groups of 160 ewes are lambing 25th February and 13th March followed by a group of ewe lambs and two year old hoggets at the beginning of April. Pedigree ewes are lambing in December

Ewe lambs are bred to increase output and also reduce the costs of retaining these animals idle over the winter. Breeding ewe lambs allows a closed flock to be maintained. Hogget ewes that rear twin lambs as yearlings are also held back to lamb with this flock. This gives these animals more time to recover and is proving beneficial in increasing the lambing percentage.

## Grassland management

The stocking rate on the farm is just shy of 10 ewes per hectare which is well above the average sheep flock. Land type can be described as good, although the clay soil nature of the soil means land can become wet with heavy or prolonged rainfall. The aim with grassland management is to maintain high quality grass at all times by keeping supply slightly ahead of demand. The Johnstons are one of a small number of sheep farmers measuring grass. Fertiliser usage is also targeted to maintain grass supply and quality. Lamb performance at grass is good with all lambs from adult ewes finished off grass. Hoggets lambs and stragglers are fed meal from late September.

The farm is unique in that it differs from conventional systems with no silage saved. Instead, Gordon and Yvonne save up grass going into the winter for use in the 'Knockbeg' system to feed ewes for November and December and into January. This is working excellently and has cut the workload associated with housing ewes earlier. Ewes are then housed on concentrates and straw. There are a number of benefits to this system. Workload is reduced, feed quality is more predictable than silage and ewe performance can be closely monitored.

There will be many other points of interest displayed on the day. Faecal egg counting is used to determine if dosing is required and a footbath programme is proving successful in reducing foot problems to a minimum.

## Conference proceedings

Conference proceedings will include progress from lowland BETTER sheep farms. The programme has been in operation for three years and has proved extremely successful in increasing the stocking rate, the number of lambs reared per ewe put to the ram and ultimately profitability of these sheep enterprises. The lessons learned on these farms are invaluable and can be adopted by all farmers to streamline their farm enterprise.

No matter what business you are in, it is important to have a plan to work towards. Farming is no different. Putting a plan in place to work towards will keep you focused on where you want your farm to be in one, two, three or even five years' time. It will also allow you to benchmark or track your performance to date. This section will include the experiences of building a flock from zero to over 1,000 head.

The importance of high digestibility feed value silage cannot be underestimated in sheep enterprises. This paper will look into the practicalities of ensiling high digestibility feed value silage from fertiliser usage, cutting dates, ensiling techniques etc.

Flock health planning will also feature on the day. This is very timely given the increase in value of sheep. With issues such as resistance to many of the most commonly used drugs available on the market, new trains of thought are emerging to flock health. Advice on putting preventative rather than fire brigade tactics into operation will pay huge dividends in reducing veterinary cost and increasing animal performance.

To register:

Discounted tickets are available from €25 for Irish Grassland Association members and can be booked online [www.irishgrassland.com](http://www.irishgrassland.com). Non-members are also welcome and tickets are available from €50 which includes:

1. One year's free membership for all new d/d memberships
2. Attendance at event
3. Light refreshments on arrival at hotel
4. Set of conference papers
5. Bus transfers to and from farm
6. Two course dinner followed by tea/coffee



Full details of conference centre location, B&B discounts and programme for the day are available online [www.irishgrassland.com](http://www.irishgrassland.com) or call our office manager on (087)9626483

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