



UPDATE – FOR WEEK 6ST MARCH TO 12TH MARCH 2004.

1. Tully Bull Sale – 6th March

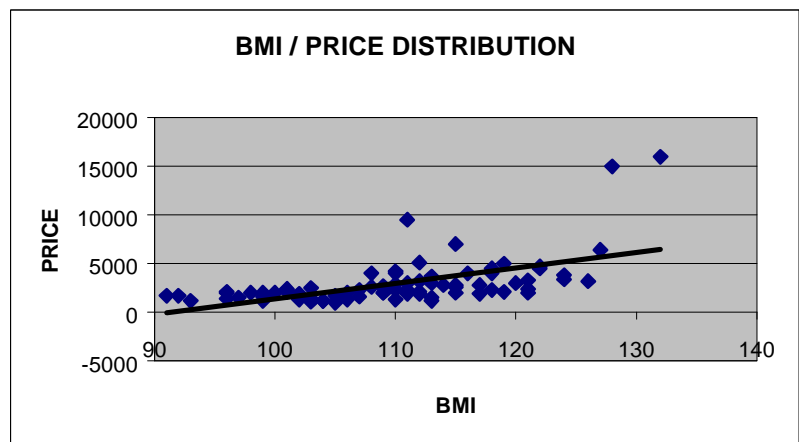
- The sale was well attended and the breeders of high merit animals well rewarded. The changes undertaken since the 2003 sale helped ensure a successful day. The only negative note was the low uptake of the top bulls by the Irish AI industry.

Figure 1. Summary of Tully Sale.

	Number	Avg (€)	Avg BMI
Sold	56	3,446	112
Unsold	23	1,770	104

- A total of 56 bulls were sold out of 79. This represents a 70% clearance of bulls in comparison to a 55% clearance of bulls in last year's sale. Bulls in each breed with a combination of good BLUP figures (where available), Performance Test figures, Bloodlines & general appearance sold well.

- In summary, an Irish AI Station purchased an Angus bull and a Northern Irish AI Company purchased a Limousin. A pedigree breeder in Yorkshire, England purchased another Angus. There was a strong trade for the remaining bulls with each breed recording good average prices.



- There was a good relationship between the Tully index for beef merit and sale price. See graph.

Figure 2. Relationship between sale price and beef merit index (BMI) in Tully sale.

- A review of the sale is being undertaken and the results will be considered at the next Beef Recording Technical Meeting (15th April).

- A special thanks to the team at Tully – Michael, Paul, John and Pat – for doing such a good job of ensuring the bulls were ready of the sale and very well presented on the day.

2. International Beef Genetic Evaluations

The Executive Board of ICAR has decided to support the proposal for an expansion of INTERBULL to provide international genetic evaluations services for **beef breeds and beef traits**. Work has commenced to determine the modifications to the governance and operation of INTERBULL required to support this expansion. A final decision is expected at the ICAR conference in late May 2004.

3. EBI Seminars – Farm Walks

- EBI farm walks were held on two farms this week, the Teagasc Moorepark farm and on the farm of Eamon Fagan, Athlone. The objective of the farm walks were to provide people from the AI industry and the dairy herdbooks with an opportunity to discuss the changes in EBI. Adding a "farm-walk" to the sessions afforded people the chance of viewing high EBI cows at grass.





- Some 25 people attended each session and the feed-back/response was very positive. Some of the issues that came up in discussion included:
 - Poor type figures for some high EBI bulls
 - Low reliability of proofs for some bulls (notably imported bulls)
 - Increased emphasis on CI and Survival (even though these traits have low heritability)
 - Decrease in relative emphasis on protein kg.
 - Increase in relative emphasis on fat kg
 - Concern that selection on EBI would reduce milk yield
- All of the above issues were well debated and whilst there was still some disagreement on specific issues, there was no-one disagreeing with the overall objective of the EBI.
- A small exercise carried out by the group demonstrated the benefits of EBI. On both farms, the five highest EBI cows were identified and the five lowest EBI cows were identified. The difference in average milk production performance, calving performance and EBI for cows on Eamon Fagans farm are given in the table below.

Cow FB No.	EBI	Lactation 2003	Days	M Kg	F Kg	P Kg	F%	P%	2002	2003	CI Days	
Top 5 EBI cows	€76.8	3.0	274	7,358	290.6	256.6	3.96%	3.49%	6-Mar	5-Mar	364.2	
Bottom 5 EBI cows	-€1.8	2.8	273	7,352	260.0	242.2	3.56%	3.31%	9-Feb	22-Mar	407.0	
Difference	€78.6		1	6	30.60	14.40	0.40%	0.18%			-43	
Economic Values				-€0.08	€1.50	€5.22					-€7.10	Overall
Profit/lactation				-€0.5	€46	€75.2					€303.9	€424.5

- Based on data from milk recording, one can see that on Eamon's farm the five high EBI cows left €424 more profit/lactation than the low EBI cows (equivalent to almost 6 cents/litre!). This was done through a combination of higher solids (+45 kg more solids) and shorter calving interval (-43 days). If further evidence was needed, Eamon confirmed that out of the group of 5 high EBI cows, 4 had since recalved, whilst only one of the low EBI cows had recalved. On viewing the high EBI cows "at work" all of the group agreed that they were sound functional cows, that were not just "pleasing to the eye" but also "doing the goods" in term of production performance.
- Based on the success of the 2 days, we propose to run another 7 farm walks during early April. These will be run in conjunction with Teagasc and will open to all dairy farmers in the respective areas.

4. Database Project

a) Newly Live Herdbooks

- 1,162 new pedigree registrations received during the past week - a big increase on previous weeks.
- There is a higher than expected amount of registrations being blocked from getting into the database because the breeders are entering the sire name rather than the sire code or sire herdbook number. ICBF will coordinate with the herd books next week as to the best way to tackle this issue going forward.
- 52 new beef herds added to the database and Animal Events materials have been issued
- A test Charolais BLUP extract was issued and the results are being evaluated before a live run is made.
- A further Limousin and Simmental BLUP extract will take place over the weekend.
- Training of the Piedmontese and Blonde d'Aquataine herd books took place today (Friday).
- Further clean-up work has taken place on the MRI and Jersey herd book data, mainly around putting death dates on older animals, for which the herd books previously did not indicate as being dead.
- Further tweaking of beef herd book intranet reports has taken place.



b) Other database activities

- A productive review of the workings of the Linear Scoring handheld has taken place with SORD this week and some actions that will increase the reliability and usability of the handheld are being undertaken.
- The final run of milk recording annual reports will take place on the database this weekend.
- Work on a two-week process to get EBI reports out to all Dairy Farmers will begin this weekend.
- Some requested updates to the cosmetics of the Milk Recording input sheet were completed this week. There is still one update to be completed, which should be done next week.

5. Milk Recording

a) Database Project

No. Herdowners Milk Recorded in IRIS = 4,416

Dairygold	1,633
Progressive	1,385
SWS	694
Kerry	450
Nenagh	124
Connacht Gold	120
Tipperary	10

No. Herd tests processed in IRIS = 15,717

Dairygold	7,618
Progressive	5,721
SWS	1,089
Kerry	521
Connacht Gold	430
Nenagh	328
Tipperary	10

b) Weekly Update

No. herd tests processed in last 7 days = 972. This is a new record for one week.

Progressive	348
Dairygold	210
SWS	200
Kerry	169 - 1st live recorder payment run from IRIS (Feb payments).
Connacht Gold	24
Nenagh	18
Tipperary	3

c) Default Drying off date

Currently if we get a calving date in for a cow but it's previous lactation is still open then we dry off one day before the calving date. As stated last week this is unsatisfactory. We are changing this default dry off date to now happen "**one day after last test in previous lactation**". This will come into effect Monday 22nd March 2004.

6. Milk Payment and EBI

In the period since the Dairy Breeding conference, I have participated in a number of meetings and discussions about the apparent conflict between the economic values used in the EBI and they way farmers are paid for the milk they supply. From these discussions it is clear that there are a number of issues that



need to be addressed by the dairy industry. We will continue to work with TEAGASC and all the interested parties to ensure the EBI accurately reflect the requirements of the customers for milk and milk products as well as reflecting cost of production and cost of processing.

Brian

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