



UPDATE – FOR WEEK 5TH FEBRUARY TO 13TH FEBRUARY 2004.

1. Board Meeting – Wednesday 18th February

- Papers for next weeks meeting were posted in Wednesday 11th.
- The agenda includes 2003 management accounts, the outcome of the dairy breeding conference and the recent review of the EBI.

2. Calving Survey Genetic Evaluations

- On Tuesday the research group (led by Roel Veerkamp) developing the new genetic evaluation system for calving difficulty and gestation length met with herd book and AI representatives to present a progress report.
- A prototype system for an across breed evaluation using animal events and historical progeny test data has been developed. Initial results for calving ease and gestation length evaluations were presented and discussed. Results a sample of AI bulls, based on a sample of all data available, for all breeds were distributed for a “confidential” review and feedback to the research team.

3. Review of EBI

- The review of the economic weights in the EBI has been completed and following consultation with the AI Industry on Tuesday and discussion at last weeks Dairy Cattle Breeding Conference the recommendations of the review group are now being implemented.
- The new economic weights in the EBI are as follows:

Trait	Past (implemented Feb 2001)		New (implemented 11 th February 2004)	
	€per unit of trait	Relative emphasis (% of total)	€per unit of trait	Relative emphasis (% of total)
Milk volume (kg)	-0.08	20	-0.08	17
Fat (kg)	0.86	8	1.50	12
Protein (kg)	5.70	42	5.22	32
Survival (%)	11.40	23	10.77	18
Calving Interval (days)	-2.07	8	-7.09	22

- The review took account of a number of factors including:
 - ❖ Revised replacement heifer costs.
 - ❖ Up-to-date lactation curves.
 - ❖ Updated milk levies, processing, transport and cooling costs.
 - ❖ Inflation.
 - ❖ Projected quota purchasing costs.
 - ❖ Forecast changes due to implementation of the Fischler reforms (milk price, cull cow returns and surplus calf returns).



- The decision has been driven by "what is best for Irish dairy farmers". At the AI Industry consultation meeting and last weeks dairy breeding conference attended by 115 people the results of the review were subject to debate. The key issue being the assumptions on which the values are based. The review team provided explanations of the key factors - milk price, production costs, quota leasing cost, processing costs and lactation curves (for cows with different calving patterns). From their explanations it was clear that the assumptions were "middle of the road" and well supported by economic projections from respected industry sources.
- Our focus will now move to the issues associated with implementing the change and ensuring the education and extension campaigns to farmers provide clear and consistent explanations of the changes. Discussions to this end are now underway. We are working with IHFA, TEAGASC and the AI Industry to finalise the details of this important change.
- The timetable for the release of February's dairy genetic evaluations is as follows:
 - ❖ Milk production, linear type, calving interval & survival and EBI proofs will be available for all AI sires (domestic and foreign) on Wednesday 18th February on a "confidential basis" to the AI industry and will be made "public" on the ICBF website on Monday 23rd February.
 - ❖ The slight delay is to ensure that all foreign files are up to date (for calving interval and survival proofs) and to allow sufficient time for data checking following the updating of the EBI formula.

4. Database Project

a) Newly Live Herdbooks

- 175 new pedigree registrations received during the past week.
- 204 new Beef Herds added to the database and Animal Events materials have been issued.
- BLUP files received for Limousin (using linear score data collected under the new system and extracted from the database) and Charolais (using linear score data collected under the old system) and will be loaded to the database immediately.
- A 'Fast-Track' enquiry function has been distributed to the herdbooks this week. Feedback on desired enhancements has been requested.
- The Montbeliarde Society data has been loaded to the production database. The herd book administrator will be at ICBF next week for training.
- The Jersey Cattle Society data has been loaded to the database and testing on a number of herds is continuing.
- Work on both Montbeliarde and Jersey pedigree certificates will continue next week.
- Enhancements to the DNA functionality have been continuing

b) Other database activities

- The loading of the latest EBI figures with the new weightings is taking place over the coming days.
- Continued support of the transfer of herds from IDRC to IRIS for milk recording is taking place.
- Efforts to achieve stability with the SORD handheld linear scoring application are continuing. Scores are continuing to flow into the database, though some problems are still being encountered.
- The distribution of annual milk recording reports for 2004 through the Milk Recording Societies has begun and will continue over the next couple of weeks.

5. Tully Report



- Plans for the Tully Sale 6th March 2004 are proceeding.
- The sale catalogue is available on the ICBF website. Test results will be added next week.

6. Milk Recording

a) Database Project - Milk Recording

No. Herdowners Milk Recorded in IRIS = 3,588

Dairygold	1,605
Progressive	1,261
SWS	391
Nenagh	124
Connacht Gold	120
Kerry	87

No. Herd tests processed in IRIS = 12,843

Progressive	6,810
Dairygold	4,725
SWS	565
Connacht Gold	348
Nenagh	287
Kerry	108

b) Weekly Update - No. herd tests processed in last 7 days = 432

Progressive	212
Dairygold	108
SWS	71
Connacht Gold	23
Kerry	14
Nenagh	4

Tipperary - Last IDRC increment taken from Tipp Co-op this week. All Input sheets from now on will be from IRIS.

c) Milk Recording - DIY Electronic Meters

On Wed 11th and Thu 12th trials of the new Tru Test Electronic Milk Meter (TTEMM) were conducted on 2 Dairygold farms. Nick Howarth from Tru Test NZ was in support for the trials. Trials were a success with the herd test details being recorded and downloaded directly to database - no paper used - all electronic. Summary Details as follows;

Tue 10th

- Ensured Meters and data handlers were charged.
- Electronically uploaded 2 herds' settings and cow IDs from the database to the Data Handlers (1 herd to 1 data handler).
- Dropped off meters and respective data handler and bar-coded vials to first farm (7 units)

Wed 11th

- AM milking recorded by farmer electronically - barcode no of vial, AM weight and cow ID all stored to Data Handler. Also other details of animal stored - milking start /end time, and milk flow rate.
- PM milking recorded by farmer electronically - barcode no. of vial, PM weight and cows ID all stored to Data Handler. Also other details of animal stored - milking start /end time, and milk flow rate.
- Hot wash and meters taken away.



- Print out of weights by cow left with farmer. Data handler links to small portable pocket printer powered from cigarette lighter in car. Also counts and list of any missed or sick cows. Battery status of meters & data handler also logged.
- Data Handler plugged into remote PC and results of Herd downloaded to PC and e-mailed to database.
- Results Loaded successfully to database next day.

Thu 12th / Fri 13th

- Repeat on second farm (9 units) - again loaded 2nd herds' test results to data base next day..
- Vials from both farms dropped to Lab for analysis with the results to ICBF Fri night.

Next Step: Now that the meters are seen to work on Irish farms we will expand out to more Dairygold herds in next weeks to maximize utilization and gather more feedback. At the end of March we plan a stage review with Tru Test and progress will be reported then.

7. Office Move

- Unpacking after last weeks move is now complete and we have settled into our “new” premises.
- A search is underway to find a suitable name for the building we are located in. All suggestions will be welcomed and given due consideration.

8. Change

The new EBI that was finalized this week places more weight on increased fat yield (but still with protein receiving 3.5 times as much weight as fat) and more weight on reducing calving interval than the EBI used for the last three years. These changes are a result of two factors. Firstly, the economics of milk production have changed with lower milk prices and higher production costs. Secondly, we now have better knowledge of the biology of milk production.

Because the EBI is being used for breeding decisions, which impact on farm profitability over many years, it is most important that it be as accurate as possible. It is for this reason that it must be continually updated as new information becomes available.

In many ways the recent changes to the EBI are a model for the entire operation of cattle breeding in Ireland. That is, we must be continually reviewing all operations in the light of new knowledge and implementing those changes that maximize the future profitability of farming in Ireland. This will require new organizational structures as well as new services and new ways of operating. Our challenge is to understand how our services impact on farm profitability and then to find ways of improving them, so that farm profitability benefits.

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