



UPDATE – FOR PERIOD 3RD JULY – 9TH JULY 2004

1. Board Meeting

- The Board will be meeting next Thursday in Tullamore. The main item on the agenda is the strategic plan for ICBF.

2. Progeny Testing

- Over the last few months a lot of work has gone into consideration of strategies for increasing both the uptake (more bulls) and accuracy of progeny testing. Nicholas Grubb has been leading the work from a beef point of view and Andrew Cromie from a dairy point of view.
- This week time was spent on establishing a common approach for both dairy and beef.
- It is clear that the problems being faced for both dairy and beef are very similar. That is:
 - not enough bulls are being progeny tested,
 - a number of organizations and individuals have a strong interest in investing in obtaining accurate genetic evaluations for their bulls with a view to marketing semen nationally and internationally,
 - before they will buy semen from a bull farmers and breeders require that the progeny test results are without bias, accurate, cover all traits of economic importance and the results are internationally comparable, and
 - currently, it is difficult and expensive to find farmers willing to use unproven bulls through artificial insemination and undertake the required recording.
- Now that animal events is operating well, virtually all herd-books are participating in the database and the new genetic evaluations systems are on-stream or soon will be, a whole new approach to progeny testing has become a viable proposition.
- In essence the new approach is a genetic evaluation service that starts with 1,000 doses of semen from a bull to be tested and finishes with accurate unbiased genetic evaluations that are internationally comparable for all traits of importance. This model can work for both dairy and beef bulls although the costs may differ. It will even enable the full range of maternal traits to be evaluated for beef bulls.
- By taking a service based approach it is possible to substantially reduce the cost of progeny testing while at the same time providing attractive incentives for a limited number of farmers to use the test bulls. Further, the evaluations can be conducted independently of the bull owner thus eliminating any risk of the results being biased. The details of this proposal are currently being developed in consultation with a number of interested parties.

3. Database Project

a) Newly Live Herdbooks

- 406 new attempted pedigree registrations received during the past week.
- 28 new Beef Herds added to the database.
- BLUP reports and Pedigree Certificates were issued to the Charolais, Limousin, and Simmental Societies.
- The Sire Error reports now returned from breeders have been updated, though there is still a small number coming in on a daily basis.
- Last year, in preparation for the moving of herdbook data to the ICBF database and the move to animal events, reports were sent to breeders of all breeds requesting that they link herdbook numbers to tag numbers for animals where the link was missing. Unfortunately, the data provided by a number of breeders has subsequently transpired to be incorrect, and the fixing of these records is now taking quite an amount of time.



b) Other database activities

- Work is almost complete on the 'Concentrate Vs Feed Input' report and this will be issued next week.
- The Beef Linear Scorer hand-holds have been rebuilt with the latest version of the software and these will be issued again to the scorers in Tully next week
- It is expected that the entrance applications for bulls to Tully will be automatically generated from the database for future in-takes (including the Sept '04 intake). This development will be completed next week.
- A separate 'Export Certificate' format for beef animals is also nearing completion.
- New disks were successfully added to the hardware landscape this week that will allow us to have a copy of the production database on a daily basis. This will allow a more efficient turnaround for reporting and extracts, as at present, such reports have to be run out of office hours to avoid impacting system performance for end users in member organisations.

4. Milk Recording

a) Database Project - Milk Recording

No. Herdowners Milk Recorded in IRIS YTD = 5,942

Progressive	1,932
Dairygold	1,577
Kerry	1,088
SWS	962
Tipperary	146
Connacht Gold	120
Nenagh	117

b) Weekly Update - No. herd tests processed in last 7 days = 1,149

Progressive	446
Dairygold	271
Kerry	216
SWS	162
Connacht Gold	27
Nenagh	16
Tipperary	11

5. Tully

- The June intake of 42 bulls started their performance test on the 6-07-04.
- A group of French farmers visited Tully on the 7-07-04 and were impressed with the standard of bulls on display.
- Application forms for all breeds will be issued from the ICBF database. This hopefully will increase the number of bulls at Tully for breeds currently without BLUP figures. It will also facilitate the recording of future performance data directly from Tully to the database.



6. Knowledge Agriculture

- At a breakfast meeting in Dublin this morning a prominent group of scientists presented the results of a study to “... propose initiatives whereby dairy producers can enhance their competitiveness and secure their profitability for the future”. The role played by the EBI in helping solve the fertility problem currently causing concern around the world in dairy cattle was acknowledged as one initiative of great value.
- It was interesting to see the ideas contained in the EBI getting a wider application at this meeting. Prof Seamus Sheehy in his contribution made use, for the first time, of the economic values used in the EBI to evaluate the economic consequence of improved nutritional management on a dairy farm. This first, illustrates that the economic underpinnings of the EBI have wider application than just to breeding.

7. Genetic Evaluations

- The work on evaluating the impact of a change in base for milk traits from a 1995 base to a 2000 base as recommended by INTERBULL has now been completed.
- A change, if implemented, would result in PDs declining by 110kg milk, 4 kg fat and 4 kg protein. The impact on EBI would be a decline of €19. A decision on whether to implement this change in base will only be made after consultation with the industry at the meeting planned for 1st September.

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