



UPDATE – for period 9th to 13th August 2004

1. ICBF Board Meeting

- The Board will meet next Thursday (19th August) to give further consideration to ICBF's Strategic Plan. The proposal to establish a national progeny testing program for beef and dairy will also be considered.
- Papers for the meeting, which included a copy of the second quarter management accounts, were posted this week.

2. COWEL Project Team Meeting

- ICBF has been invited to join a consortium of similar organisations in Finland, Sweden and Estonia to support an application for EU Research funds. The essence of the research is that it will evaluate strategies that cattle breeders can use to prevent the loss of fertility and disease resistance associated with selection for production traits alone.
- Brian Wickham is representing ICBF at a meeting in Helsinki today to plan the next phase of applying for the EU research funds.

3. Focus of Cattle Breeding

- Sandrine Antunes returns to France today after a very productive few weeks with ICBF. Her work illustrates an important aspect of the way ICBF is seeking to increase the incomes of Irish cattle farmers.
- Sandrine has been focused on establishing a practical system for ensuring all foreign born ancestors of Irish cattle are correctly identified in the ICBF database. She worked with Charolais and Limousin cattle as a test case. She had the benefit of having direct access to the French database for these animals and was thus able to see not only how each animal is identified in Ireland but also how it is identified in France. The variations in the French system of identification over the last 30 years are just as numerous and complicated as they are in the Irish system!
- The problem faced by all herd books when they enter the pedigree details for foreign animals is knowing that they have the correct identification recorded. If an error is made it may not be picked up until international genetic evaluations are being computed by which time it is much too late to be making corrections. Useful information gets lost as a consequence.
- Firstly, Sandrine's work has demonstrated the importance of a single international identification for all animals, world-wide. A standard has been developed by INTERBULL and its use has been expanded to cover the beef breeds and females as well as males. Secondly, her work has identified the need for an electronic system for transferring identification and pedigree details for all animals (and semen) imported into Ireland. ICBF will commit further resources to ensuring the establishment of such a system for international use.
- How does this relate to the incomes of Irish cattle farmers? ICBF's genetic evaluation systems are being built to identify the best animals in the world for use in Ireland. This can only be done if all countries share a common standard for animal identification. International genetic evaluations based on animal performance then become possible and from this the most profitable can be identified and sourced for use on Irish farms. At stake is a large amount of future profitability on Irish cattle farms.



4. Tully

- The advertisement for the sale of the Bulls appeared in this weeks Journal together with some further support in John Shirley's column. First callers as a result of this advertisement began to arrive on Thursday afternoon. We are confident that there will be good interest in this group of bulls. Reports for this group of bulls will be posted on the web on Monday.
- The Angus bull caught up in the TB outbreak left for England on Thursday morning. The purchaser Mr. Geoff Lawn was most appreciative of the care taken of his bull and wished to convey his thanks to all concerned at ICBF.
- Applications for the next intake continue to flow in reflecting the great advantage of IRIS in identifying potential test bulls.
- Some of you may have had difficulty in contacting Michael this week, he has eventually been prevailed upon to take a week away from his bulls.

5. Database

Newly Live Herdbooks

- 254 new attempted pedigree registrations received during the past week.
- 9 new Herds added to the database.
- The weekly BLUP run for Limousin, Charolais, and Simmental animals was executed and the results will be available on Monday.
- Initial work has begun on the development of a beef genetic-evaluation extract.

Other database activities

- The Embryo Transfer data input has been in use this week and suggested amendments will be implemented within the coming week.
- The re-designed DNA processing function on the intranet is available for testing.
- An initial sample Shorthorn cert has been issued. Development is continuing on the cert.
- Development of a dry-off report is underway for autumn calving herds.
- Work on Milk Recording billing files is progressing.
- Essential maintenance will be carried out on the Database this coming Wednesday, 18th August 2004. The database will not be available from 5.30 pm until 9am the following morning.

6. Milk Recording

a) Database Project – Milk Recording

- No. Herdowners Milk Recorded in IRIS YTD = 6,106

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| Progressive | 2,090 |
| Dairygold | 1,580 |
| Kerry | 1,089 |
| SWS | 963 |
| Tipperary | 146 |
| Connacht Gold | 120 |
| Nenagh | 118 |



b) Weekly Update

- No. herd tests processed in last 7 days = 1,062

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Progressive | 441 |
| Dairygold | 214 |
| Kerry | 192 |
| SWS | 151 |
| Tipperary | 22 |
| Connacht Gold | 21 |
| Nenagh | 21 |

7. Genetic Evaluations

a) Calving Interval and Survival

The cumulative effect of the changes introduced in the calving interval and survival evaluation on the final proofs (See Update of July 23, 2004) were deemed to warrant discussion with the industry before implementation. It was therefore decided that the data edit criteria, genetic evaluation model and proof conversion method used in the April 2004 evaluation should be used for the current set of proofs. New CIS proofs were therefore re-computed this week. Correlation between the August and May domestic CIS proofs was 0.99 for SU and CI respectively. The impact of the changes announced earlier will be discussed with the industry with a view to implementation in the future.

b) Calving Performance Test Evaluation

Results of the latest test evaluation of calving survey data was released to the AI industry today. Only sires with minimum reliability for calving difficulty of 70% or greater have been included in the listing. Where proofs for gestation length and mortality were >70% and >50% respectively for a given sire, then these have been published. Otherwise, they have been omitted. Correlations between these proofs and equivalent proofs from the Old method were relatively high (0.61 for calving difficulty and 0.84 for gestation length).

We are currently working on defining a suitable genetic base against which proofs for all breeds can be compared. The proposed base and its impact on the proofs will be discussed at the next beef/AI technical meeting's (1st September) with a view to its implementation in the next official calving performance evaluations.

c) Proof Publication.

The latest official proofs for production, conformation calving interval and survival traits are currently being loaded into the IRIS database with a view to publication on Wednesday next week. The delay in publication was partly due to the re computation of calving interval and survival proofs using the same procedure as in May 2004.

8. Linear Inspection

The annual Lift inspections are due to commence next week. About 2400 animals, progeny 41 sires across 300 herds will be inspected over the next 4 weeks by IHFA linear inspectors.



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