



*Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year
from all at Irish Cattle Breeding Federation*

1. Important Dates

- + **Tuesday 6th January 2009.** EBI discussion group awards. Corrin Mart, Rathcormac.
- + **Thursday 22nd January 2009.** ICBF Board Meeting, Portlaoise. 10.30am
- + **Thursday 22nd January 2009.** Sheep Board Meeting, Portlaoise. 2:00pm

2. A review of 2008 – *Brian Wickham*

As 2008 draws to a close it is a good opportunity to reflect back on the year that was, for ICBF.

At this time last year, applications for the **Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme** were just starting to go to herd owners. A year later the achievements of the scheme include:

- Applications from 53,000 herd owners, representing more than 90% of all suckler cows.
- An increase in calves recorded on the ICBF database from 1.1 million in 2007 to 1.85 million this year, representing 90% of all calves born in Ireland in 2008.
- A significant increase in the use of Animal Events recording in dairy herds on farms that are also participating in the scheme.
- Over 400,000 new docility and calf quality performance records for beef weanlings, representing a 20 fold increase. Research into using this data in beef genetic evaluations is nearing completion.
- An increase of over 500,000 calving performance records used in genetic evaluations. Only a few years ago less than 20,000 calving records were available to be used in genetic evaluations each year.
- DAFF payments on over 450,000 qualifying animals.
- 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 was also very good industry buy-in with the Farmers Journal playing a key role in removing the mystique from the scheme. This is the first year of the planned five years. We have learnt a lot and will be working to make the scheme more streamlined at farm level. If current progress can be maintained, Ireland will soon lead the world in beef cattle breeding and achieve the highest welfare standards in beef production.

This was the last year of the three year *Profit with AI Partnership* promotion campaign which has played a major role in halting and reversing the decline in AI. This year's campaign featured 26 weekly installments of cattle breeding information on a dedicated page in the Farmers Journal. One of the lessons learnt from the campaign has been the value of surveys in understanding the breeding decisions that farmers make. This enabled the campaign to be more focused.

At this time last year we took on the challenge of recruiting 1,200 dairy herds to progeny test 70 bulls in the spring 2008 GENÉIRÉLAND[®] dairy program. These numbers were achieved, along with improved semen delivery schedules, reflecting the better bulls available and the efforts of the GENÉIRÉLAND[®] team.

Proof that GENÉIRÉLAND[®] is working the way it was designed to was shown in the results for the 2005 scheme lining up perfectly with our predictions. The Dairy Cattle Breeding Day held in Cork Marts' new Corrin facility in November was a celebration of this success. The event gave us all an opportunity to recognise the key practices required for successful cattle breeding; accurate record keeping, consistent use of AI and the use of genetic evaluations in making breeding decisions being among them.

ICBF celebrated its first ten years of operation in 2008. Starting in March 1998 with a newly appointed CE equipped with a laptop computer, a rental car and mobile phone, ICBF has grown to occupy a key role in beef and dairy cattle breeding. The ICBF team now comprises 30 staff & contractors and a number working part time. ICBF developed EBI and Euro-Star indexes are now widely used to guide dairy and beef breeding decisions. The EBI is identifying a strain of Holstein Friesian with both improved fertility and higher production, something many in the Holstein world thought impossible only a short time ago.

ICBF's cattle breeding database is now increasingly available to herd owners. HerdPlus[®] usage is approaching 4,700 dairy and beef herds (3,000 this time last year), with 74% 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, a wide array of valuable management information. The sire advice facility was used on-line by 1,700 herds, a 70% increase on 2007. With ICBF's AI handheld system now used to record over 0.52 million inseminations, a 40% increase on 2007, and the use of milk recording growing by a further 8%, the data available for use in management reports has exceeded all expectations. This has been amply illustrated by the very positive feedback from farmers participating in the EBI €100 Discussion Group competition. We must wait for January 6th, 2009, to hear the results of the competition, but the feedback is that discussion group reports are invaluable in helping farmers focus on aspects of their management that can be improved.

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 which achieved a substantial increase in the level of weight recording in pedigree beef herds in 2008.

Our bull search facility (on www.icbf.com) had a complete revamp in 2008 and now provides extensive information for each genetic evaluation as well as a facility for comparing evaluations from one run to the next. We made this investment to give breeders the information needed to answer a wide range of questions while reducing the need for us to provide phone support. Steps such as this lead to improved productivity for the ICBF team while, at the same time, increasing the knowledge and capability of our breeding industry.

This year ICBF extended its infrastructure to sheep. Sheep Ireland (www.sheep.ie), with its own Board, was formed and a strategy agreed for improving the sheep meat supply chain, and thus the profitability of sheep farming. Already progress has been made and the first flocks are directly accessing the Sheep Ireland database via www.sheep.ie. 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.

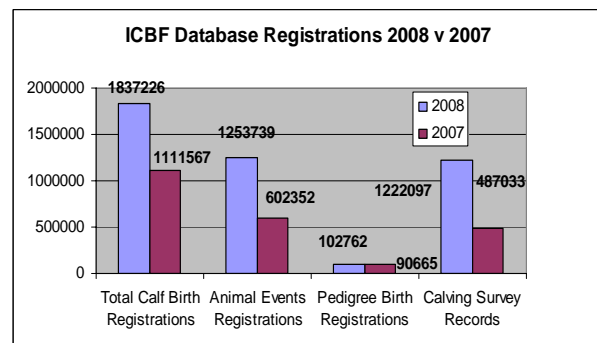
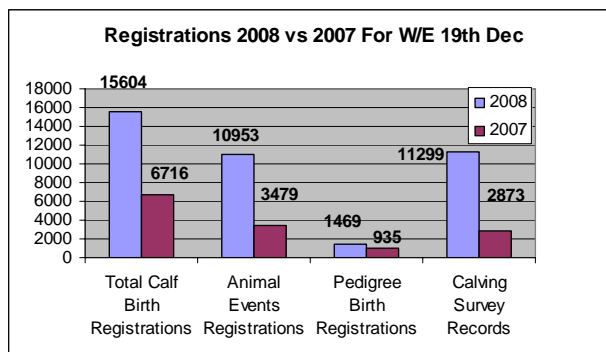
Genomic selection as a tool for selecting dairy bulls arrived in 2008. ICBF and TEAGASC are collaborating with each other and international partners to establish the Irish genomic key. Semen, from 1,200 dairy bulls progeny tested in Ireland, has been used as a source of DNA for testing using the Illumina 50K SNP chip. Results are expected early in 2009.

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 2008 was particularly evident through the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme, GENEIRLAND® 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.

On reflection, 2008 has been ICBF's best year yet. Not only have we been able to achieve substantial growth in virtually all of our activities, but this has been done without an increase in staffing and has resulted in a continued improvement in ICBF's financial situation. 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. Database



- ✚ 524,847 inseminations have been received so far in 2008, compared with 374,295 in 2007 for the same period.
- ✚ Testing of the new AI handheld software continued this week with good feedback being received. The plan is that testing will continue over Christmas and that the organisations will go live on the new software in January.
- ✚ The Suckler Scheme remains very active. The number of calves with a meal feeding introduction has increased to over 700,000 with just over 565,000 of these having been weaned.
- ✚ Dry-off sheets are coming back at a steady rate. It is essential that farmers return these in a timely manner in order to get their Milk Recording Annual Report.
- ✚ Work on revamping the Milk Recording system continues. The design stage of the new inputting screens is currently being finalised.
- ✚ The web server hardware infrastructure has been upgraded.
- ✚ Improvements to the sheep inventory screen are continuing based on the very useful feedback received. Work on the remaining screens is progressing well.

4. GROW – Linear Scoring & Weight Recording



- ✚ The GROW Linear Scoring & Weight Recording Service commenced in January 2008.

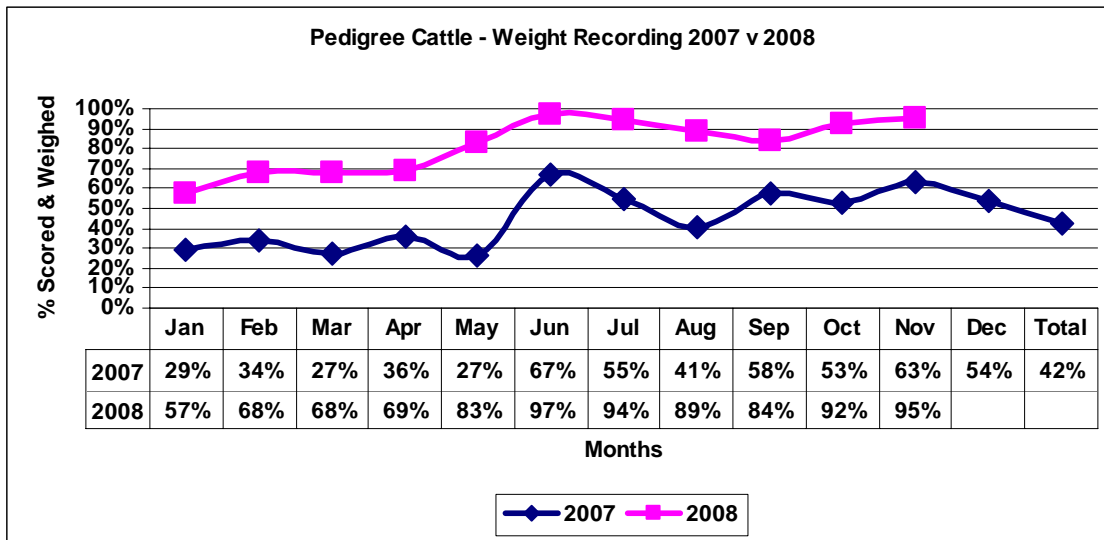
- ✚ When the service started, the main challenge was to ensure that all of the data recorded in the field would be used in the genetic evaluations.
- ✚ We put in place 3 basic rules that would ensure the data being returned from the field could be used in evaluations:
 - **Weight record every animal that is scored.**
 - **Ensure they are 150-300 days old.**
 - **Ensure they are in a group of 5.**
- ✚ We focussed on all 3 rules whilst putting particular emphasis on weight recording. This has paid off and the figures below, as well as the graph, are proof of the tremendous advances that have been made in weight recording.

| | Jan – Nov 2007 | Jan–Nov 2008 |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Scored | 10,530 | 11,162 |
| Weighed | 4,344 | 8,859 |
| % | 40% | 80% |

- ✚ The % of cattle being scored & weighed in Ireland has never been higher and this is solely due to the tremendous efforts of our team of Linear Scorers, right throughout the year.
- ✚ Challenge for 2009 - Now that we have made an impact on the level of weight recording we will be concentrating on the '150-300 day' rule and the 'Group of 5' rule, whilst not let the great improvement achieved on the weight recording front slip.
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| Pedigrees - 2007 | | | |
|------------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|
| Month | Scored | Weighed | % Cattle Weighed |
| Jan | 1850 | 544 | 29% |
| Feb | 1494 | 504 | 34% |
| Mar | 1333 | 363 | 27% |
| Apr | 744 | 268 | 36% |
| May | 380 | 101 | 27% |
| Jun | 287 | 193 | 67% |
| Jul | 642 | 351 | 55% |
| Aug | 929 | 380 | 41% |
| Sep | 718 | 413 | 58% |
| Oct | 1314 | 699 | 53% |
| Nov | 839 | 528 | 63% |
| Dec | 345 | 187 | 54% |
| Total | 10,875 | 4531 | 42% |

| Pedigrees - 2008 | | | |
|------------------|--------|---------|------------------|
| Month | Scored | Weighed | % Cattle Weighed |
| Jan | 1354 | 773 | 57% |
| Feb | 1437 | 974 | 68% |
| Mar | 1320 | 893 | 68% |
| Apr | 941 | 645 | 69% |
| May | 778 | 646 | 83% |
| Jun | 943 | 914 | 97% |
| Jul | 1274 | 1200 | 94% |
| Aug | 524 | 464 | 89% |
| Sep | 790 | 662 | 84% |
| Oct | 948 | 876 | 92% |
| Nov | 853 | 812 | 95% |
| Dec | | | |
| Total | | | |



5. Lambplus®

- ✚ Lambing Notebooks were sent out to all Lambplus® clients today.
- ✚ These notebooks will allow Lambplus® Farmers record information about the ewe and lamb(s) at lambing, including creating parentage information and recording some performance traits in the ewe and the lamb(s).
- ✚ Shown here is a picture of the booklet
- ✚ Shown below is a diagram showing the layout of the inside of the booklet.
- ✚ Following testing, development is continuing on the Screens for recording Lambing, Rearing & Mating data, which hope to be released early in January.



6. Milk Recording

| National Milk Recording Statistics - Herds, Cows & EDIY 19/12/08 | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| Milk Recording Organisation | Total Herds Recorded YTD 19/12/08 | No. EDIY Herds YTD 19/12/08 | % Herds EDIY | Total No. Cows Recorded YTD 19/12/08 | No. EDIY Cows YTD 19/12/08 | % Cows EDIY |
| Progressive | 2,246 | 938 | 42% | 187,441 | 75,131 | 40% |
| Dairygold | 1,700 | 645 | 38% | 126,408 | 49,645 | 39% |
| Kerry | 1,161 | 248 | 21% | 79,794 | 16,317 | 20% |
| SWS | 915 | 135 | 15% | 63,279 | 9,991 | 16% |
| Tipperary | 171 | 72 | 42% | 13,080 | 5,781 | 44% |
| Arrabawn | 166 | 138 | 83% | 12,976 | 10,967 | 85% |
| Connacht | 159 | 69 | 43% | 10,523 | 4,435 | 42% |
| Donegal | 49 | 49 | 100% | 4,820 | 4,820 | 100% |
| Total | 6,567 | 2,294 | 35% | 498,321 | 177,087 | 36% |

| Recorded Cows by Milk Recording Organisation - Year on Year Comparison | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Milk Recording Organisation | YTD 2007 Cows Recorded 01/01/07 - 19/12/07 | YTD 2008 Cows Recorded 01/01/08 - 19/12/08 | 2008 vs 2007 Year on Year Difference (%) |
| Progressive | 172,444 | 187,441 | 8.0% |
| Dairygold | 112,903 | 126,408 | 10.7% |
| Kerry | 72,503 | 79,794 | 9.1% |
| SWS | 61,690 | 63,279 | 2.5% |
| Tipperary | 12,352 | 13,080 | 5.6% |
| Arrabawn | 12,102 | 12,976 | 6.7% |
| Connacht | 10,339 | 10,523 | 1.7% |
| Donegal | 3,920 | 4,820 | 18.7% |
| Total | 458,253 | 498,321 | 8.0% |

National Milk Recording Results by County - 10 day Period 09/12/08 to 19/12/08.

| | 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 | 9 | 425 | 47 | 22.4 | 4.11 | 3.52 | 1.71 | 355 |
| CAVAN | 27 | 1,064 | 39 | 16.6 | 4.12 | 3.43 | 1.25 | 331 |
| CLARE | 2 | 58 | 29 | 16.7 | 4.87 | 3.79 | 1.45 | 948 |
| CORK STH | 183 | 7,997 | 44 | 18.0 | 4.31 | 3.57 | 1.42 | 317 |
| CORK NTH | 119 | 6,671 | 56 | 19.5 | 4.26 | 3.52 | 1.52 | 298 |
| DONEGAL | 5 | 258 | 52 | 15.8 | 4.49 | 3.75 | 1.30 | 383 |
| DUBLIN | 6 | 305 | 51 | 22.5 | 3.86 | 3.55 | 1.67 | 332 |
| GALWAY | 14 | 667 | 48 | 18.8 | 4.06 | 3.32 | 1.39 | 360 |
| KERRY | 69 | 3,730 | 54 | 17.8 | 4.17 | 3.43 | 1.35 | 385 |
| KILDARE | 12 | 732 | 61 | 21.3 | 4.04 | 3.58 | 1.62 | 337 |
| KILKENNY | 14 | 1,066 | 76 | 18.9 | 4.11 | 3.52 | 1.44 | 357 |
| LAOIS | 27 | 1,438 | 53 | 18.4 | 4.22 | 3.62 | 1.44 | 319 |
| LEITRIM | 5 | 216 | 43 | 19.3 | 4.02 | 3.42 | 1.44 | 328 |
| LIMERICK | 46 | 2,395 | 52 | 18.1 | 4.12 | 3.45 | 1.37 | 369 |
| LONGFORD | 4 | 179 | 45 | 16.0 | 4.16 | 3.52 | 1.23 | 276 |
| LOUTH | 23 | 1,564 | 68 | 21.3 | 4.15 | 3.51 | 1.63 | 305 |
| MAYO | 18 | 1,069 | 59 | 17.3 | 3.69 | 3.52 | 1.25 | 315 |
| MEATH | 54 | 4,356 | 81 | 20.7 | 4.26 | 3.56 | 1.62 | 320 |
| MONAGHAN | 18 | 751 | 42 | 17.3 | 4.01 | 3.40 | 1.28 | 293 |
| OFFALY | 8 | 406 | 51 | 13.5 | 3.82 | 3.50 | 0.99 | 426 |
| SLIGO | 6 | 269 | 45 | 20.0 | 3.84 | 3.55 | 1.48 | 372 |
| TIPPERARY NTH | 8 | 371 | 46 | 16.4 | 4.34 | 3.81 | 1.34 | 428 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| TIPPERARY STH | 5 | 205 | 41 | 14.2 | 4.36 | 3.49 | 1.11 | 268 |
| WATERFORD | 15 | 946 | 63 | 22.4 | 4.11 | 3.39 | 1.68 | 304 |
| WESTMEATH | 19 | 1,091 | 57 | 20.3 | 4.35 | 3.61 | 1.62 | 238 |
| WEXFORD | 44 | 2,725 | 62 | 19.0 | 4.38 | 3.60 | 1.52 | 351 |
| WICKLOW E | 14 | 1,019 | 73 | 19.9 | 3.88 | 3.45 | 1.46 | 316 |
| WICKLOW W | 8 | 623 | 78 | 25.7 | 4.43 | 3.38 | 2.01 | 379 |
| | <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 | 785 | 42,795 | 54 | 18.9 | 4.17 | 3.52 | 1.45 | 355 |

National Milk Recording Averages by Province - 10 day Period 09/12/08 to 19/12/08.

| Provincial | <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> |
|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Munster | 447 | 22,373 | 50 | 17.9 | 4.13 | 3.56 | 1.37 | 415 |
| Leinster | 242 | 15,929 | 66 | 20.0 | 4.11 | 3.53 | 1.53 | 332 |
| Connacht | 46 | 2,420 | 53 | 18.8 | 4.15 | 3.45 | 1.43 | 333 |
| Ulster | 50 | 2,073 | 41 | 16.6 | 4.13 | 3.53 | 1.27 | 336 |

7. Genetic Evaluations

International Beef and Dairy

- ✚ Work has started on potential conversion formulae for the Normande breed by evaluating the strength of the genetic link between Ireland & France. Investigated variables will cover milk production, somatic cell count, fertility, and calving.
- ✚ Genetic parameter estimation for InterBeef has also started at the INRA in Paris. The data, originated from France, Ireland, the UK, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, was gathered and checked by the InterBeef center for the Limousine and Charolais breeds.

Beef

- ✚ Work continues on the evaluation of the docility information recorded through the AWRBS scheme. Initial results suggest that this form of docility recording is heritable (in the region of 0.25 to 0.45 depending on the datasets investigated) and thus can be influenced through selection. The next phase of the work is now concentrating on establishing the genetic and phenotypic associations with the docility scores recorded through the linear scoring service. A strong genetic correlation would allow the use of both forms of docility measurement in a genetic evaluation and thus utilizing both forms of data for breeding value estimation.

8. 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 88 20222 |
| Fax: 023 20229 | 023 88 20229 |

We would like to thank everybody for their contribution during the year and we look forward to another very productive year in 2009. We will close on Tuesday 23rd December for Christmas and return on Friday 2nd January 2009.

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

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