



ICBF Weekly Update 21st December 2012

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

1 Important Dates

- + **Interim Sheep Board Meeting** – Tuesday 15th January, 14:00, Maldron Hotel, Portlaoise.
- + **ICBF Board Meeting** – Thursday 24th January, 10:30 to 14:00, Maldron Hotel, Portlaoise.
- + **Herdbook Genomics Meeting** – Thursday 10th January, 10:00 to 13:00, Maldron Hotel, Portlaoise.

2 A Review of 2012

As 2012 draws to a close it is a good opportunity to reflect back on the year that was, for ICBF and Sheep Ireland. 2012 has been a very challenging year for farmers in Ireland, with extremely poor weather conditions, and weakened farm gate prices. However, there is a general feeling of optimism for the medium term, and we continue to be focused on providing a breeding infrastructure that will facilitate the achievement of the ambitious Food Harvest 2020 targets.

Early in the year, **€uro-Star review** group was set up under the chairmanship of Michael Doran, with a view to revamping the Euro-Star indexes in order to meet the needs of the industry. The group worked extremely well and the outcome resulted in the creation of separate Euro-Star indexes for (a) Maternal (b) Terminal and (c) Dairy Beef, with the move away from one overall index.

Genomics continues to evolve at a significant pace. In 2012 48%, up from 47% in 2011 and 40% in 2009, of some 650,000 recorded dairy inseminations were from genomically selected bulls. In 2012 our efforts in genomics have included a number of very significant developments including

- (a) The launch of a female genomic evaluation project for dairy farmers. At a reduced cost of €30 per female this service included a genotype on the LD chip and genomic predictions for a full range of traits. Around 8,000 females were genotyped as part of this project.
- (b) The launch in May of genomic proofs for the linear type traits.
- (c) In partnership with Teagasc, Illumina and Weatherby's, the development of a custom chip for Ireland that would provide parentage, genomic evaluation, and lethal/recessive gene capabilities. This chip will be launched early in 2013.
- (d) In partnership with Teagasc, research to develop genomic selection for beef breeding has continued. A major initiative to move all parentage testing for pedigree males to the SNP chip technology is now well advanced, working in collaboration with the beef herdbooks and Weatherby's to find a workable solution for 2013.

Our **genetic evaluation** activities are at the very heart of ICBF's role in cattle and sheep breeding. The extra data collected through the suckler cow welfare scheme and other initiatives coupled with improvements in our evaluation methods has resulted in a substantial improvement in the accuracy of our beef genetic evaluations. The evaluations continue, however, to be at the mercy of good quality data for real progress to be made.

With that in mind, the launch of the **National Weight Recording** service this year is hugely significant. We really need to ramp up the levels of participation in the service in 2013, along with maintaining the 'Suckler Scheme' progress in data recording in the national beef herd through the new Beef Data Programme.



The **Best Practice in Cattle Breeding** campaign was continued this year. This year's campaign featured weekly installments, covering a wide range of useful and practical breeding information on a dedicated page in the Farmers Journal.

The **GÈNÈ IRÈLAND**[®] dairy progeny test program got back on track in the spring of 2012 after a difficult 2011 due to a major IBR outbreak. A major revamp of the GÈNÈ IRÈLAND[®] beef programme took place in 2012, and the roll-out of this will begin in earnest in early 2013. One element that has made great strides in 2012 is the changing of the role of the Tully Test station to one of a testing centre for commercial animals. The first batch of animals have just been slaughtered and we are extremely pleased with the process and how it has worked. It has also made Tully more relevant to the ordinary commercial farmer, which can only be a good thing.

HerdPlus[®] membership has exceeded 15,000 dairy (40%) and beef herds (60%). These herds have access to a wide range of valuable breeding information which farmers can use to breed more profitable cattle. ICBF's AI handheld system was used to record over 0.67 million inseminations in 2012, a 4% increase on 2011, despite the difficult year from a weather perspective. Our **Bull Search** facility (on www.icbf.com) continues to be the facility on our website that farmers and breeders find most useful with over 1,000,000 searches in the last twelve months.

Significant development work was completed in conjunction with **Animal Health Ireland (AHI)** in the area of IT infrastructure for management of the voluntary phase of the BVD programme. Significant progress was also made in relation to the CellCheck and Johnes programmes. ICBF's ability to generate genetic evaluations for animals in relation to disease resistance will become an area of increasing importance in the coming years. As such, our relationship with AHI will continue to be extremely important.

Our role in the international community of animal recording and animal breeding saw us hosting the ICAR & Interbull meetings in 2012. The event was an outstanding success, with over 800 delegates attending from over 50 countries. This was a great opportunity to show case the developments which the Irish breeding industry has made over the past number of years in the areas of dairy, beef and sheep breeding. The integrated nature of our data recording and evaluation systems gives us significant advantages, and we need to continue to exploit those.

This year the OptiMIR partnership (www.optimir.eu) involving ICBF, Teagasc and 15 other partners in UK, France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg commenced operations. The project is focusing on making good use of the extra data (the MIR spectra) that can be collected from milk sample testing. This project is an example of European collaboration with a focus on delivering benefits for dairy farmers and the wider industry. It is partially funded by Interreg.

Interbeef continues to make good progress. The key objective of Interbeef is to allow the generation of international genetic evaluations for beef cattle to become a routine service. It has been available for many years on the dairy side through Interbull, and beef farmers need to have the same access to good information on imported animals.

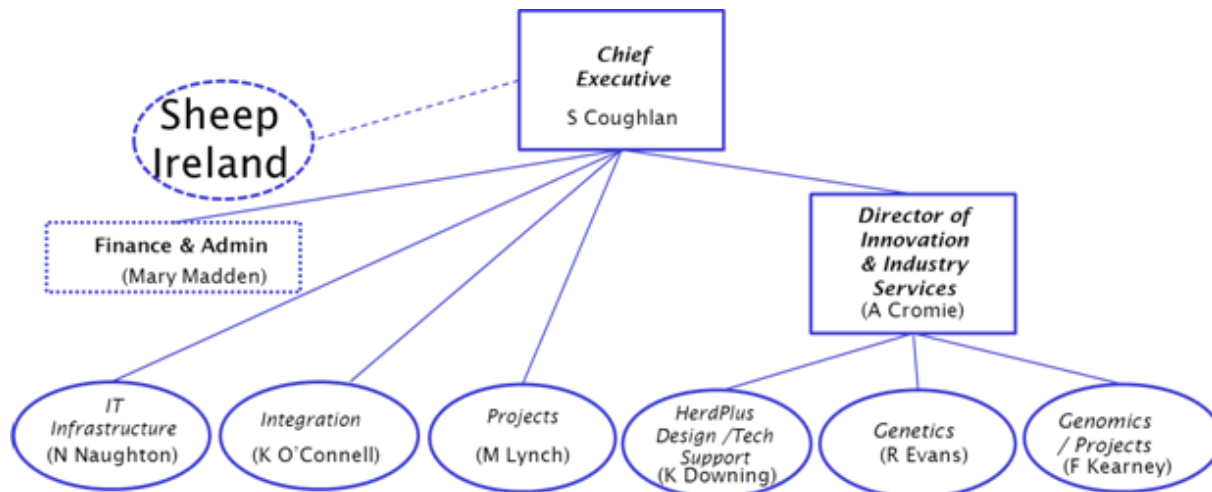
Sheep Ireland (www.sheep.ie) continued to make very good progress and has now established its permanent board structure, and has also implemented an industry funding model, putting it on a much more sustainable footing. Sheep Ireland needs to further accelerate its progress in 2013, and become more relevant to ordinary commercial sheep farmers. With that in mind, we have enhanced the team at Sheep Ireland to help deliver this progress.

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 2012 was particularly evident again through the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme, the Beef Technology Adoption Programme, GÈNÈ IRÈLAND[®], the support of AHI in the voluntary BVD scheme, and Sheep Ireland. Without DAFM support it would be much more difficult for ICBF to deliver so much benefit to the industry and wider community.

In terms of the internal ICBF organisation, 2012 was a significant year, with Brian Wickham completing his term as Chief Executive of ICBF. Brian's contribution to the industry is well acknowledged, and last night he was presented with the John Mooney Award from the Agricultural Trust for his contribution to Irish Agriculture.



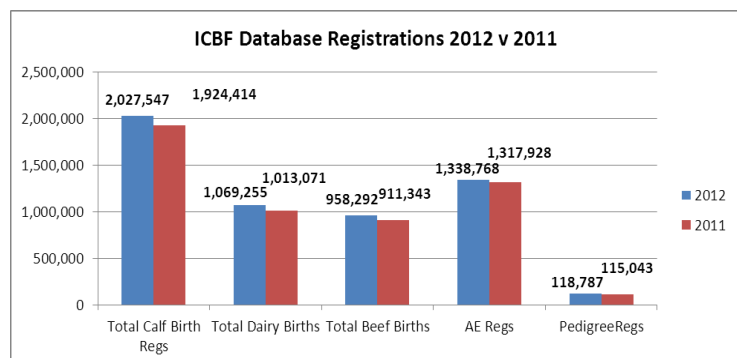
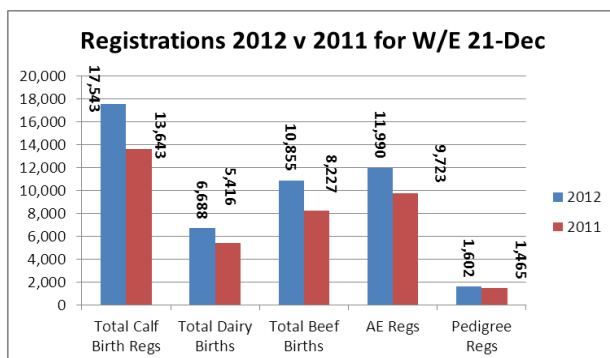
Of course, with Brian leaving ICBF, we had to recalibrate and restructure the organisation to meet the challenges ahead. With that in mind, a number of structural changes were made within the organisation. Dr. Andrew Cromie has become Director of Innovation and Industry Services. We have also created a ‘Technical Leadership Team’ that will maximise the output from the available resources at ICBF’s disposal, while maintaining a lean, flat organisation structure. The ICBF leadership group is now structured as below.



Summary

2012 has been a year where we have continued to exploit the new cattle breeding technologies for the benefit of Irish farmers. We have been able to achieve growth in most of our activities. We have been able to achieve this extra output without an increase in resources and ICBF’s financial situation is in line with budgets. While there have been personnel changes at ICBF, the key to ICBF’s success remains the same - the application of good science, a focus on the needs of farmers, working closely with our stakeholders and a 100% commitment to delivering 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, DAFM, our sponsors, Teagasc, and, most importantly, Irish Farmers.

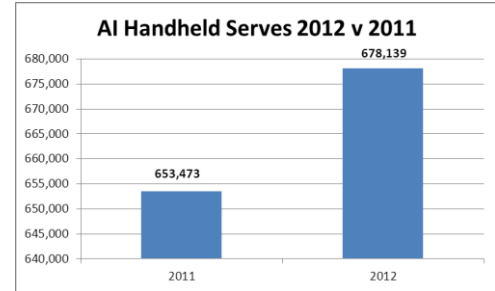
3 Database



- The stats above are compiled with the assistance of DAFM AIM systems.
- In the Suckler scheme, the number of 2012 born calves with meal introduced is 544,838 with the number of animals weaned at 450,400.
- BVD test results continue to be received at ICBF and are being processed accordingly. Around 482,000 samples have been returned at this stage, with a 0.62% BVD Virus Positive rate.



- ✚ Good progress continues around the design of the Beef HerdPlus outputs to incorporate the new Euro-Star indexes, and the development work on these is continuing.
- ✚ The 2013 Dairy personalised notebooks continue to be generated and printed. The distribution of these will begin next week.
- ✚ The graph shows Inseminations recorded on AI Handhelds in 2012 compared with 2011.



4 GENE IRELAND® - Beef

- ✚ Sign-ups are completed for the GENE IRELAND autumn program.
- ✚ 219 herds taking a total of 4777 straws have signed up.
- ✚ This was enough to test 9.5 bulls.
- ✚ All orders received have been packed and dispatched.
- ✚ Work is beginning on identifying bulls for the 2013 panel.
- ✚ To learn more or to sign up please phone 1850 600 900 or 045 521573.
- ✚ The approximate total straws ordered per bull so far are detailed in the table below.

Code	GJB	TQL	VMP	RWM	FWO	FSZ	FYB	LZF	GZS	TVR	EFZ	WLZ	KJB	FTH	CJH	FQR
# Straws	170	120	260	150	255	245	360	450	150	500	500	450	500	345	145	145

5 Genetic Evaluations

Dairy

- ✚ Processing of the dairy evaluations are currently underway and genetic evaluation files and bull search for proven and genomic dairy AI bulls should be available this Friday evening 21st December.

Beef

- ✚ An issue was found with the incorporation of the foreign information in the new beef evaluation which has necessitated a further genetic evaluation run. A new evaluation is underway but will not be finished by Friday. This does not affect the beef indexes of dairy animals. As a result the release of the beef proofs will be delayed until Monday 7th January. This will also be the date at which all cow proofs (dairy and beef) and the full bull search will be available.
- ✚ We acknowledge this is a busy time for the industry preparing catalogues and we sincerely apologise for this delay but given the importance of incorporating the foreign data for beef bull proofs it was necessary to hold the release until the foreign information was included as in previous evaluations.

Sheep

- ✚ Thierry Pabiou was in Finland this week working on the genetic evaluation software enhancements for sheep evaluations.



6 Sheep Ireland

- ✚ Our Lambing notebooks and 2013 renewal forms have been sent out this week to all our early lambing pedigree flocks - the remainder will be forwarded in the New Year. 2013 will be a very important year for our breed improvement programme and we look forward to continued support and help from our LambPlus breeders to improve and expand the scheme, for the benefit of all involved in the industry.
- ✚ We would like to wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and hopefully the coming year will be a profitable one for Irish sheep farmers.

7 Tully

Current intake of GEN€ IRELAND commercial progeny (77 bulls)

The remaining 37 bulls from the initial group of 77 commercial progeny that finished their performance test on 20th November 2012 were slaughtered on Tuesday 18th December. Table 1 below shows a breakdown of the conformation and fat scores for the 77 animals. Carcass weight for the 77 bulls ranged from 297kg to 481kg, with an average carcass weight of 402 kg for the entire group. The average kill-out rate for the group was 59.4%, with kill-out ranging from 50 to 65%. All meat yield data was collected from each animal at the time of slaughter and this information will be fed into the ICBF database for use in genetic evaluations.

Table 1- Range in conformation and fat score (15 point scale) for the 77 bulls.

	E=	E-	U+	U=	U-	R+	R=	R-
1=	1							
1+			2					
2-	3	2	5					
2=	5	5	12					1
2+	1	4	17	7		1		
3-	3	2	2	2		1		
3=								
3+			1					

Meat eating quality data was collected in collaboration with Teagasc on each of the bulls slaughtered to date. Similar to the 40 bulls that were slaughtered on the 4th December, the strip-loin from the right hand side of each carcass for the bulls slaughtered this week was retained for more in-depth analysis. Data collected in the factory on the 77 bulls included primal yields, hourly PH measurements of the carcass/striploin and NIRS spectra images at 4-6 points on the carcass. As part of assessing the meat eating quality, information such as colour of loin, visual marbling of the loin, composition analysis (intramuscular fat %, protein % & moisture %), cook loss and shear force measurements will be analysed on each of the striploins that were collected. Also, samples of the striploin are to be archived for potential sensory and tenderness analysis.

We would like to thank Slaney Foods, Bunclody, Co. Wexford for their help and co-operation in the collection of the carcass and meat eating quality data.

New intake of commercial progeny (59 bulls) - Started test on 4th December

The new intake of 59 bulls that started their performance test on the 6th December were weighed this week. The average weight of the group was 517 kilos. The bulls will be weighed weekly and this was the third weight to be recorded on the bulls since the test commenced. All bulls were assessed this week for muscle, skeletal and functionality traits. Docility is also being recorded on an on-going basis. Bulls were also ultrasonically scanned for muscle and fat depth along with intramuscular fat at the start of the test.



8 GROW[®]

- + 765 Pedigree animals were weighed and scored in November.
- + This is 56 fewer animals than November 2011.
- + 661 Commercial animals were weighed and scored in November.
- + This is up by 185 animals from November 2011.
- + A major referencing session for the linear scorers was held in Tully this week.

9 Milk Recording

National Milk Recording Statistics - Herds, Cows & EDIY 21/12/12						
Milk Recording Organisation	Total Herds Recorded YTD 21/12/12	No. EDIY Herds YTD 21/12/12	% Herds EDIY	Total No. Cows Recorded YTD 21/12/12	No. EDIY Cows YTD 21/12/12	% Cows EDIY
Munster	3,740	1,090	29%	309,543	95,912	31%
Progressive	2,481	1,010	41%	232,530	95,299	41%
Tipperary	122	44	36%	10,330	3,508	34%
Total	6,343	2,144	34%	552,403	194,719	35%

Recorded Cows by Milk Recording Organisation - Year on Year Comparison			
Milk Recording Organisation	YTD 2011 Cows Recorded 01/01/11 - 21/12/11	YTD 2012 Cows Recorded 01/01/12 - 21/12/12	2012 vs. 2011 Year on Year Difference (%)
Munster	306,113	309,543	1.1%
Progressive	222,496	232,530	4.3%
Tipperary	13,159	10,330	-27.4%
Total	541,768	552,403	1.9%

Please see milk recording stats attached

We would like to thank everybody for their contribution during the year and we look forward to another very productive year in 2013.

We will close for Christmas today and return on Wednesday 2nd January 2013, if you need to contact ICBF urgently, please telephone Sean Coughlan on his mobile 087 2903121

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

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Registered Office: Sheep Database Ltd trading as "Sheep Ireland". Highfield House, Shinagh, Bandon, Co Cork. Registered Dublin, Ireland. Registration Number 465004, Companies Acts 1963 to 2006. Web: www.sheep.ie.

National Milk Recording Results for the 10 day period, 12-DEC-2012 To 21-DEC-2012

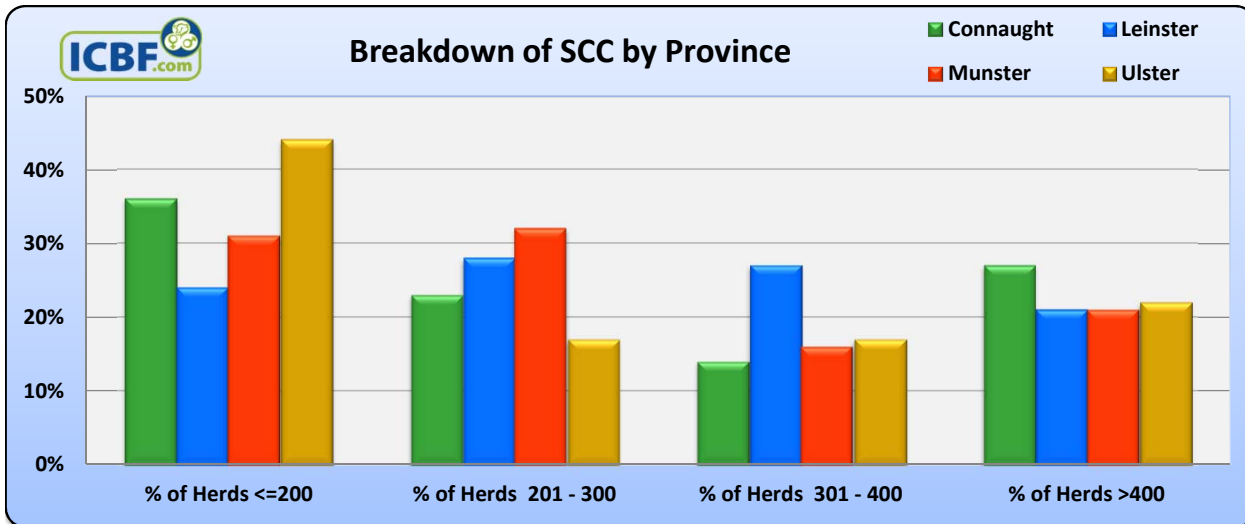
ICBF.com	No. Herds Recorded	No. Cows Recorded	Avg Herd Size	Avg Milk kg/Cow	Average Fat %	Average Protein %	Average F+P kg	Average SCC*
Connaught	22	904	41	19.5	3.99	3.30	1.43	259
Leinster	94	7,075	75	19.3	4.19	3.43	1.47	284
Munster	210	12,072	57	17.2	4.26	3.48	1.32	261
Ulster	18	1,013	56	19.0	4.10	3.35	1.41	232
National Statistics	344	21,064	61	18.0	4.21	3.44	1.37	265

* Geometric Mean Herd SCC

SCC Distribution for the 10 day period, 12-DEC-2012 To 21-DEC-2012

ICBF.com	No. Herds Recorded	No. Cows Recorded	Avg Herd Size	% of Herds <=200	% of Herds 201 - 300	% of Herds 301 - 400	% of Herds >400	Average SCC*
Connaught	22	904	41	36%	23%	14%	27%	259
Leinster	94	7,075	75	24%	28%	27%	21%	284
Munster	210	12,072	57	31%	32%	16%	21%	261
Ulster	18	1,013	56	44%	17%	17%	22%	232
National Statistics	344	21,064	61	30%	30%	19%	22%	265

* Geometric Mean Herd SCC



% Herd Breakdown for the 10 day period, 12-DEC-2012 To 21-DEC-2012

ICBF.com	No. Herds Recorded	No. Cows Recorded	Avg Herd Size	Best 20% SCC	Best 40% SCC	Average SCC**	Worst 40% SCC	Worst 20% SCC
Connaught	22	904	41	153	211	239	296	478
Leinster	94	7,075	75	187	258	294	320	405
Munster	210	12,072	57	148	224	248	290	409
Ulster	18	1,013	56	142	189	238	279	413
National Statistics	344	21,064	61	162	229	262	302	413

** Percentile Herd SCC Rank (Median SCC)

