



*Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year
from all at ICBF & Sheep Ireland*

1 Important Dates

- ✚ **ICBF Board Meeting** – Thursday 27th January, 10:30 to 14:00 – Maldrón Hotel, Portlaoise.
- ✚ **Sheep Ireland Board Meeting** – Thursday 27th January, 14:00 to 16:30 – Maldrón Hotel, Portlaoise.

2 A review of 2010 – Brian Wickham

As 2010 draws to a close it is a good opportunity to reflect back on the year that was, for ICBF and Sheep Ireland.

2010 has been a very challenging year for Ireland! However, it saw much improved returns for the dairy and sheep sectors. The prospects for beef remain more challenging. It is in these recessionary times that hard decisions must be made in order to ensure the future viability of our organisations and industry. The decisions taken by ICBF over its short history and the efforts of our dedicated and hard working team have placed us in a relatively good position as 2010 comes to a close, and most importantly, ensured we are well placed to help achieve the ambitious 2020 growth targets for cattle and sheep farming.

The major achievement of 2010 has been the continued roll-out of genomic selection for dairy cattle. In a period of less than two years the required research was completed, ICBF's genetic evaluation systems modified, the results communicated to dairy farmers and the AI industry providing genomically selected bulls. In spring 2010 40%, up from 35% in 2009, of some 600,000 recorded dairy inseminations were from genomically selected bulls.

In 2010 our efforts in genomics have included a number of very significant developments including:

- A greatly expanded Holstein-Friesian training population - over 6,000 compared with just 1,200 this time last year - as a result of collaborative sharing agreements with a number of other countries and further genotyping of Irish animals with accurate genetic evaluations. The result is an increase in the accuracy of our genomic evaluations.
- The establishment of IGenoP as a means for facilitating a world-wide sharing of genotypes. We expect to have a working prototype of this system completed by the end of 2010. This concept has been discussed at international forums (ICAR in May and WCGALP in August) and in due course we expect it to be hosted by the Interbull centre in Upsalla, Sweden. In the meantime, the genotype database, that is the heart of IGenoP, will be used by ICBF to facilitate genomic evaluation services in Ireland.
- The development by Teagasc of an accurate system for imputing 50K genotypes from the less expensive 3K genotypes. We expect this system to form the basis of new services in 2011.
- An agreement with IHFA to offer, in conjunction with Weatherbys, an integrated parentage test and genomic evaluation service based on the 3K Illumina chip for calves born in spring 2011.
- A major review of the dairy cattle breeding program for Ireland. This review has identified opportunities to more than double rates of genetic gain, half breeding scheme costs while minimising disease and inbreeding risks. The findings were discussed with the industry last week and the outcome of those consultations are summarised in the Update of 10th Dec. Over the next few weeks ICBF will develop, in consultation with the industry, a proposal for implementing the findings of the review.
- In partnership with Teagasc, the initiation of research to develop genomic selection for beef breeding.

At this time last year we were celebrating the achievements of the second year of the **Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme**. As a result of the demonstrable benefits of the scheme DAFF have committed the resources needed for it to continue in 2011. This is a major achievement in light of the increasingly severe constraints on public finances.

Achievements in 2010 relevant to the scheme include:

- A continued high level of participation by suckler herds in the scheme representing some 85% of all suckler cows.
- A streamlining of the scheme based on experience in 2009 resulting in costs savings and simplification of recording.
- The incorporation of data from the scheme in genetic evaluations for calving (ease, mortality & gestation length), calf quality and docility.
- The Euro-Star indexes are now widely accepted by the beef breeding industry.

This scheme has been so successful, so quickly, because of a number of factors including farmers' awareness of the value it represents, and the ability of DAFF and ICBF to put in place the required systems and infrastructure. There is also very good industry buy-in with the Farmers Journal playing a key role in removing the mystique from the scheme. This is the third year of the planned five years. Ireland is now starting to lead the world in beef cattle breeding while also achieving the high welfare standards in beef production.

The *Best Practise in Cattle Breeding* campaign was continued this year. It played a key role in the high level of uptake of genomically selected bulls to breed dairy replacements. This year's campaign featured 22 weekly installments, covering a wide range of useful and practical breeding information on a dedicated page in the Farmers Journal.

The GEN€IR€LAND[®] dairy progeny test program for spring 2010 suffered from the unfortunate outbreak of IBR at the NCBC stud resulting in fewer bulls being tested than farmer demand would have supported. The dairy breeding scheme review (referred to above) is addressing ways of minimising this risk in the future.

The HerdPlus[®] and GEN€IR€LAND[®] beef conference (8th October 2010), held in conjunction with the Beef Expo (Sunday 10th Oct) was a great success with some 300 farmers attending. The objective of the day was to inform beef farmers on latest developments in GEN€IR€LAND[®] and ICBF HerdPlus. In addition, bulls from the last Tully intake were sold by auction.

ICBF's cattle breeding database is now increasingly available to herd owners. Further upgrades to infrastructure in 2010 have ensured high speed of access to the database for users.

HerdPlus[®] usage is approaching 8,000 dairy and beef herds (6,400 this time last year), with some 75% choosing the electronic option. These herds have direct access via ICBF's website (www.icbf.com) to not only record a wide range of events but also, to a wide array of valuable management information. ICBF's AI handheld system was used to record over 0.60 million inseminations in 2010, a 10% increase due to the system being used by more technicians. Our bull search facility (on www.icbf.com) which had a complete revamp in 2008 is one of the facilities on our website that farmers and breeders find most useful with over 500,000 searches in the last twelve months looking for the details of some 40,000 bulls.

ICBF's Active Bull lists moved to a new level in 2010 as a consequence of the implementation of a new web-based system for the administration of AI codes and for AI companies to notify bull availability and semen prices. The Active Bull lists are now "real-time" and continuously updated by the AI companies.

The launch of a new Catalogue Service for both commercial and pedigree animals, in conjunction with the Breed Associations, marked a major step forward in the continued roll-out of the use of breeding values in the trading of animals and in the making of breeding decisions at farm level.

Several of the beef Breed Associations have provided, through their websites, on-line access to their Herd Books. This facility, provided by ICBF, involves live access to the ICBF database, providing a very powerful tool to beef breeders, for locating the best pedigree animals in Ireland. It is complemented by ICBF's GROW[®] service and the new catalogue service launched in October 2010.

Significant development work was completed in conjunction with Animal Health Ireland (AHI) in the area of IT infrastructure for the capture and management of BVD and other health data. This puts AHI, and the industry in general, in a strong position to roll out a widespread BVD control programme along with disease control initiatives.

This year the extension of ICBF's infrastructure to sheep made substantial further progress. Sheep Ireland (www.sheep.ie), with its own Board, has proceeded to implement the strategy agreed in 2008 for improving the sheep meat supply chain, and thus the profitability of sheep farming. A review of the 2008 strategy was completed this year and a revised strategy for the next period adopted. All key elements: database, MALP, CPT and genetic evaluations are now in place. We are now ready to grow our LambPlus[®] service. By extending ICBF to cover sheep there are benefits for cattle, through spreading of overheads, and for sheep, through ready access to knowledge, skills and infrastructure.

Irish farming benefits greatly from the unique partnership that exists between Government and the industry. The ability of ICBF to put DAFF funding to good use is widely acknowledged and in 2010 was particularly evident through the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme, GEN[®] and Sheep Ireland. Without DAFF support it would be much more difficult for ICBF to deliver so much benefit to the industry and wider community.

Our role in the international community of animal recording and animal breeding progressed in 2010 with Ireland being chosen to host the ICAR & Interbull meetings in 2012 (see www.icar2012.ie) and our membership in the OptiMIR partnership (see www.optimir.eu) which has secured substantial Interreg funding.

On reflection, 2010 has been a year highlighted by the exploitation of new technology for the benefit of Irish farmers. We have been able to achieve growth in most of our activities. The drop in milk recording experienced in 2009 was reversed in 2010. We have been able to achieve this extra output with little increase in staffing and ICBF's financial situation is in line with budgets. The key to ICBF's success has been the application of good science, a focus on the needs of farmers and a commitment to continuous improvement by a talented and dedicated team. We are most fortunate to operate in an environment where ICBF's vision is shared by our Board, our members, our sponsors and DAFF.

On behalf of the ICBF team I would like to take this opportunity to extend seasons greetings to all of our readers.

3 GEN[®]

Dairy

- ✚ A total of 198 herds took part in this seasons programme, taking 4,608 straws so far.
- ✚ MXZ will be available at the start of January.

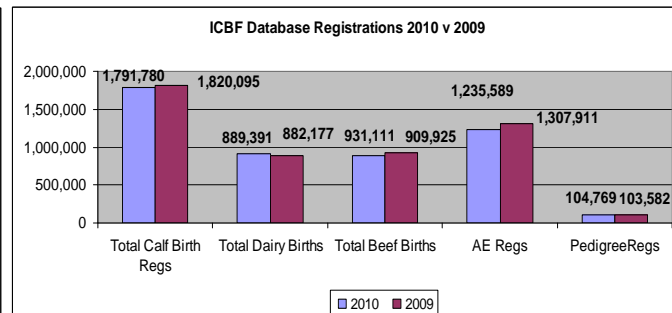
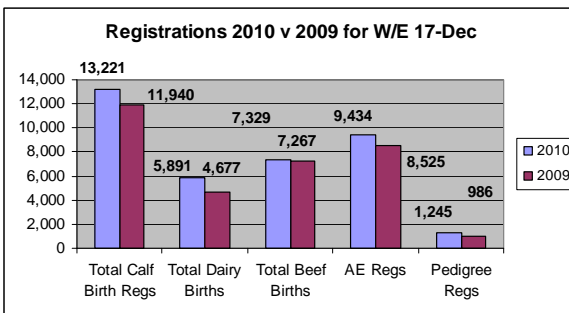
Beef

- ✚ Only 14 herd owners are now waiting for their straws to be dispatched
- ✚ 305 herds have signed up, taking a total of 5895 straws.
- ✚ This is an average of 19 straws per herd.

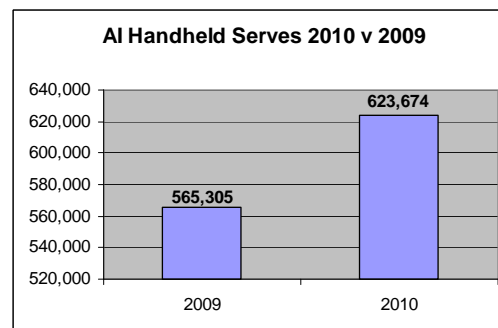
- ✚ Sign up packs are being sent to participating herd owners.
- ✚ To order straws phone 1850 600900 or 045 521573.
- ✚ Work is continuing on identifying bulls for the Spring program.
- ✚ More details on the bulls are available in the GENÉIRÉLAND section of the website.
- ✚ Approx total straws sent out per bull currently available are in the table below.

BREED	AA	BA	BB	CH	CH	HE	LM	PT	SA	SH
CODE	MLJ	KCE	KYR	GHX	CXY	GCT	CZH	CBQ	BHU	LYJ
# STRAWS	243	297	510	597	600	68	184	139	598	10

4 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 523,973 with the number of animals weaned at 391,100.
- ✚ The generation of a '5 Year Trend' report for suckler herds is currently underway. This will be distributed to all Suckler Scheme participants in January as part of the distribution of the 2011 Notebooks and return envelopes.
- ✚ The design of a new infrastructure to manage genotypes at ICBF will be completed next week.
- ✚ The building of the solution to allow farmers avail of the genotyping service will be completed prior to Christmas. Final design tweaks were on-going this week, with these set for completion next week.
- ✚ A new process for the reporting to breeders of sire errors on calf registrations is being completed. The aim is to streamline the process and make it easier for farmers to complete the process on-line.
- ✚ The generation of the Herdplus packs to support the spring calving season is continuing.
- ✚ The graph shows Inseminations recorded on AI Handhelds in 2010 compared with 2009.



5 HerdPlus®

Dairy & Beef

- ✚ The latest EBI and Euro-Star Proofs are available for all HerdPlus herds in the Profile section. The reports will be generated over the Christmas period and posted early in the year.

6 Tully

- A total number of 104 high index bulls are involved in the current intake (Table 1). This number is similar number to the 105 bulls that were tested in the Autumn 2009 intake. This is a very exciting intake, with most bulls being top of their respective breed in terms of their genetic merit figures.
- All bulls are in isolation with the first of 3 weekly blood samples, testing for IBR, taken from each bull this week. Bulls will be in isolation till the New Year, where they will then start their 90 day performance test.
- At present, bulls are being built up gradually on ad-lib concentrates with bulls being fed on average around 6 kilos of concentrates with 2 kilos dry matter of hay per head, per day. All bulls have received booster vaccinations for RSV and PI3 (strains of pneumonia), along with vaccination against Blackleg and various other clostridia diseases. Also, bulls were vaccinated on entry for Ringworm where it was deemed necessary.

Table 1. Breakdown by breed of bulls in isolation at Tully

Breed	AA	AU	BB	BA	CH	HE	LM	SA	SI	SP*
No of animals	20	2	5	2	31	3	24	6	10	1

* Speckle Park

7 GROW®

- Yet again the number of pedigree animals weighed and scored in November exceeds the corresponding month in 2009.
- 773 Pedigree and 653 Commercial animals were weighed and scored in November.
- The tables below give summary statistics on the number of pedigree and commercial animals weighed and scored over the first 11 months of the last 4 years

Pedigree - Total Weighed & Scored Statistics (1st Jan - 1st Dec)				
Year	Total	Scored Only	Weighed & Scored	% Weighed & Scored
2007	10530	6186	4344	41%
2008	11162	2303	8859	79%
2009	7763	649	7114	92%
2010	8985	361	8624	96%

Commercials - Total Weighed & Scored Statistics (1st Jan - 1st Dec)				
Year	Total	Scored Only	Weighed & Scored	% Weighed & Scored
2007	3301	144	3157	96%
2008	4406	47	4330	98%
2009	5655	40	5615	99%
2010	5335	39	5296	99%

- The number of pedigrees weighed and scored in the first 11 months of 2010 compared to 2009 is up by 1510 animals. This is a very encouraging increase of 21%
- Work is continuing on the review of the GROW service.

8 Genetic Evaluations

- All new dairy and beef proofs are now available on the ICBF website through the bull search. The usual AI sire files are also available under "Genetic Evaluations". The supplementary files for the bull search detailing progeny and contemporary comparisons for the individual traits are currently being processed and will be available next week.

9 Milk Recording

National Milk Recording Results by County - 10 day Period 07/12/10 to 17/12/10

	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	2	91	46	26.6	4.80	3.84	2.30	313
CAVAN	10	482	48	17.2	4.29	3.66	1.37	401
CLARE	4	193	48	22.0	3.89	3.35	1.59	302
CORK STH	140	6,935	50	19.8	4.58	3.74	1.65	359
CORK NTH	88	4,769	54	18.5	4.52	3.75	1.53	350
DONEGAL	7	690	99	17.7	4.50	3.69	1.45	340
DUBLIN	6	302	50	23.0	3.55	3.45	1.61	343
GALWAY	8	553	69	22.8	4.57	3.74	1.89	311
KERRY	64	3,633	57	19.6	4.26	3.53	1.53	379
KILDARE	13	974	75	25.0	4.22	3.66	1.97	652
KILKENNY	4	347	87	16.5	4.70	4.02	1.44	386
LAOIS	6	347	58	16.2	4.09	3.79	1.28	338
LEITRIM	5	216	43	18.9	3.90	3.54	1.41	254
LIMERICK	37	2,365	64	19.1	4.34	3.69	1.53	396
LONGFORD	1	39	39	16.1	4.74	3.81	1.38	222
LOUTH	12	904	75	20.9	4.35	3.65	1.67	409
MAYO	11	705	64	16.2	4.08	3.73	1.27	250
MEATH	27	2,256	84	23.2	4.08	3.58	1.78	394
MONAGHAN	6	228	38	23.1	4.29	3.49	1.80	321
OFFALY	7	404	58	20.5	3.93	3.59	1.54	487
ROSCOMMON								
SLIGO								
TIPPERARY NTH	5	254	51	18.3	4.45	3.77	1.50	418
TIPPERARY STH	5	498	100	11.5	5.70	4.31	1.15	283
WATERFORD	11	744	68	16.5	4.62	3.84	1.40	351
WESTMEATH	9	561	62	17.6	4.07	3.69	1.37	288
WEXFORD	10	910	91	19.0	4.70	3.79	1.61	311
WICKLOW E	3	149	50	20.4	4.17	3.60	1.59	338
WICKLOW W	3	221	74	14.5	4.27	3.71	1.16	718
	No. Herds Recorded	No. Cows Recorded	Average Herd Size	Average 24hr Milk kg/Cow	Average Fat %	Average Protein %	Average F + P kg	Average SCC
National	504	29,770	63	19.3	4.36	3.70	1.55	367

National Milk Recording Averages by Province - 10 day Period 07/12/10 to 17/12/10

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	354	19,391	55	18.1	4.55	3.75	1.50	355
Leinster	103	7,505	73	20.2	4.28	3.71	1.61	400
Connacht	24	1,474	61	19.1	4.18	3.67	1.50	272
Ulster	23	1,400	61	19.3	4.36	3.61	1.54	354

National Milk Recording Statistics - Herds, Cows & EDIY 17/12/10						
Milk Recording Organisation	Total Herds Recorded YTD 17/12/10	No. EDIY Herds YTD 17/12/10	% Herds EDIY	Total No. Cows Recorded YTD 17/12/10	No. EDIY Cows YTD 17/12/10	% Cows EDIY
Munster	3,564	1,000	28%	280,327	85,969	31%
Progressive	2,084	816	39%	188,209	72,413	38%
Tipperary	133	57	43%	12,001	5,777	48%
Connacht	152	59	39%	10,165	3,796	37%
Total	5,933	1,932	33%	490,702	167,955	34%

Recorded Cows by Milk Recording Organisation - Year on Year Comparison			
Milk Recording Organisation	YTD 2009 Cows Recorded 01/01/09 - 17/12/09	YTD 2010 Cows Recorded 01/01/10 - 17/12/10	2010 vs. 2009 Year on Year Difference (%)
Munster	257,474	280,327	8.2%
Progressive	182,639	188,209	3.0%
Tipperary	11,157	12,001	7.0%
Connacht	9,868	10,165	2.9%
Total	461,138	490,702	6.0%

We would like to thank everybody for their contribution during the year and we look forward to another very productive year in 2011. We will close on Thursday 23rd December for Christmas and return on Tuesday 4th January 2011.

*Wishing you all the Best
for Christmas and the coming Year.*

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