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## UPDATE – FOR PERIOD 8<sup>TH</sup> TO 14<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2004.

### 1. Annual General Meeting

- The AGM was held on Thursday.
- In his Chairman's report John Malone emphasized that ICBF was now up and running with a database that is world-class.
- Brian Wickham in the Chief Executive's report highlighted the large contribution that the optimal breeding scheme design can make to farmers incomes. ICBF is working to ensure this potential is realized.
- Ernst & Young were appointed as Auditors following a review of proposals from four firms.
- It was announced that John Malone was stepping down as Chairman and as DAF's appointment to the Board of ICBF. John O'Sullivan will replace him as Chairman and Dave Beehan as DAF's appointment to the Board.
- ICBF's Irish Cattle Breeding Statistics for 2003 were launched at the meeting (see attached for highlights).
- The meeting expressed its appreciation and congratulations to John Malone for his leadership and excellent work in bringing all the parties together to get ICBF established and operational.

### 2. Board Meeting

- The Board met on Thursday.
- Decisions taken included:
  - (a) To recommend to the AGM the appointment of Ernst & Young as Auditors for 2004.
  - (b) To accept the Irish Shorthorn Society Limited into membership of ICBF.
  - (c) That ICBF work in concert with industry stakeholders in the development of proposals in relation to the use of modulation funds.
  - (d) That the July Board meeting be extended to provide time to consider ICBF's future Strategy & Direction.
  - (e) To endorse actions taken in relation to improving the process for implementing changes to the EBI.
  - (f) To appoint John O'Sullivan as Chairman.

### 3. Calving Survey Genetic Evaluations

- The next consultation meeting for the new calving survey evaluation system is being held next week on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May starting at 10:30 in Hotel Kilkenny. Background material for this meeting has been emailed today.

### 4. Dairy Genetic Evaluations

- The next herd-book and AI consultation meeting for dairy genetic evaluations will be held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May starting at 14:00 at Hotel Kilkenny. The agenda for this meeting was distributed last week.
- Interbull evaluations were officially released on Monday as planned. Rear teat placement was included in the Interbull run by Ireland and UK for the first time this run but most Irish bulls are missing this trait. Efforts are in progress to extract this data for the Irish bulls for the next run.
- Foreign proofs from Germany and Italy were available for conversion for the first time this run. This brings to a total of 8 countries whose bulls now have converted Irish proofs for calving interval and survival. The table below shows a breakdown of the number of bulls with proofs from various sources and countries.
- Calving difficulty evaluation results were updated this week following preliminary checks last week. The proofs were released to the industry today as planned ahead of discussions at next week's consultation meeting.



- The release of official production and CIS proofs has been put off till Monday. This delay was due to the delay in obtaining all required files from the cooperating countries. Even though work on the proofs from all sources has been completed today, they have to be loaded to the Database so that they can be released with the up-to-date additional information from IRIS.

Table 1. Total number of Irish and Foreign bulls with calving Interval and survival proofs.

<u>Source of proof</u>	<u>Total number of bull proofs Converted</u>	<u>Number Originating from this country</u>	<u>% originating from this country</u>	<u>Number With Irish Daughters</u>
Ireland Rel>50%	No Blending required			1459
Ireland Rel<50%	No foreign proofs for blending			15672
Denmark	4462	4247	95	529
France	7959	6085	76	309
Germany	11,381	9393	83	254
Italy	4580	4580	100	44
Netherlands	8390	6352	76	906
NewZealand	8236	6379	77	77
UK	7869	4785	61	610
USA	152588	148490	97	528

## 5. Database Project

### a) Newly Live Herdbooks

- 1,254 new attempted pedigree registrations received this week.
- Animal Events registrations in general have not reduced significantly as in the past at this time, due to the later calving pattern of the newly added beef herds.
- 67 new Beef Herds added to the database.
- BLUP reports and Pedigree Certificates were issued to the Limousin Society - a batch was also issued to the Charolais Society for testing.
- A significant number of the items on Breed Society Task List's have gone through final testing and outputs will begin to flow next week.

### b) Other database activities

- The latest dairy genetic evaluations will be added to the database this weekend.
- Preparation for the issuing of the Spring Calving reports will begin this weekend with a view to having them issued within 10 days.
- Parallel testing of the revised 'New Herds' process is ongoing.
- Extensive work is continuing on removing older records being held for correction in the IRIS front porch. It is aimed to have this work largely complete by the end of May.

## 6. Milk Recording

### a) Database Project - Milk Recording

- No. Herdowners Milk Recorded in IRIS = 5,877

Progressive	1,737
Dairygold	1,707
Kerry	1,076
SWS	961
Nenagh	136



Tipperary	135
Connacht Gold	125

- Weekly Update - No. herd tests processed in last 7 days = 1,157

Progressive	379
Dairygold	319
Kerry	200
SWS	188
Connacht Gold	24
Arrabawn	13
Tipperary	34

#### b) Electronic Milk Meters (EMM) – DIY recording update

- The DIY EMM trial has now been running for over 3 months.
- 18 herd owners are successfully DIY recording using the EMMs, with most having completed 3 recordings.
- At this stage we will do a routine measurement accuracy check (3 month usage) on the meters. To this end we have sent 12 meters to Tru Test in Denmark for Calibration. (Tru Test have the specific Calibration equipment in their lab in Denmark).

#### c) Diary Reminder – 9<sup>th</sup> June

- On Wed 9<sup>th</sup> June, we will be holding an industry conference on DIY Electronic Milk Recording.
- Venue will be Teagasc, Moorepark Fermoy.
- In the morning session we will be hearing how countries like Denmark and New Zealand operate the EMM system (both have over 80% of their Dairy herds Milk Recording!).
- In the afternoon we will review the Irish EMM project and discuss an operational model for EMM in Ireland. Invites will be issued next week, so keep the diary free for June 9<sup>th</sup>.

#### 7. Tully

- The Department of Agriculture have looked at the field where the December '03 intake are moving to and have given their approval.
- Quotations have been received for fencing the field and a contractor has been chosen. Fencing will start on 21-5-04.
- A date has been set for the next TB test of these bulls with result due on 24-5-04.

#### 8. Looking to the Future – A Good Example

On Thursday John Malone stepped down as the Chairman of ICBF and as DAF's appointment to the Board of ICBF. It is thus appropriate to reflect on ICBF's achievements under John's leadership over the last seven years since he took on the role of chairing the Interim Board in 1997.

In 1997, and this was before I had even heard of ICBF, John and a number of other forward thinkers decided that Irish cattle breeding should be more focused on the needs of farmers and that it should have a world-class information infrastructure. This vision for a better future was shared with the farm organisations, IFA and ICMSA, and with the wider cattle breeding industry. Since then John has provided the leadership that has enabled a whole series of problems and obstacles to be surmounted. There have been many financial, political and technical problems that have been overcome over these last seven years. Never once has John been daunted by the problems and a solution has always been found. Today we have a cattle-breeding database, at least for dairy but soon for beef, that is world-class and a genetic evaluation system to match. This could not have been achieved without John's clear vision, cool head and quiet determination.



John's example of focusing on the long term goal and treating all problems along the way as merely obstacles to be overcome illustrates how great progress can be made. We can all take a lesson from this and follow John's example as we move Irish cattle breeding forward into the future.

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**ICBF Cattle Breeding Statistics Report (2003) – Key Trends****ICBF Annual General Meeting  
Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2004.**

Key trends from the ICBF Cattle Breeding Statistics Report (2003) include:

- 15% of births in National calf registration database are now via the ICBF “Animal Events” system. The number of Animal Events births increased from 283,967 in 2002 to 333,785 (up 17.5%). These were across 7,018 milk-recording herds. Of these 333,785 births, some 82% had valid sire information and 70% had information on calving performance (which equates to a 20-fold increase in data-recording compared to previous systems).
- The number of Animal Event births is expected to increase even further in 2004 – a further 6,000 pedigree beef herds started using the Animal Events system in January 2004. It is anticipated that “Animal Events” will be open to all beef and dairy herds from January 2005.
- 50% increase in pedigree registrations within the IHFA herdbook, up from 60,593 in 2002 to 90,363 in 2003 (pedigree registrations in the IHFA herdbook are recorded via the Animal Events system). Beef herdbooks have stayed relatively constant.
- 32% of cows and 22% of herds involved in milk recording. Proportion of cows in milk recording has dropped slightly. Furthermore, the average herd-size has reduced, suggesting that some larger herds have exited milk recording.
- 17% increase in SCC between 2002 and 2003. Average SCC for cows in milk recording (some 350,000 cows) increased from 182,000 cells/ml to 213,000 cells/ml in 2003. This trend was apparent across all lactations and was largest for animals in lactations 4-5 (the increase for animals in these parity groups was typically around 45,000 cells/ml).
- Increase in total milk solids production from 426.3 kg/lactation to 432.8 kg/lactation (up 1.5%). Rate of increase has been higher in protein production, with butterfat content reducing from 3.71% to 3.67%
- 8% drop in 1<sup>st</sup> inseminations through technician AI services. This trend is consistent with previous years (1<sup>st</sup> inseminations have dropped from 835,190 in 2000 to 656,702 in 2003 – a drop of some 21% in overall terms). AI penetration rate (including DIY inseminations) now 42%.
- 25% reduction in the number of dairy and beef bulls going onto progeny test in last 5 years.
- Sustained genetic improvement in muscle and skeletal EBV’s within the Charolais, Limousin and Simmental breeds (1.0 EBV unit/annum).
- First signs of genetic improvement with the Holstein Friesian breed for fertility traits (e.g., Calving Interval has decreased by –0.6 days for calves born since 2002). Similar trends are apparent for Survival. These are the first indications that selection decisions based on EBI (EBI was first introduced in February 2001) are starting to correct the decline in fertility performance.

The full cattle breeding statistics report will be available for downloading next week from the ICBF website – <http://www.icbf.com>