



**UPDATE – for period 14<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> December 2007**



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

**1 Important Dates**

- Tuesday 8th January 2008.** 14:30 to 17:00. Moorepark Conference Centre. Discussion Group EBI awards presentations.
- Thursday 31st<sup>h</sup> January 2008.** 10:30 to 13:00. Board Meeting. Comfort Inn, Portlaoise.

**2 Reflections on 2007 – Brian Wickham**



As 2007 draws to a close it is opportune to reflect on the last twelve months.

The **Euro-Star** index for beef breeding was finalised in January '07 and has been rolled out to the beef breeding industry this year. This is the culmination of several years of effort to develop an index that identifies beef cattle with the greatest genetic potential to generate profits under Irish beef farming conditions.

The outbreak of **IBR at Tully** in February presented ICBF with one of the biggest challenges faced in its short history. That Tully has re-opened is testimony to a tremendous team effort to ensure that Irish beef breeding continues to benefit from the best available tools. I would like to acknowledge the support we received from DAF, the expertise and advice of our Veterinary Expert group, the commitment of beef breeders, the contributions and leadership of the Tully Advisory Committee, the dedication of our team at Tully and the support of the Board of ICBF in meeting this challenge.

During 2007 **GENEIRLAND**<sup>®</sup> was transformed to become the heart of ICBF's breeding program support services for all dairy and beef breeds. The **GENEIRLAND**<sup>®</sup> service from ICBF to the Irish cattle breeding industry now has two main elements – procurement and progeny testing. With the help of vital support from DAF, through the NDP, dairy and beef progeny testing has been streamlined with test bull inseminations in some 700 co-operating herds during 2007.

Our **HerdPlus**<sup>®</sup> service grew rapidly in 2007 and was expanded to provide valuable beef breeding information, including **Euro-Star** reports, to beef herd owners. Over 3,000 herds are now using this service.

As I write, DAF are posting applications for the **Suckler Scheme** to herd owners. Irish cattle breeding will benefit greatly from this scheme as it facilitates the collection of data (sire, calving ease, weaning weight etc) that will enable the **Euro-Star** indexes to become more accurate and more widely available for participating suckler herds. There has been a lot of preparation undertaken in 2007 for this scheme.

**ICBF's database** has undergone a major upgrade. Elements of the upgrade included: new server, new disk storage system, upgrade to the latest version of Oracle and upgrade to the latest version of HP's operating system. The upgrades will reduce the turnaround time on genetic evaluations, ensure we can efficiently deal with the extra volumes of data resulting from the suckler scheme, and support the increasing use of our website by **HerdPlus**<sup>®</sup> customers.

Early in 2007 the Board took a number of actions to ensure our services to Herd Books' met expectations. These included: a new web based interface to the ICBF database (Taurus), provision of an on-line herdbook (see the IHFA website for the current version), a complete review of the beef linear scoring and weight recording service (being launched as the **GROW** service), and expansion of **GENEIRLAND**<sup>®</sup> to support the breeding schemes operated by each breed.





The roll-out of **AI Handhelds'** continued with the number of inseminations recorded through the system approaching 375,000 for the year. The Handhelds' are proving to be very effective and are well liked by AI technicians. The resulting improvement in data quality is providing new opportunities to improve our information services.

Over 1,000 herds went on-line to use the new **Sire Advice** facility launched in the spring of 2007. This facility is being enhanced on the basis of feedback and is expected to become a tool used by many farmers to help with the selection of AI sires.

2007 was a year of consolidation for **EDIY Milk Recording**. Over the winter of 06/07 our meter calibration unit, based at Moorepark, checked all meters and is currently involved in this annual task. Milk recording organisations have achieved a further 4.6% increase in the uptake of milk recording.

ICBF's contribution to the expanded **Profit with AI Partnership** campaign included a substantial contribution to a series of 25 full page features in the Farmers Journal. This campaign benefited from DAF's support and is leading to an increase in the use of AI to breed dairy replacements.

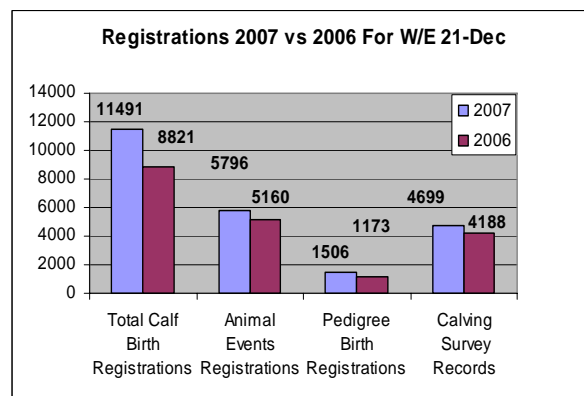
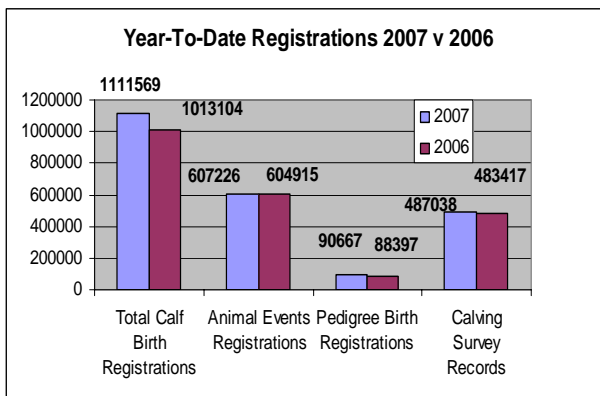
The list of other significant achievements in 2007 includes: a revision of the EBI, the EBI €100 competition, publication of "**Cattle Breeding in Ireland**" (in association with Ireland hosting EAAP), participation in the **Partners in Reproduction** conference series under the title of **Fertility for Expansion**, and presentations to numerous industry and farmer meetings.

In reflection 2007 was the year when:

- ✚ beef moved to the top of the agenda,
- ✚ HerdPlus became established,
- ✚ GEN€IR€LAND® and breeding programs became centre stage, and
- ✚ the value of the ICBF database became even more apparent.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed to ICBF's work in 2007 and to wish all our readers a happy and relaxing festive season.

### 3 Database Update



✚ 374,739 inseminations have been received so far in 2007, compared with 170,352 in 2006 for the same period.

✚ The problems experienced as part of the hardware and database upgrade have largely been resolved.





- ✚ Application forms for the Suckler Scheme have been issued by DAF, and Animal Events books will be issued to herd early in the New Year. An explanation of the scheme is now on the ICBF website (in the publications section).
- ✚ A significant amount of development work is on-going in relation to the Suckler Scheme.
- ✚ Further work took place this week on the Sire Advice solution in advance of the spring breeding season.
- ✚ The design and implementation of some updates to the Gene Ireland application began this week in advance of the Spring AI season.

#### 4 **GROW - Linear Scoring Training & Referencing Session**



- ✚ From Tue 4<sup>th</sup> – Thurs 6<sup>th</sup> December the ICBF Linear Scorers took part in a 3 day Training & Referencing Session.
- ✚ The Master Linear Scorer from Institut d'Elevage in France, Pierre Berrechet, assisted us during the 3 days.

- ✚ **Day 1:** Different types of Bulls & Heifers were scored. Basil Bothwell then led the discussion about the scores that each Scorer gave until a consensus was reached. That evening, presentations were given to the Scorers on the French & Irish Scoring systems by Pierre Berrechet & Pat Donnellan.



- ✚ **Day 2:** The Linear Scoring exam took place. This consisted of 15 Bulls & 15 Heifers being scored in the morning and the same 30 animals being scored in the afternoon.

- ✚ **Day 3:** Another Linear Scoring exam similar to the previous day took place. This was followed by a final scoring & discussion session.

- ✚ The results of the exam have been processed by Pierre Berrechet at L'Institut d'Elevage in France. All of the Scorers successfully passed the exam. A full report will be sent by Pierre in January. All of the Scorers have now been trained, referenced and examined to the same level as the French Linear Scorers.
- ✚ The Training & Referencing session was an excellent learning experience for all concerned. Pierre Berrechet was very impressed by the interest & eagerness of our Scorers to ensure that they are all scoring in harmony with each other. ICBF will be working very closely with the Institut d'Elevage so as to put systems in place here for our Scorers so they are getting regular feedback on their performance in the field.
- ✚ Pierre also complimented the Herdbooks, Scorers & ICBF for developing the model in Ireland whereby each Scorer has a designated area in which all breeds are covered. In France this is not the case. Technicians from different Herdbooks & AI companies regularly cross paths thus duplicating the work and also adding cost to the farmer.





## 5 Genetic Evaluations

- New slaughter data and mart data have been loaded and will form part of the new extract for the next beef performance evaluation.
- ICBF staff met with the Blonde Aquitaine Breed Development group in Abbeyleix Manor Hotel on Monday night. The meeting involved informing the group of recording facilities available through the ICBF website and also to outline a plan to maximise recording of pedigree and performance data from the upcoming Animal Welfare Scheme and the inclusion of this data for the purposes of genetic evaluations.

## 6 Tully

- The next IBR test of the bulls at Tully and pre entry isolation took place on 17<sup>th</sup> December and all were clear.
- The bulls in Conlons pre entry isolation unit will enter Tully today.
- A Bio Security audit of Tully will take place week commencing 14<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

## 7 Milk Recording

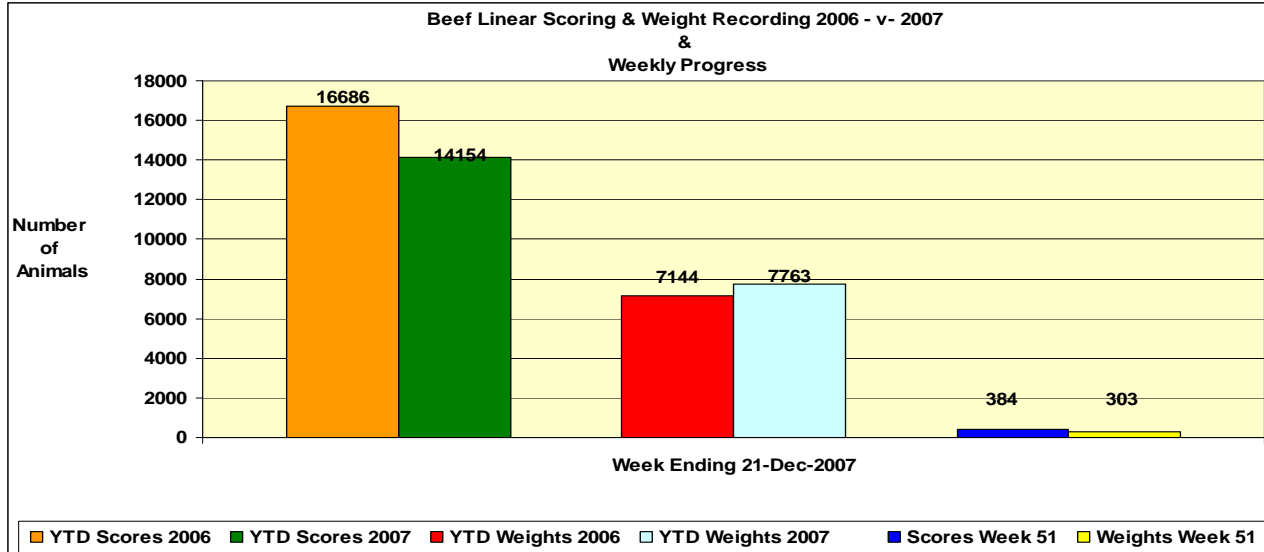
National Milk Recording Statistics - Herds, Cows & EDIY 21/12/07						
Milk Recording Organisation	Total Herds Recorded YTD 21/12/07	No. EDIY Herds YTD 21/12/07	% Herds EDIY	Total No. Cows Recorded YTD 21/12/07	No. EDIY Cows YTD 21/12/07	% Cows EDIY
Progressive	2,147	697	32%	172,641	53,784	31%
Dairygold	1,595	555	35%	112,749	40,628	36%
Kerry	1,034	70	7%	72,590	5,690	8%
SWS	933	114	12%	61,798	7,571	12%
Tipperary	170	71	42%	12,352	5,245	42%
Arrabawn	169	128	76%	12,102	9,250	76%
Connacht	154	68	44%	10,366	4,476	43%
Donegal	43	43	100%	3,920	3,920	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,245</b>	<b>1,746</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>458,518</b>	<b>130,564</b>	<b>28%</b>

Recorded Cows by Milk Recording Organisation - Year on Year Comparison				
Milk Recording Organisation	YTD 2005 Cows Recorded 01/01/05 - 21/12/05	YTD 2006 Cows Recorded 01/01/06 - 21/12/06	YTD 2007 Cows Recorded 01/01/07 - 21/12/07	2007 vs 2006 Year on Year Difference (%)
Progressive	155,926	163,049	172,641	5.6%
Dairygold	98,891	104,735	112,749	7.1%
Kerry	68,228	70,974	72,590	2.2%
SWS	56,280	60,821	61,798	1.6%
Tipperary	9,484	11,898	12,352	3.7%
Arrabawn	7,223	11,139	12,102	8.0%
Connacht	7,536	9,403	10,366	9.3%
Donegal	4,888	5,281	3,920	-34.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>408,456</b>	<b>437,300</b>	<b>458,518</b>	<b>4.6%</b>





## 8 Beef Linear Scoring & Weight Recording



## 9 Partners in Reproduction

Copies of the presentations to the Fertility for Expansion one day seminars are now available in the publications section of our website.

*We would like to thank everybody for their contribution during the year and we look forward to another very productive year in 2008.*



*We will close today for Christmas and return on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2008, if you need to contact ICBF urgently, please telephone Brian Wickham on his mobile 086 826 9911*

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