



## UPDATE – for period 25<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005

### 1 Cattle Breeding – Important Dates

- **10:30 – 13:00 and 14:00 – 16:00, Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April. The Montague Hotel, Emo, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.** Herd Book Operations Review, Beef Technical Meeting and Meeting of Numerically Small Herd Books.
- **14:30 – 16:00 Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, Heritage Hotel, Port Laois.** ICBF Annual General Meeting. Please note that the **AGM has been moved from 5<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> of May.**

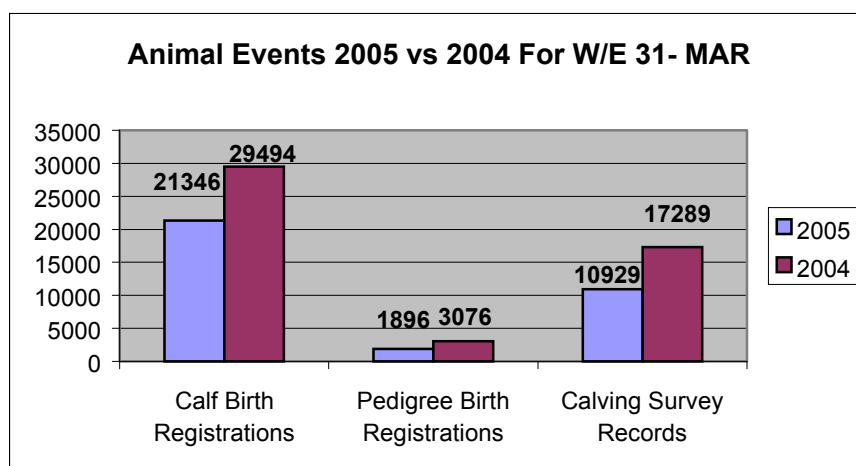
### 2 ICBF Board Meeting 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004

Decisions at yesterday's Board meeting included:

- Adoption of the recommendation from the Audit & Finance Sub-Committee to approve the audited accounts for 2004.
- To commence using IBB (Internet Business Banking) for payroll, creditor payments, transfers between accounts and general bank account queries.
- To support the launch of the G€N€ IRELAND progeny test program in 2005 for both dairy and beef bulls.
- To make the breeding chart, recently developed in collaboration between ICBF and TEAGASC, available to all relevant herds as soon as possible.
- To work with the wider breeding industry to review opportunities for communicating with cattle farmers.
- That ICBF must ensure it retained a strong capability to support the needs of the beef breeding industry especially now that it has been confirmed that Dr Al Grogan has been promoted by DAF and will be returning to DAF on a phased basis over the next few weeks.

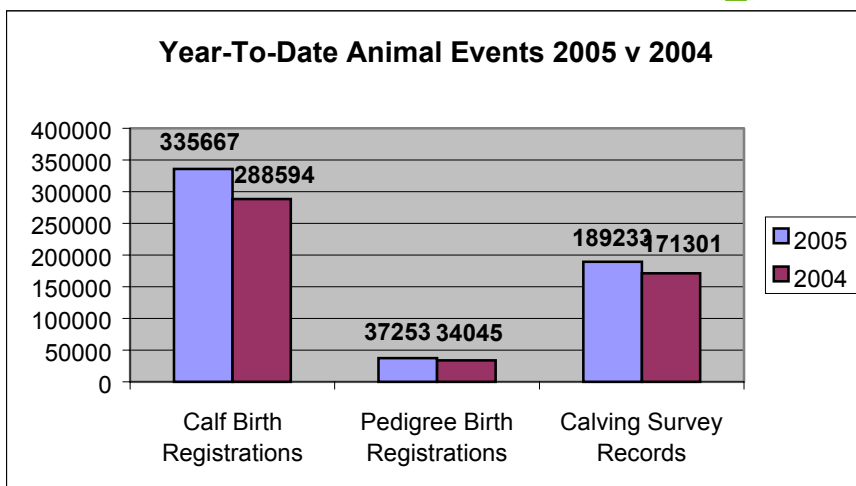
### 3 Database Update

- 156 new herds added to the database.
- Comment from the staff in the Animal Events (AE) office: *"AE sheet numbers staying high, number of new herd permission forms reduced but getting a steady number of them daily. Still some dry off sheets coming in."*
- 4,461 Teagasc ICBF permission forms have now been returned by Teagasc clients. A new file of data has been received from Teagasc linking advisors to herds. This will allow the system to go fully live next Tuesday. The breeding charts will be issued next week.





- Work on generating complete statistics from the database for 2004 is on-going. This work will be finished next week.
- A review of the Beef Linear Scoring handheld was held in Tully last week and the output will be incorporated into design changes in the future.
- The handover of tasks from Al Grogan has begun this week and will be on-going over the coming weeks.
- The development work to get all herdbooks available on-line is completed. Testing by the individual herdbooks will be on-going next week before the final release.
- The Norwegian Red herdbook data for the animals involved in the TEAGASC Moorepark trial has been received and is being reviewed. Once the data quality is confirmed, it will be loaded to the database.



#### 4 Milk Recording

- Average turnaround time for March was 6.05 days, a slight increase on February 2005 but almost four days quicker than in 2004 (see table below).
- The best turnaround in March was achieved by Kerry – 4.57 days. Well done.

Milk Recording Organisation	2005 * Herds Recorded Week 25/03/05 - 01/04/05	2004 Herds Recorded Week Ending - 02/04/04
Progressive	329	317
Dairygold	181	256
Kerry	154	183
SWS	135	319
Connacht	37	25
Tipperary	18	10
Arrabawn	0	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>1,116</b>

\* Note: No. Days in this week was 4 versus 5 in same week 2004

Industry Test Turnaround	March 2005	March 2004
No. Animals Recorded	162,246	164,518
No. Herd Tests Processed	3,993	4,427
Average Turnaround (No. days)	6.05	9.95

#### 5 Tully

- Planning for the sale on April 30<sup>th</sup> has started. The sale catalogue will be on the ICBF web site from the 6<sup>th</sup> of April and advertising for the sale will begin on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April. Linear scoring will take place on 5<sup>th</sup> April and official BLUP figures will be ready by 14<sup>th</sup> April.
- A group of commercial beef farmers from Roscommon visited Tully on the 31-3-04.
- A group of Veterinary students from UCD will visit Tully on 6-4-05.



## 6 Genetic Evaluations – New Beef Profit Indexes – Explanatory Material.

Today sees the release of a draft of the new beef indexes and the new beef active bull list. These have been released to the industry for comment prior to official release on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April. An explanation of the recent changes has been prepared by the key ICBF people involved (Andrew Cromie, Pat Donnellan, Victor Olori & Al Grogan) and is repeated here.

The Economic Breeding Indexes for beef and calving traits reflect how much PROFIT a farmer can expect to realise from making a breeding decision. They are designed to help farmers increase returns from cattle breeding and are available for all AI sires and stock bulls with sufficient beef carcass and calving information in the cattle-breeding database. Unfortunately, too few bulls have sufficient information on maternal traits for official publication at this stage. Overcoming this problem for 2006 will require more “commercial” beef cows (and herds) getting involved in the cattle-breeding database.

In the mean time, official information is available for four sub-indexes. These are

1. *Beef Production Sub Index (BPSI)*
2. *Weaned Calf Sub Index (WCSI)*
3. *Beef Calving Sub Index (BCSI)*
4. *Dairy Calving Sub Index (DCSI)*

The following is a summary of each of these sub-indexes, together with a listing of the “Top 10” bulls from the draft Active Bull List for each of these indexes.

### 1. Beef Production Sub Index

This Sub Index will estimate how good a bull is at producing progeny with high value carcasses. Table 1 gives the Top 10 Bulls for the Beef Production Sub Index from the draft ICBF Active Beef Bull List (Spring 2005).

**Example Table 1. Top 10 Active AI Bulls based on BPSI (Beef Production Sub Index)**

Brd	Code	Name	B Yr	BPSI	Rel	WCSI	Rel	BCSI	Rel	DCSI	Rel
CH	HWN	HOLLOWTREE NICKOLAS	1997	€122.8	65	€151.0	67	-€12.5	61	-€41.9	70
BB	VDC	VICTORIEUX D AU CHENE	1985	€119.3	88	€137.3	90	-€21.2	81	-€47.2	87
SI	HKG	HILLCREST KING	1999	€113.4	67	€167.4	69	-€17.1	73	-€57.9	81
CH	PIO	DOVEA PINOCCHIO	1999	€113.3	68	€149.9	72	-€23.6	64	-€57.9	64
BB	TIY	TINTIN DE MY	1985	€112.9	86	€131.7	90	-€18.6	78	-€30.5	86
CH	CF52	DOONALLY NEW	1997	€110.6	90	€142.7	93	-€21.3	83	-€48.4	87
CH	NWK	ENFIELD NEWLOOK	1997	€110.4	76	€164.1	82	-€22.5	63	-€64.3	70
BB	GUY	GENERAL DU GORTIL GAYOT	1986	€109.6	80	€135.1	83	-€23.3	85	-€38.6	91
SI	MLM	MARBELHILL LIAM	2000	€106.8	61	€184.0	64	-€17.0	63	-€45.9	68

Suckler farmers who are finishing their own stock should focus strongly on this Sub Index. Bulls that are producing cattle that have a high carcass weight for age, good conformation at kill out and good lifetime feed efficiency will score high on this index. Weaning weight and carcass fat score are also taken into account but to a lesser extent. The top bull on this list is HWN with a BPSI of €122.8. This indicates that, on average progeny of HWN will return an extra profit of €122.8 at slaughter compared to a sire with a BPSI of €0. In this way, beef farmers can quickly use the new indexes to identify the bulls that are leaving more profit on their farm.

### 2. Weaned Calf Sub Index

This Sub Index will estimate how good a bull is at producing high value weanlings for sale. Table 2 gives the Top 10 Bulls for the Weaned Calf Sub Index from the draft ICBF Active Beef Bull List (Spring 2005). Suckler farmers who are selling their weanlings for the live export market should look more closely at bulls that perform well on this Sub Index. There is a strong emphasis on conformation. Weaning weight is the other factor that influences whether or not a bull does well within the index. The top bull on this list is MLM



with a WCSI of €184. This indicates that, on average progeny of MLM will return an extra profit of €184 when sold as a weanling compared to a sire with a BPSI of €0.

**Example Table 2. Top 10 Active AI Bulls based on WCSI (Weaned Calf Sub Index)**

Brd	Code	AI Station	Name	B Yr	BPSI	Rel	WCSI	Rel	BCSI	Rel	DCSI	Rel
SI	MLM	DOVEA	MARBELHILL LIAM	2000	€106.8	61	€184.0	64	-€17.0	63	-€45.9	68
SI	HKG	PG	HILLCREST KING	1999	€113.4	67	€167.4	69	-€17.1	73	-€57.9	81
CH	NWK	PG	ENFIELD NEWLOOK	1997	€110.4	76	€164.1	82	-€22.5	63	-€64.3	70
CH	MDO	PG	MOGADOR	1996	€98.2	87	€159.0	91	-€25.6	71	-€49.9	76
LM	ORO	DOVEA	ORTOLAN	1998	€103.1	66	€153.9	69	-€10.0	71	-€39.4	77
CH	HWN	PG	HOLLOWTREE NICKOLAS	1997	€122.8	65	€151.0	67	-€12.5	61	-€41.9	70
CH	PIO	DOVEA	DOVEA PINOCCHIO	1999	€113.3	68	€149.9	72	-€23.6	64	-€57.9	64
CH	CF51	PG	DOONALLY NICEFOR	1997	€98.6	75	€145.3	80	-€21.8	68	-€55.9	73
SI	BDJ	MUN	BALLYDUFF JEWELLER	1998	€47.5	85	€143.9	88	-€20.5	76	-€58.3	85
CH	CF52	PG	DOONALLY NEW	1997	€110.6	90	€142.7	93	-€21.3	83	-€48.4	87

### 3. Beef Calving Sub Index

This index should be of interest to all farmers as it puts a direct cost on calving problems estimated for each bull. It takes into account calving difficulty, gestation length and calf mortality. A bull might have a very high BPSI or WCSI but if it also has a very negative Beef Calving Sub Index it might be better to avoid it altogether. Adding together BPSI or WCSI (depending on your circumstance) with BCSI will give you an indication of the “overall profit” from using a given bull on your beef herd (i.e., income from beef output – potential cost of calving). Therefore, if you are a suckler farmer and taking calves through to slaughter, the overall profit from using MLM (see Table 2) would be (€106.8 - €17.0) = €90.2. Given that this index is focused on calving performance it is not surprising that the best bulls on this index are bulls from the traditional breeds (Table 3).

**Example Table 3. Top 10 Active AI Bulls based on BCSI (Beef Calving Sub Index)**

Brd	Code	AI Station	Name	B Yr	BPSI	Rel	WCSI	Rel	BCSI	Rel	DCSI	Rel
AA	LYM	MUN	LISLANEY MICK	1997	€2.8	85	€37.5	87	€7.5	91	€15.7	96
AA	RUH	PG	ROOSE ULAH	1983	€26.9	73	€53.3	75	€3.9	81	€1.7	90
AA	NAM	EUROGENE	NETHERTON ELSAM	1985	€32.4	66	€58.2	67	€3.8	64	€4.5	74
AA	EOC	MUN	EARL OF CREROGUE	1996	€40.2	74	€70.7	74	€2.3	76	€5.4	88
AA	EOB	MUN	EDMUNDO OF BALLINULTY	1997	€25.3	90	€64.5	93	€1.7	96	€7.1	98
AA	RHD	PG	RAINBOW HILLS INDEPENDENCE 117	1992	€35.4	82	€52.9	86	€0.8	79	-€6.8	88
AA	KJE	PG	KBJ JETTA 64D	1993	€45.3	66	€73.5	68	-€1.7	62	-€11.1	71
AA	JSN	DOVEA	JESANA NAPOLEON	1997	€43.4	80	€75.8	80	-€1.9	89	-€4.2	93
AA	LHL	DOVEA	LAHEENS LARRY	1995	€25.5	85	€48.9	89	-€3.4	75	-€17.5	81

### 4. Dairy Calving Sub Index

This index is very similar to the beef calving index, except that the economic impact of using a “difficult” calving bull on the dairy herd is much higher – due to the potential loss of milk yield, and associated infertility problems. Again, the traditional breeds score highly on this sub-index.

### Maternal Sub Index & Total Beef Index.

Although not published yet, the maternal sub-index is to be used where a suckler farmer is choosing a bull to breed replacements. Cow survival, calving interval, age at first calving, calving difficulty, gestation length, calf mortality, weaning weight and cull cow carcass weight are included in this sub-index. As noted earlier, lack of available data on commercial beef cows is the major obstacle stopping the publication of this sub-index. Until this problem is overcome, beef farmers will not have information on a maternal sub-index and by extension the “Total Beef Index” (which is a composite of each of the other sub-indices and reflects “total profit” for all beef breeding decisions).



## 7 ICBF Genetic Evaluations for Beef & Calving Traits (1st April 2005) - Technical Update.

Following the last beef industry meeting (23<sup>rd</sup> February 2005) and following further feed-back from the beef industry, a number of improvements were made to the current set of genetic evaluations. These include:

- **Improved Data Selection.** In the previous evaluations, an animal had to have a herd of finishing and no movements to be included in the evaluation. This criteria has since been changed to accommodate; (i) offspring of some progeny-test bulls that were being moved to the central testing stations, and (ii) some animals that were being moved to finishing herds (which were also in the database). The net effect of this change has been to increase the number of records available for the evaluation of carcass traits (see Table 1).

*Table 1. Number of records included in the current & February evaluations for beef traits.*

	Carcass Wt.	Wean Wt.	Live Wt.
Current evaluation	83,781	32,409	35,491
February evaluations	54,840	35,022	37,661

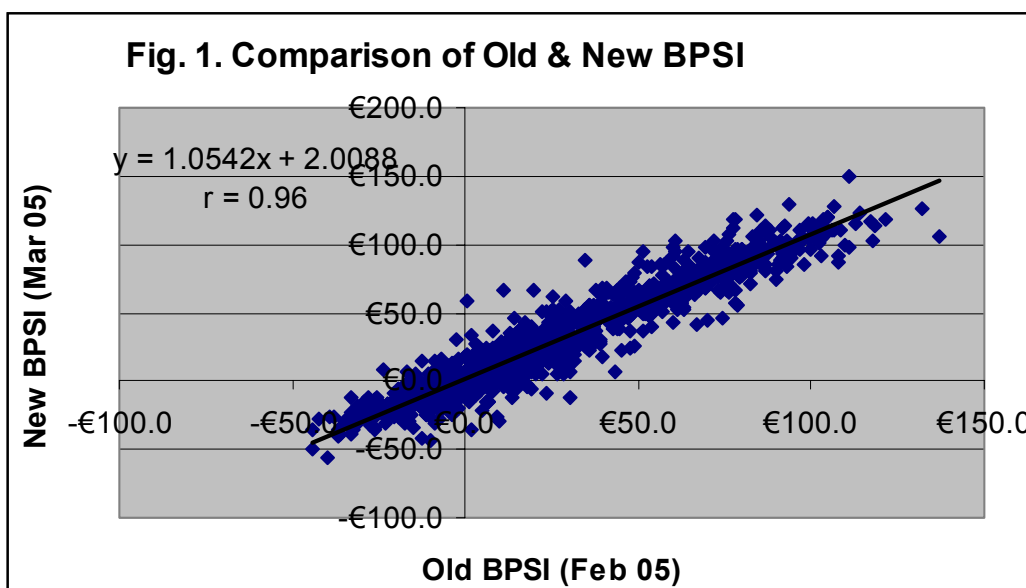
- **Definition of Contemporary Groups.** Contemporary group definition has also been re-evaluated (based on feed-back from the last meeting). Initially, 5 animals recorded in a given year were sufficient for inclusion in the analysis. This has now been changed to a minimum of 5 records in 6 months. The net effect of this change, has been a slight reduction in the number of records available for evaluation of weaning weight and live weight (see Table 1 above). However, the accuracy of the contemporary group definition has improved considerably, resulting in better estimates of genetic parameters for each of relevant traits.
- **Breed Effects for Feed Intake.** At the recent consultation meeting concern was expressed that the presence of different strains within a breed (e.g., beef and dual purpose strains within a given breed) could result in biased estimates of feed intake for that breed. However, these concerns proved unfounded, as there was no evidence of a “non-normal” distribution for feed intake for any of the breeds. However, there was some evidence of “extreme values” for feed intake for a small number of bulls, due to errors in the data. These records were removed from the analysis, resulting in a better “fit” for the data. The breed adjustment was also re-computed, after applying the same logic as for other traits. Combined these improvements gave more stable estimates for the breed effects for feed intake.
- **Calving Performance.** A further 5 months of calving performance data were added to the evaluations, compared to the January 2005 run which was based on data up to September 2004. This had the effect of increasing the quantity of calving performance data for each of the relevant traits (see Table 2).

*Table 2. Number of records included in the current & February evaluations for calving traits.*

	Gest. Length	C Diff	Mortality
March 2005	134,826	447,360	480,066
January 2005	99,097	393,379	419,097

- **Net effect of the changes.** The net effect of these changes has been to increase considerably the number of bulls obtaining “official” evaluations – especially younger bulls that had progeny with movement records in the database. For example, some 1,455 AI bulls have received evaluations in the current evaluation for BPSI, compared to only 1,270 previously.

The mean and variance of proofs changed slightly, reflecting the improved data structure. However, there was little change in the ranking of bulls with correlations between old and new sub-indexes >0.95 for BPSI, WCSI, BCSI and DCSI (see Figure 1 for BPSI).



A summary of the breed averages for bulls with a minimum reliability proof of 50% for all four sub-indexes (some 550 bulls in total) is given in table 3.

**Table 3. Breed Averages for AI Bulls with a minimum of 50% for all Sub Indexes**

Breed	Sires	BPSI	WCSI	BCSI	DCSI
AA	30	€29.6	€54.7	-€0.7	-€3.6
BB	33	€91.3	€116.1	-€14.0	-€23.6
CH	27	€95.1	€134.7	-€19.5	-€53.3
FR	47	€0.7	€16.3	€1.1	€7.9
GS	1	€5.4	€30.8	-€5.3	-€16.3
HE	17	€33.1	€56.1	-€6.2	-€21.3
HO	313	€0.0	-€1.3	-€0.7	-€1.5
JE	1	-€42.1	-€24.5	€13.6	€31.0
LM	37	€84.1	€114.9	-€10.5	-€49.2
MO	16	€34.1	€43.1	-€12.7	-€33.3
MY	5	€15.6	€30.7	-€2.1	€2.2
RB	5	€25.7	€39.5	-€4.8	-€1.0
RD	2	€17.0	€26.9	€0.1	-€5.4
SH	2	€35.0	€62.1	-€9.4	-€27.7
SI	14	€64.5	€126.9	-€14.2	-€45.3
SR	1	€15.3	€26.0	-€0.2	€7.7

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