

1 Important Dates

- + **Sheep Ireland - LambPlus User Meeting** – Wednesday 28th September, 19:00 to 21 :00 – Hibernian Hotel, Mallow.
- + **Sheep Ireland - LambPlus User Meeting** – Thursday 29th September, 19:00 to 21:00 – Seven Oaks Hotel, Carlow.
- + **Sheep Ireland - LambPlus User Meeting** – Monday 3rd October, 19:00 to 21 :00 – Radisson Blu Hotel, Athlone.
- + **Sheep Breeding Consultation Industry Meeting** – Thursday 6th October, 11:00 to 14:00 – Tullamore Court Hotel, Tullamore.
- + **Sheep Ireland Board Meeting** – Thursday 6th October, 14:00 to 16:30 – Tullamore Court Hotel, Tullamore.
- + **High Health Status Beef Bull Sale** – Saturday 15th October 2011 – 12:00 to 2:00 - Tully Performance Test Centre.

2 ICBF Board Meeting

The ICBF Board meeting on Thursday this week was devoted to a discussion on the outcome of the Beef Breeding review. Given the importance to beef breeding of these developments we have reproduced here, a slightly edited version of the report to the Board. Three key decisions were made and our work now moves to the next phase. The next phase involves; seeking the views of the Tully Advisory Committee, detailed discussions with key stakeholders and the development of detailed operational plans for Gene Ireland Beef.

a. Decisions Made.

That the Board approved:

- the development of a Herd Data Quality Index,
- the development, by ICBF, of a comprehensive new live-weight recording infrastructure for Ireland, and
- in principle, the expansion of Gene Ireland Beef to include services at the levels of Bull Breeders, Progeny Test Bull Identification, and Progeny Test Operation.

b. Background.

Previous work has identified a number of priority areas that ICBF needed to address in order to ensure optimal rates of genetic improvement in the Irish beef production sector. These included: elite bull breeding herds, bulls for AI, commercial progeny testing and research herds, Tully performance test, weight recording, and priority traits for beef breeding.

Since the last meeting of the ICBF Board the following have been undertaken:

1. A series of consultation meetings involving the cattle breeding industry stakeholders, the most recent of which was held on Wednesday 7th September.
2. A cost-benefit study by Dr Peter Amer the results of which have been reported to the consultation meetings.
3. Investigations into options for modifying and extending the cattle breeding infrastructure to better service the needs of the beef breeding sector.

This report is a summary of the findings.

c. Herd Data Quality Index.

High quality accurate data collected on commercial farms is an essential and fundamental element of breeding more profitable beef and dairy cattle. A number of concerns about the quality of data available for beef breeding in Ireland have been identified. These include reports of false birth dates, selective recording and selective treatment of animals. In an effort to address these concerns in a comprehensive and low cost manner a “herd data quality index” with the following features is proposed:

1. It is computed by ICBF using data from the ICBF database and other sources.
2. It focuses on timeliness, completeness and deviations from normality in the data recorded for the herd over a defined time period.
3. It is provided to the herd owner as a tool to facilitate improved recording practices which result in better quality data.
4. It is reviewed at least annually so as to incorporate improvements.
5. The herd owner can choose to provide transparency of their recording by authorising other parties to view the data quality index for their herd.
6. It may be used as criteria for determining the eligibility of data for use in genetic evaluations.
7. It is initially developed in conjunction with Beef Herd Books for pedigree beef breeding herds with initial implementation in early 2012.

d. Weight Recording Infrastructure.

Animal live weights are required for a wide range of purposes on a much more extensive basis than currently available in Ireland. It is proposed that ICBF develops a new weight recording infrastructure which includes the following features:

1. It covers the capture of live-weight and date-of-weighing from birth to slaughter for beef and dairy cattle.
2. That each herd would weigh all or defined groups of animals some three times per year.
3. A facility for using a tape-measure for determining birth weights.
4. A set of weighing and data capture equipment (weigh bars, platform, clock, mobile phone network enabled handheld computer) and tools (web screens, reports) that facilitate low error rates, low costs and a rapid turnaround of ICBF database reports following weighing.
5. A comprehensive HerdPlus[®] database report (both paper and web-based) which is useful to herd owners for helping with management and breeding decisions.
6. It facilitates collection of weight data from herds where weighing systems already exist and are being used.
7. It facilitates a range of field service options (DIY, technicians) being provided by local service providing structures.
8. The initial goal is to have some 50 cells, each capable of recording weights in some two herds per day, operational by May of 2012.
9. Service fees will be charged to cover the cost of operating the infrastructure.

e. GENÉIRELAND[®] BEEF

The key outcome from the review has been that the beef breeding scheme currently operating in Ireland is not achieving optimal rates of genetic gain.

The review has identified that the optimal design comprises a well-designed progeny test which is coupled with bull breeding herds that follow best practice in breeding, provide the bulls for progeny test and make use of the best bulls identified by progeny test to breed female replacements and the next generation of bulls.

Bull breeding herds are the main vehicle for distributing genetic gain to the commercial herds through the supply of well-bred stock bulls.

The main role of AI in the breeding scheme is to:

- enable bull breeders to access high merit proven bulls worldwide, and
- to facilitate an accurate progeny test of beef bulls that are most suitable for ensuring long term achievement of the breeding objective for beef cattle.

AI can also, as a by-product of the breeding scheme, provide commercial dairy and beef producers with access to beef bulls with a wide range of genetic characteristics.

The key elements of the optimal beef breeding scheme are thus: bull breeders, bulls for progeny test, progeny test and, as an aspect of the progeny test, a facility for measuring feed intake, health and meat quality traits.

It is proposed that the scope of Gene Ireland Beef be extended to cover the infrastructure services associated with the optimal beef breeding scheme for Ireland as described in more detail here. These services are targeted at four different levels.

f. Bull Breeder Services

A closer working relationship between Gene Ireland and bull breeders is essential for ensuring genetic gains are optimised.

Bull breeders make bull selection and mating decisions that determine the rate of genetic gain in the entire beef industry. It is most important that these decisions take account of both the short-term and long-term interests of the breeders and the wider industry.

The proposed service to Bull Breeders includes the following features:

1. Is provided to breeders who are members of a Herd Book that is participating in the Gene Ireland breeding scheme.
2. Is provided to breeders who agree to, and comply with, the terms and conditions of the service. These to include service fees, participation in relevant data recording service(s), achieve minimum standards for data quality index, provide first choice of bulls for use in progeny test, and others to be finalised in consultation.
3. A comprehensive mating advisory analysis which targets the matings required for optimal rates of genetic gain for the long term benefit of the beef industry.
4. Facilities for facilitating the sale of high quality stock bulls to commercial dairy and suckler herds.

g. Progeny Test Bull Selection Services

For those breeds participating in Gene Ireland Beef:

1. Annual audit of genetic gain and genetic diversity.
2. Annually identify from the bulls available worldwide, including stock bulls in Ireland, those most suitable for ensuring genetic gain and genetic diversity of the Irish beef cattle population.
3. Annually source those bulls most suitable for breeding the next crop of potential bulls for progeny testing and arrange sufficient matings in Bull Breeder herds.

4. Annually identify and select bull calves which are candidates for the progeny test.
5. Annually arrange for progeny test candidates to be disease tested and placed into semen production with an appropriate collaborating AI facility.
6. Annually finalise the list of bulls to be progeny tested.

h. Progeny Test Operation

For those breeds participating in Gene Ireland Beef:

1. Recruit herds to use semen from progeny test bulls in the current year in accordance with appropriate service terms and conditions.
2. Arrange for semen distribution to herds.
3. Monitor and support all herds with incomplete progeny test obligations.
4. Provide comprehensive information on key performance indicators.

i. Special Trait Data Collection

For the beef bulls in the Gene Ireland progeny test:

1. Select and acquire a sample of progeny for test.
2. Operate facility for measuring agreed range of traits including feed intake and meat quality.
3. Arrange open days at regular intervals to show-case progeny test and beef breeding.

j. Breeding Objectives & Selection Indexes

Further work is being undertaken before a recommendation will be made in relation to beef selection indexes. The key issue is that genetic trends for maternal traits in the beef breeds are in the wrong direction if selection is based on the SBV with the current economic weightings.

k. Genomics

An extensive research program on use of genomic information to assist beef selection is currently underway. It will be some twelve months before the outcome of this research is known. In the meantime we have been advised that the breeding scheme design recommended above is the most appropriate of those considered for the foreseeable future and in the eventuality that genomic selection is practical along the lines seen in the dairy industry.

3 Genetic Evaluations

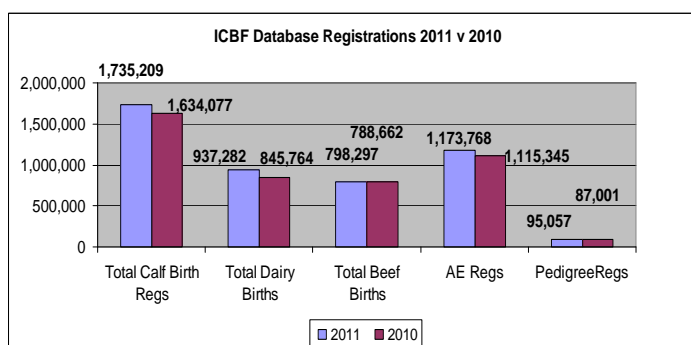
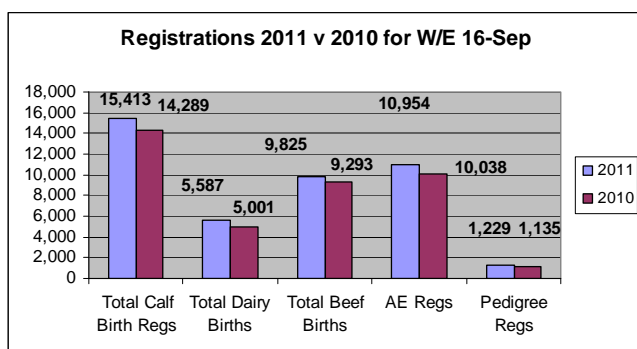
- ✚ Extracts for the upcoming end of test evaluation for Tully bulls have now been taken and the evaluation will commence today.
- ✚ New test runs for maternal weaning weight have also commenced and will be circulated to the industry in the coming weeks.

4 GROW[®]

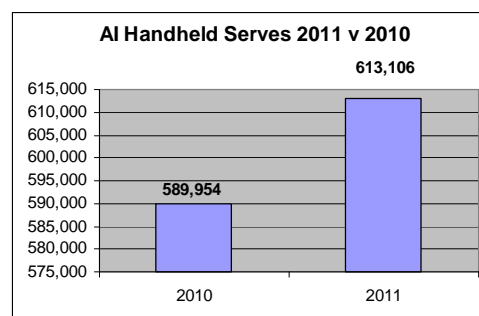
- ✚ 548 Pedigree animals were weighed and scored in August (down from 753 in August 2010).
- ✚ 355 Commercial animals were weighed and scored in August (down from 374 in August 2010).
- ✚ Ongoing dual scoring sessions are being held with the scorers.

- Each of the 5 scorers will have at least one of these sessions per year with each other scorer i.e a minimum of 20 dual scoring sessions per year in total.

5 Database



- The stats above are compiled with the assistance of DAFF AIM systems.
- In the Suckler scheme, the number of 2010 born calves with meal introduced is 663,801 with the number of animals weaned at 609,187.
- The health recording forms for the Dairy Efficiency Scheme (DEP) will be sent to farmers over the next couple of days.
- Testing continues on the prototype of a new cattle weighing scales with blue-tooth integration to ICBF handheld software. It is intended to start field trials with it from October 1st.
- Work is on-going in building the systems that will support the upcoming national BVD eradication programme. The file transfers from the labs participating in the AHI 'proficiency test' have been completed this week.
- The high density beef genotype files are currently being loaded to the ICBF database.
- The graph shows Inseminations recorded on AI Handhelds in 2011 compared with 2010.



6 Sheep Ireland

- This week we have been finalising plans for a busy schedule over the coming weeks. The Ploughing Championships are taking place in Athy, Co. Kildare next week and Sheep Ireland will again have a presence at the event. We will be located at the National Sheep Breeders Stand, so we welcome all sheep industry representatives to come and speak with us on the day.
- On Friday 23rd Sept we will be in attendance at the Mayo mountain breeders annual ram sale in Ballinrobe Livestock Mart. We are delighted to have recording breeders presenting Euro-Star rams for sale on the day, we hope that we can create a bit of a stir on the day and get more breeders on board for the coming year. To date the Mayo Mountain breed has not been recording any parentage information, this is something that many breeders now wish to rectify in association with Sheep Ireland with a view to obtaining pedigree status. See this week's Farmers Journal for more information about the ram group.
- Sheep Ireland met with our MALP farmers this week to finalise plans for the coming year. This meeting was very positive with some really strong suggestions made on the evening. We outlined our Single Sire Mating

(SSM) protocol at the meeting, which we intend to trial on a small number of farms this year, to assess its feasibility on commercial farms going forward. Should SSM prove to be successful on our MALP farms, it will act as a real boost to our plans to get more commercial farmers around the country performance recording their flocks. Up to now DNA has been used exclusively to assign parentage to lambs born into the MALP program. The first MALP mature ewe weighing's being today Fri 16th on the farm of Ken Matthews. This will be very valuable information for our evaluations as up to now we have been using lamb weaning weight as a predictor of ultimate mature weight.

- ✚ Selection of our CPT rams continued this week. Up to now we have 21 rams confirmed into the program, with the final 9 rams due to be finalised by Mon 19th.
- ✚ We hope to see you all at the Ploughing next week.

7 GEN€IR€LAND®

- ✚ The GI Autumn program is now up and running.
- ✚ 11 bulls across 8 breeds are available
- ✚ More details on the bulls are available in the GEN€IR€LAND section of the website.
- ✚ To order straws phone 1850 600 900 or 045 521 573.
- ✚ Approx total straws sent out per bull currently available are in the table below.

BREED	AA	BA	BB	BB	CH	CH	HE	LM	PT	SI	SI
CODE	MLJ	KCE	BZP	RWS	CSQ	DZP	GCT	MXF	CBQ	SXD	APZ
# STRAWS	515	540	295	5	380	155	180	10	260	305	5

8 Milk Recording

National Milk Recording Statistics - Herds, Cows & EDIY 16/09/11						
Milk Recording Organisation	Total Herds Recorded YTD 16/09/11	No. EDIY Herds YTD 16/09/11	% Herds EDIY	Total No. Cows Recorded YTD 16/09/11	No. EDIY Cows YTD 16/09/11	% Cows EDIY
Munster	3,669	1,041	28%	301,155	94,816	31%
Progressive	2,370	900	38%	213,380	81,411	38%
Tipperary	144	64	44%	13,073	6,297	48%
Total	6,183	2,005	32%	527,608	182,524	35%

Recorded Cows by Milk Recording Organisation - Year on Year Comparison			
Milk Recording Organisation	YTD 2010 Cows Recorded 01/01/10 - 16/09/10	YTD 2011 Cows Recorded 01/01/11 - 16/09/11	2011 vs. 2010 Year on Year Difference (%)
Munster	275,102	301,155	8.7%
Progressive	190,467	213,380	10.7%
Tipperary	11,914	13,073	8.9%
Total	477,483	527,608	9.5%

National Milk Recording Averages by Province - 10 day Period 06/09/11 to 16/09/11								
Provincial	No. Herds Recorded	No. Cows Recorded	Average Herd Size	Average 24hr Milk kg/Cow	Average Fat %	Average Protein %	Average F + P kg	Average SCC
Munster	1049	76,480	73	19.1	4.14	3.68	1.50	275
Leinster	355	26,329	74	20.2	3.99	3.54	1.52	304
Connacht	62	3,713	60	20.4	3.85	3.46	1.49	293
Ulster	94	6,505	69	18.8	4.10	3.54	1.44	303

National Milk Recording Results by County - 10 day Period 06/09/11 to 16/09/11								
	No. Herds Recorded	No. Cows Recorded	Average Herd Size	Average 24hr Milk kg/Cow	Average Fat %	Average Protein %	Average F + P kg	Average SCC
CARLOW	19	1,254	66	20.6	3.92	3.41	1.51	341
CAVAN	44	2,378	54	21.2	3.91	3.52	1.58	267
CLARE	41	2,460	60	19.5	4.08	3.65	1.51	282
CORK STH	284	19,527	69	19.1	4.23	3.72	1.52	235
CORK NTH	284	21,218	75	18.9	4.24	3.76	1.51	257
DONEGAL	13	1,820	140	16.2	4.38	3.61	1.29	383
DUBLIN	7	343	49	24.8	3.48	3.47	1.72	390
GALWAY	34	2,146	63	17.6	4.22	3.68	1.39	359
KERRY	144	9,840	68	21.1	3.97	3.59	1.60	293
KILDARE	10	699	70	19.4	4.12	3.52	1.48	382
KILKENNY	61	4,707	77	17.9	4.18	3.66	1.40	247
LAOIS	35	2,451	70	19.6	3.94	3.61	1.48	261
LEITRIM	6	321	54	20.0	4.12	3.53	1.53	317
LIMERICK	134	9,575	71	19.7	4.04	3.62	1.51	283
LONGFORD	6	375	63	18.1	4.04	3.48	1.36	202
LOUTH	20	1,517	76	20.3	3.77	3.45	1.47	337
MAYO	17	887	52	24.0	3.63	3.49	1.71	285
MEATH	58	5,082	88	21.0	3.93	3.45	1.55	320
MONAGHAN	37	2,307	62	19.0	4.02	3.48	1.43	260

OFFALY	16	1,323	83	19.8	4.19	3.66	1.55	313
ROSCOMMON	4	295	74	23.5	3.88	3.43	1.72	171
SLIGO	1	64	64	16.9	3.38	3.19	1.11	332
TIPPERARY NTH	45	3,815	85	18.1	4.14	3.72	1.42	286
TIPPERARY STH	62	5,496	89	18.4	4.26	3.67	1.46	295
WATERFORD	55	4,549	83	18.3	4.17	3.71	1.44	268
WESTMEATH	23	1,807	79	22.0	4.04	3.54	1.67	231
WEXFORD	71	4,949	70	19.3	4.14	3.65	1.50	286
WICKLOW E	19	1,270	67	19.6	3.82	3.52	1.44	315
WICKLOW W	10	552	55	20.3	4.25	3.58	1.59	329
	<i>No. Herds Recorded</i>	<i>No. Cows Recorded</i>	<i>Average Herd Size</i>	<i>Average 24hr Milk kg/Cow</i>	<i>Average Fat %</i>	<i>Average Protein %</i>	<i>Average F + P kg</i>	<i>Average SCC</i>
National	1,560	113,027	71	19.8	4.02	3.56	1.50	294

Brian Wickham (PhD) Chief Executive, ICBF & Sheep Ireland, Highfield House, Shinagh, Bandon Co. Cork., Phone: +353 238 820 222, Mobile: +353 86 826 9911, Email bwickham@icbf.com.

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