



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

1 Important Dates

- + **ICBF Board Meeting** - Thursday 26th January, 10:30 to 14:00, Portlaoise.
- + **Sheep Board Meeting** - Thursday 26th January, 14:00 to 16:30, Portlaoise.

2 Database

As 2011 draws to a close it is a good opportunity to reflect back on the year that was, for ICBF and Sheep Ireland.

2011 has been a very challenging year for Ireland! However, it saw good returns for the dairy, beef and sheep sectors. Long may it last is a common refrain from our farming friends. The decisions taken by ICBF over its short history and the efforts of our dedicated and hard working team have placed us in relatively good position as 2011 comes to a close, and most importantly, ensured we are well placed to help achieve the ambitious 2020 growth targets for dairy, beef and sheep farming.

The major achievements of 2011 are the continued roll-out of genomic selection for dairy cattle and the realisation of the benefits of the suckler scheme.

Genomics

In a period of less than three years; the required research was completed, ICBF's genetic evaluation systems modified, the results communicated to dairy farmers, the AI industry providing genomically selected bulls and now low cost genomic evaluation services have been established for dairy herd owners. Dairy inseminations were from genomically selected bulls was 49% this year, up from 40% in 2010 and 35% in 2009.

In 2011 our efforts in genomics have included a number of very significant developments including:

- The launch, in March, of a genomic evaluation service for dairy farmers. At a cost of €50 per calf this service included a 3K genotype and genomic predictions for a full range of traits. This service is available for bull and heifer calves. There are very few countries in the world where such a service is available for bull calves.
- The launch, in December, of an initiative to genotype 10,000 females. The goals are; to enable dairy farmers to use genomic selection in their breeding decisions, and to improve the accuracy and breeds covered by our genomic predictions.
- The development of genomic evaluations for type traits and improved evaluations for animals with a higher Friesian content.
- The development, by Teagasc, of an accurate system for imputing 50K genotypes from the new 7K chip which will shortly replace, at no extra cost, the 3K chip used earlier this year. This 7K system gives greater accuracy and can be applied with fewer restrictions than the 3K one.
- In partnership with Teagasc, research to develop genomic selection for beef breeding is now well advanced. Some 3,500 beef bulls are being genotyped using the Illumina HD (700K) SNP chip. We expect the first results of this research in 2012.

Suckler Scheme

At this time last year we were celebrating the achievements of the third 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 2012. This is a major achievement in light of the increasingly severe constraints on public finances.

Achievements in 2011 relevant to the scheme include:

- A continued high level of participation by suckler herds in the scheme representing some 70% of all suckler cows in 35,000 herds.
- The incorporation of data from the scheme into our genetic evaluations for calving (ease, mortality & gestation length), calf quality, docility, maternal milk and female fertility.
- The Euro-Star indexes are now widely accepted by the beef breeding industry although we are still not satisfied that industry has a good supply of suitable replacement females.

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 fourth 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.

Other

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 genetic evaluations for maternal milk and female fertility traits in beef cattle.

This year we completed a major review of beef cattle breeding and implementation of the findings will be the next phase in our efforts to improve genetic gain in national beef herd.

The *Best Practise in Cattle Breeding* campaign was continued and expanded 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 GEN€IR€LAND[®] dairy progeny test program for spring 2011 suffered from the unfortunate major outbreak of IBR at the NCBC stud resulting in fewer bulls being tested than farmer demand would have supported. The dairy breeding scheme review completed in 2010 is addressing ways of minimising this risk in the future.

HerdPlus[®] usage is approaching 9,000 dairy and beef herds with over 85% 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 access a wide array of valuable management information.

ICBF's AI handheld system was used to record over 0.65 million inseminations in 2011, a 10% increase due to growth in the use of AI.

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 1,000,000 searches in the last twelve months.

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.

Several of the beef Breed Associations have provided, through their websites, on-line access to their Herd Books. This facility, supported by ICBF, involves live access to the ICBF database, providing a very powerful tool for beef

breeders, to locate the best pedigree animals in Ireland. It is complemented by ICBF's GROW[®] service and the catalogue service launched late in 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 eradication program and to take other 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 last year and a revised strategy for the next period adopted. All key elements: database, MALP, CPT and genetic evaluations are now in place and working well. We are now focused on growing our LambPlus[®] service for ram breeders. 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 2011 was particularly evident through the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme, GEN[®]IRLAND[®] 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 will see us hosting the ICAR & Interbull meetings in 2012 (see www.icar2012.ie). This will be a great opportunity to show case the developments which ICBF has lead in the cattle and sheep breeding industry. Attached is an invitation for anybody interested in making a presentation at this conference. Please follow the instructions if you want to be a speaker then.

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 Mid-Infr-Red 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.

The next stage in the development of Interbeef passed an important milestone in the last few days. All the initial partners (9 Service Users, ICAR and SLU – Swedish University of Agricultural Science) have now signed the Interbeef Collaboration Agreement which clears the way for international genetic evaluations for beef cattle to become a routine service.

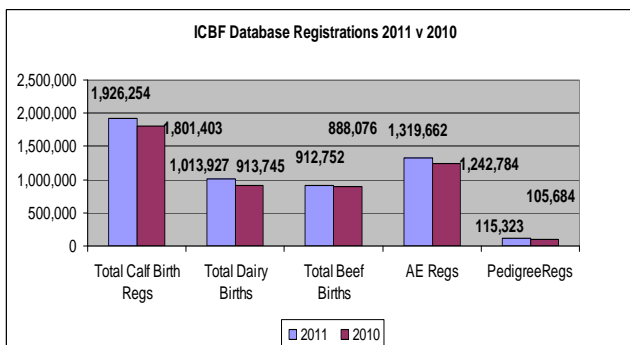
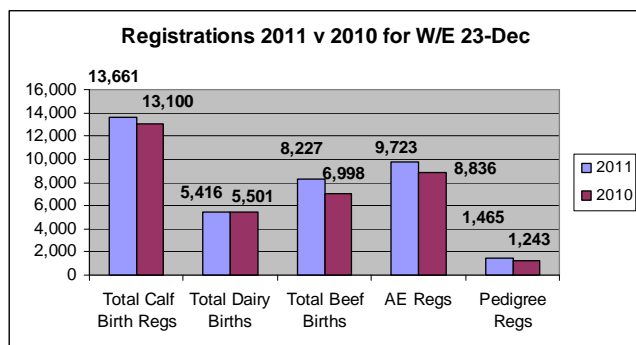
Summary

On reflection, 2011 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 and in 2011 record levels were achieved. We have been able to achieve this extra output without an increase in staffing and ICBF's financial situation is in line with budget. 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, Teagasc, DAFF and, most importantly, Irish Farmers.

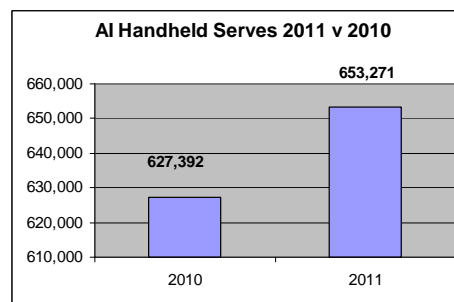
3 Genetic Evaluations

The December evaluations are now complete. Results are available on the ICBF website through the bull search, online Herd Books and the online herd profiles. This has been a massive effort this year. We appreciate the patience of our many customers during this period of considerable change.

4 Database



- ✚ The stats above are compiled with the assistance of DAFF AIM systems.
- ✚ In the Suckler scheme, the number of 2011 born calves with meal introduced is 538,662 with the number of animals weaned at 420,257.
- ✚ Around 5,600 herds have already completed their Dairy Efficiency Programme (DEP) health recording requirements for 2011.
- ✚ The initial stage of testing on the prototype of the new cattle weighing scales with blue-tooth integration to ICBF handheld software has come to an end. From a technical perspective, the units are working well. We have had a number of issues in relation to the waterproofing of the units. We will make a decision on the next steps in the New Year.
- ✚ The development of a new 'Bull-Tracker' report for pedigree herds is on-going. The focus of the report is to show the performance of stock-bull offspring. This will be ready for testing at the end of the first week of the New Year.
- ✚ The first BVD test results were received and processed this week. Around 1,500 herds have purchased tissue tags for BVD testing.
- ✚ Some further developments to enhance the loading of genotype information to the database is continuing. International partners are also helping with the testing of our IGenoP database system.
- ✚ The graph shows Inseminations recorded on AI Handhelds in 2011 compared with 2010.



5 GEN€IR€LAND® - Beef

- ✚ 156 herds have signed up to the Autumn program.
- ✚ More details on the bulls are available in the GEN€IR€LAND® section of the website.
- ✚ To order straws phone 1 850 600 900 or 045 521 573.
- ✚ APZ has become the 8th Simmental bull to be tested through the program.
- ✚ Work is continuing on putting the 2012 panel together.

- The new figures published this week show that of the 50 bulls tested to date through GEN[€]IR[€]LAND[®], 30 of them are 5 Star bulls on SBV.

Approx. total straws sent out per bull currently available are in the table below:

BREED	BB	BB	CH	HE	PT	SI
CODE	BZP	RWS	DZP	GCT	CBQ	SXD
# STRAWS	455	425	430	270	430	425

The table below gives a summary of the uptake in the program over the last 5 years:

Summary of programs (2007-2011)					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Herds involved in the program	146	468	726	491	410
Straws dispatched	2,920	7,956	12,342	8,860	6,904
Straws/herd	20	17	17	18	17

6 GROW[®]

- 821 pedigree animals were weighed and scored in November (up by 48 from November 2010).
- 476 commercial animals were weighed and scored in November (down by 177 from November 2010).
- Ongoing dual scoring sessions are being held with the scorers.
- 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 5 years:

Pedigree - Total Weighed & Scored Statistics (1st Jan – 30 th Nov)				
Year	Total Presented	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%
2011	8262	116	8146	99%

Commercials - Total Weighed & Scored Statistics (1st Jan – 30 th Nov)				
Year	Total Presented	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%
2011	5013	9	5004	100%

- The number of pedigrees weighed and scored in the first 11 months of 2011 compared to 2010 is down by 478 animals.
- The number of commercials weighed and scored in the first 11 months of 2011 compared to 2010 is down by 292 animals

7 Milk Recording

National Milk Recording Results by County - 10 day Period 13/12/11 to 23/12/11

	<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>
CARLOW	9	513	57	25.2	4.57	3.49	2.03	313
CAVAN	32	1,455	45	19.7	4.05	3.40	1.47	293
CLARE	7	300	43	21.0	3.99	3.39	1.55	468
CORK STH	158	8,573	54	20.9	4.37	3.48	1.64	254
CORK NTH	79	4,362	55	20.2	4.26	3.54	1.58	277
DONEGAL	6	623	104	12.3	4.62	3.77	1.03	477
DUBLIN	2	109	55	23.9	3.99	3.46	1.78	544
GALWAY	8	391	49	21.3	4.49	3.54	1.71	312
KERRY	56	2,948	53	19.8	4.10	3.36	1.48	350
KILDARE	22	1,364	62	21.5	4.08	3.35	1.60	333
KILKENNY	17	1,112	65	21.7	4.33	3.51	1.70	233
LAOIS	20	1,017	51	20.3	4.32	3.50	1.59	456
LEITRIM	2	66	33	20.4	4.13	3.49	1.55	294
LIMERICK	51	3,073	60	21.3	4.15	3.46	1.62	285
LONGFORD	6	281	47	17.8	4.40	3.56	1.42	270
LOUTH	19	1,665	88	28.3	4.01	3.59	2.15	338
MAYO	21	977	47	19.6	3.90	3.46	1.44	311
MEATH	53	4,529	85	20.7	4.35	3.41	1.61	275
MONAGHAN	24	937	39	17.3	4.12	3.39	1.30	341
OFFALY	11	478	43	20.3	4.13	3.28	1.50	347
ROSCOMMON	2	66	33	22.8	3.70	3.52	1.65	475
SLIGO	7	273	39	19.2	4.20	3.30	1.44	315
TIPPERARY NTH	8	400	50	16.2	4.30	3.46	1.26	398
TIPPERARY STH	7	312	45	21.0	4.36	3.43	1.64	305
WATERFORD	18	910	51	20.2	4.35	3.53	1.59	274
WESTMEATH	11	756	69	21.7	4.22	3.55	1.69	243
WEXFORD	46	2,312	50	20.7	4.24	3.51	1.60	319
WICKLOW E	17	1,124	66	20.2	4.39	3.55	1.60	313
WICKLOW W	11	815	74	24.8	4.51	3.37	1.95	374
	<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	730	41,741	56	20.7	4.23	3.47	1.59	337

National Milk Recording Averages by Province - 10 day Period 13/12/11 to 23/12/11

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	387	20,878	54	20.8	4.23	3.47	1.60	307
Leinster	244	16,075	66	22.1	4.26	3.47	1.71	335
Connacht	40	1,773	44	20.7	4.08	3.46	1.56	341
Ulster	62	3,015	49	16.4	4.26	3.52	1.28	370

National Milk Recording Statistics - Herds, Cows & EDIY 23/12/11

Milk Recording Organisation	Total Herds Recorded YTD 23/12/11	No. EDIY Herds YTD 23/12/11	% Herds EDIY	Total No. Cows Recorded YTD 23/12/11	No. EDIY Cows YTD 23/12/11	% Cows EDIY
Munster	3,674	1,043	28%	306,199	95,788	31%
Progressive	2,397	922	38%	222,804	84,630	38%
Tipperary	145	65	45%	13,159	6,331	48%
Total	6,216	2,030	33%	542,162	186,749	34%

Recorded Cows by Milk Recording Organisation - Year on Year Comparison

Milk Recording Organisation	YTD 2010 Cows Recorded 01/01/10 - 23/12/10	YTD 2011 Cows Recorded 01/01/11 - 23/12/11	2011 vs 2010 Year on Year Difference (%)
Munster	280,858	306,199	8.3%
Progressive	198,868	222,804	10.7%
Tipperary	12,242	13,159	7.0%
Total	491,968	542,162	9.3%

We would like to thank everybody for their contribution during the year and we look forward to another very productive year in 2012.

We will close today for Christmas and return on Tuesday 3rd January 2012, if you need to contact ICBF urgently, please telephone Brian Wickham on his mobile 086 8269911.

*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.



Invitation Dated 11th November 2011.

To: Potential Speakers for ICAR 2012

Please give some thought to speaking at [ICAR 2012](#) which is being held in Cork from Monday 28th May to Friday 1st June, 2012.

The [main session themes](#) are:

Session	Date/Time	Theme	Target Audience
1	Mon 28th May from 10:30 to 18:00.	Information for Profitable Dairy Farming.	Policy and decision makers in the worldwide dairy recording and breeding industry.
2	Tues 29th May from 10:30 to 18:00.	Information for Profitable Beef & Sheep Farming.	Policy and decision makers in the worldwide beef & sheep recording and breeding industry.
3	Wed 30th May from 8:30 to 10:30.	How Can Animal Recording Improve the Profitability of Animal Farming?	Policy and decision makers, and technical experts in the worldwide recording and breeding industry.
4	Wed 30th May from 14:00 to 18:00.	Identifying the Most Profitable Animals for Breeding - Dairy, Beef, Sheep.	Policy and decision makers, and technical experts in the worldwide breeding industry.
5	Wed 30th May from 14:00 to 18:00.	On-Farm and On-Animal Devices for Identification and Recording.	Policy and decision makers, and technical experts in the worldwide animal recording industry.
6	Thurs 31st May from 8:30 to 10:30.	Practical Implications of Genomic Technologies for Animal Agriculture.	Policy and decision makers, and technical experts in the worldwide recording and breeding industry.
7	Thurs 31st May from 11:00 to 13:00.	Information Systems for Providing Farmers (and Breeders) with Information Needed to Increase Profitability.	Policy and decision makers, and technical experts in the worldwide field of information systems applied to the recording and breeding industry.
8	Thurs 31st May from 11:00 to 13:00.	Developments in Off-Farm Recording & analysis - for Milk, Meat, ...	Policy and decision makers, and technical experts in the worldwide field of laboratory measurement systems applied to the recording and breeding industry.
9	Fri 1st June from 8:30 to 10:30.	The Future Organisation of Animal Recording & Genetic Evaluations -	Policy and decision makers in the worldwide recording and breeding industry.



Invitation Dated 11th November 2011.

Session	Date/Time	Theme	Target Audience
		keeping the balance between Commercial, Industry Good and Public Good.	

If you would like to present (10 minutes for presentation and 5 minutes for discussion) a paper, or poster, under one or more of these themes please suggest a title (max 200 characters) and provide a short abstract (max 2,000 characters) by [registering as a potential speaker here](#). Please use the registration form to fill in your details, indicate that you are interested in presenting a paper and provide a title and short abstract. The deadline for receiving your proposed paper is **31st December 2011**.

Other key deadlines that have to be strictly respected by **Speakers** and the **Organisers** are:

1. Submit Abstract and Title by 31st December 2011 (**Speaker**).
2. Notification of paper acceptance on or before 25th January 2012 (**Organisers**).
3. Submission of written paper – 1st Draft by 27th April and final version for on-line publication by 25th May, 2012 (**Speaker**).
4. Submission of Presentation slides by 25th May 2012 (**Speaker**)

As a reward for the collaboration of **Speakers**, we the **Organisers** are committed to:

1. Include a copy of the **abstracts** of all accepted presentations in the printed program.
2. Publish on the conference website all **written papers** on Monday 28th May, the first day of the conference.
3. Publish on the conference website all **presentations** on Monday 28th May.

Your efforts in respecting the above deadlines will not be in vain. Please help us make these deadlines and ensure a really enjoyable and informative conference for all delegates.

The process for title submission and the publication of proceedings is [available in more detail here](#).

We encourage you to focus on the main themes for the conference and to submit your ideas as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Brian Wickham

On behalf of the Organising Committee for ICAR 2012