



## **UPDATE – for period 16<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2005**

### **1 Cattle Breeding – Important Dates**

- **14:00 – 16:00 Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, Heritage Hotel, Port Laois.** ICBF Annual General Meeting.
- **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> May, Abbeyleix Manor Hotel.** ICBF Beef Industry meeting 10.30am-1.00pm, ICBF Dairy Industry meeting 2.00pm-4.00pm.

### **2 Summary of Meetings held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April**

#### **Numerically Small Herd Books**

- Since the previous meeting of this group in Kilkenny over a year ago a tremendous amount has been achieved towards the putting in place of a totally fair system of genetic evaluation. The key element was the central database and the fact that a large bulk of data could be obtained from the non-pedigree sector.
- Difficulties are being experienced with the lack of availability of A.I. service records on the database. This was mainly due to breeders and A.I. technicians not adhering to the protocols laid down three years previously, where the last five digits of the NID for each cow would be recorded with each insemination. ICBF's main strategy for solving this problem has been the development of the hand-held computer recording system for A.I. technicians. This had been trailed successfully, but to work properly relied upon the herd participating in Animal Events. In the short term, while efforts are made to recruit all herds using AI into Animal Events, AI organisations are being encouraged to comply with the recommended protocol, farmers are being encouraged to record DIY inseminations through Animal Events and ICBF will process breeding chart data at the end of the current mating season.
- ICBF has been providing a very high level of technical support for the herd books. This cannot be sustained for such a small numbers of registrations per year. ICBF is replacing it this with an email held desk system. Herd Books are being encouraged to explore options for reducing their need for support.
- The meeting was advised that the numerically small breeds should:
  - a. Carefully follow up on each and every user of a stock bull,
  - b. Make sure they were signed onto AE, and
  - c. Were made fully aware they must have valid contemporary groups.
- Thus, by whatever incentive a society could afford, farmers purchasing stock bulls of their breed must be encouraged to use link sires through A.I. It was imperative that any link sire used was the best available representative of the breed and ideally will have been used heavily in the "home" population for the breed.
- Breeders should make full use of their herd register to locate the herds to which stock bulls are sold.
- There was concensus that the meeting was an excellent forum for sharing information and it should be held every six months.

#### **Database Operations Review for Herdbooks joining the database in 2004**

- The latest statistics for Animal Events and herd book registrations show that there was an increase in registrations in 2004 compared with 2003 and that, for all breeds, there is now a very large amount of data now available for non-pedigree animals.
- The prototype system for making herd book animal and breeder information available via the Web was discussed. It was agreed that everything possible should be available via each breed society's web site.
- A solution is under development for the recent delays experienced with notification of movement records for bulls entering and leaving Tully.



- ICBF is to approach DAF in relation to a number of ideas for streamlining calf registration.
- At the request of the Herd Books, ICBF is to explore options for providing standardised data for
  - a) pedigree show catalogues and
  - b) sale catalogues for both pedigree and non-pedigree cattle.
- Great appreciation was expressed for the support provided by ICBF staff & contractors over the change over period.

### Beef Technical Meeting

- The meeting comprised progress reports from ICBF in relation to developments relevant to beef breeding.
- Michael Barron provided a summary of developments at Tully since it was taken over from DAF by ICBF. The Centre is holding a second sale in 2005 at the end of April. The selection process for bulls to enter Tully will change when the new evaluations are available. ICBF will call a meeting of interested parties prior to implementing significant changes. A suggestion to give prominence to 400 day weights was declined.
- Nicholas Grubb gave an update on the linear scoring service. Over 16,000 animals had been scored in the current session (Sept'04 to Apr'05). There had been virtually zero complaints either in scoring standard or cost. ICBF were now at the stage of having all the data analysed by Roel Veerkamp's team and this would form part of a root and branch re appraisal and re equipping of the whole system scheduled for the middle of July.
- Good progress had been made on the principle of private bull ownership in AI. It was now up to breed societies to make sure that they had good bulls entering the system. They couldn't expect the A.I. to mind this for them.
- The Teagasc National Food Centre was now actively involved in calibrating the yield determining characteristics of the new VBS grading machines. Furthermore "E plus V" the German manufacturers had been persuaded to lend a VBG USDA approved grading machine, which would be absolutely vital in giving an objective means of assessing marbling in progeny test cattle as well as on larger numbers of Hereford and Angus crosses.
- Herd Books should now be thinking of using the new database and genetic evaluation system to find the top five percent of their breeding females and be planning to mate these to the best available, preferably outcross bulls they could find. The resultant progeny could then be screened for Tully and eventual progeny test.
- Andrew Cromie provided the meeting with an update on the development of the beef genetic evaluations and the GEN€ IR€LAND program for dairy and beef.

### 3 EU Technology Platform

- ICBF was represented, by Dr Wickham, at an EU meeting in Brussels called to determine if there was sufficient support for Animal Breeding to be established as a Technology Platform. The concept of Technology Platforms is that Industry would define a Strategic Research Agenda in an area where achieving Europe's growth, competitiveness and sustainability objective is dependent on major research and technological advances in the medium to long term.
- The meeting included representatives from a wide range of Industry, Research, and Farming interests.
- The meeting strongly supported proceeding to the next step in the process - creation of a "Vision Document".
- Technology Platforms currently exist for a twenty areas including; plants for the future, and global animal health.



- Further progress is expected by the end of 2005.

#### 4 Tully

- Performance test results for the December intake which will be for sale in Tully on 30-4-04 will be up on the ICBF web site next Monday.
- Judging of the FBD prizes will now take place on Monday. Breeders of the prize winning bulls will be notified in writing on Tuesday 26-4-05.
- A group of 20 commercial beef farmers from Derry will visit Tully on Tuesday 26-4-05.

#### 5 GENE IRELAND

Work on the GENE IRELAND progeny test program (a joint initiative involving ICBF, National Cattle Breeding Centre and Dovea AI) has continued this week with particular focus on the following areas:

- **Signing up herds** – to date some 125 dairy herds have signed up to the program. The target for Spring 2005 is 150 herds.
- **Inbreeding reports** – Inbreeding reports have been developed for the participating herd-owners. These reports advise the farmers of potential close matings between GENE IRELAND test bulls and cows on their farm.
- **Semen dispatch** – over 100 herds have now received their first batch of GENE IRELAND semen (10 high EBI young bulls \* 5 straws/bull).
- **Semen collection** – over 20 young bulls have had semen collected at this stage (from an original group of 25 bulls). This work is taking place at Ballyvourisheen, Mallow.
- **Farmer meetings** – a further 2 farmers meetings were held this week (Mallow & Castleisland). The meetings were well attended (approximately 30 farmers in total), with feedback from the meetings very positive. Further farmer meetings have been scheduled for next week at the following venues:

**Monday 25<sup>th</sup> April River Side Hotel, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford**

**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April Headfort Arms Hotel, Kells, Co. Meath**

**Wed. 27<sup>th</sup> April Anner Hotel, Thurles, Co. Tipperary**

**Thurs. 28<sup>th</sup> April Hotel Minilla, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary**

Attention is now switching to the beef herds, where a similar approach is being planned for beef progeny testing. Over the course of the next few weeks, GENE IRELAND will be contacting and signing up beef herds keen to be involved in the program. An attractive incentive package is currently being finalized for these herds and will involve; synchronization, complimentary test bull semen, pregnancy check and cash incentives.

#### 6 Letter to high EBI herds

Letters are presently being prepared for posting next week to some 1,150 herd owners with one or more high EBI cows. The objective of the letter is to highlight to these herd-owners that;

- a) they have high EBI cows, and
- b) to give advise regarding the mating of these cows this Spring.

The letter has been posted in conjunction with NCBC, who are currently purchasing high EBI male calves on Irish dairy farms. A draft copy of the letter is attached.



## 7 Inbreeding Advice.

At the request of Teagasc, ICBF have developed a “quick-guide” to close matings for advisors and farmers. The quick-guide takes bulls from the ICBF Active Bull List 2005 and checks inbreeding co-efficients against the 20 most popular sires from the recent Herd EBI Listings (Spring 2005). Explanatory material has also been provided.

## 8 Peter Amer Visit.

Dr. Peter Amer (Abacus International) will be visiting ICBF for the next 2 weeks. The purpose of his visit is to commence work on beef index developments for 2005/2006. The key areas of work will include:

- Future prices for beef product (steers, heifers, cull cows & animals for export).
- Future quality differentials for beef product.
- Future labour costs associated with beef cattle production.
- Future costs of difficult calving & calf mortality.

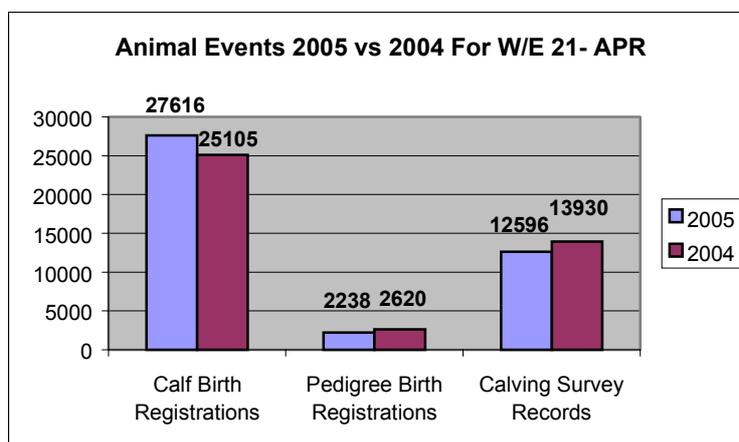
A number of meetings have been scheduled with key beef industry personnel to discuss these and other related issues. Peter’s visit will culminate with a beef industry review meeting which will take place on **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> May in the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel (10.30 AM - 1 PM)**. **Roel Veerkamp** (Animal Breeding Group, Wageningen) will also be in attendance at the meeting to discuss developments in genetic evaluations for beef production traits.

## 9 Milk Recording

Milk Recording Organisation	Herds Recorded Week 15/04/05 - 22/04/05	2004 Herds Recorded Week Ending - 23/04/04
Progressive	431	382
Dairygold	232	344
SWS	169	210
Kerry	196	259
Tipperary	35	27
Connacht	13	30
Arrabawn	11	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,087</b>	<b>1,269</b>

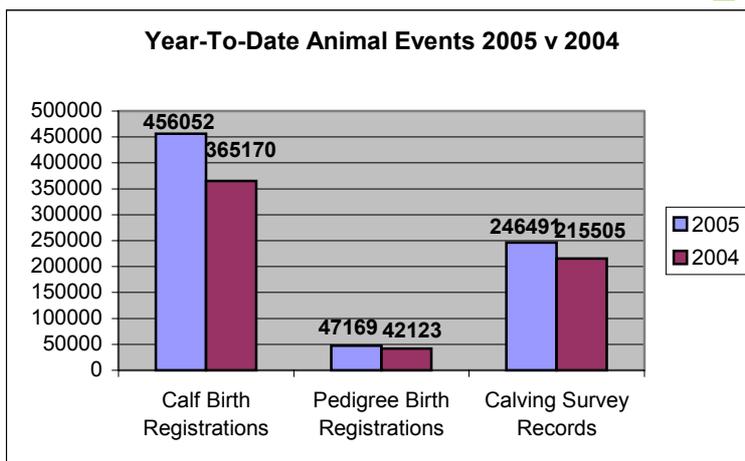
## 10 Database Update

- 84 New Herds added to the database. 17,267 herds signed up to the ICBF database have registered calves in 2005. The total for 2004 was just over 14,000. This is an increase of 23%.
- Comment from the staff in the Animal Events (AE) office: ***"Number of AE sheet coming in decreasing a little. The inflow of new herd permission forms is staying steady."***

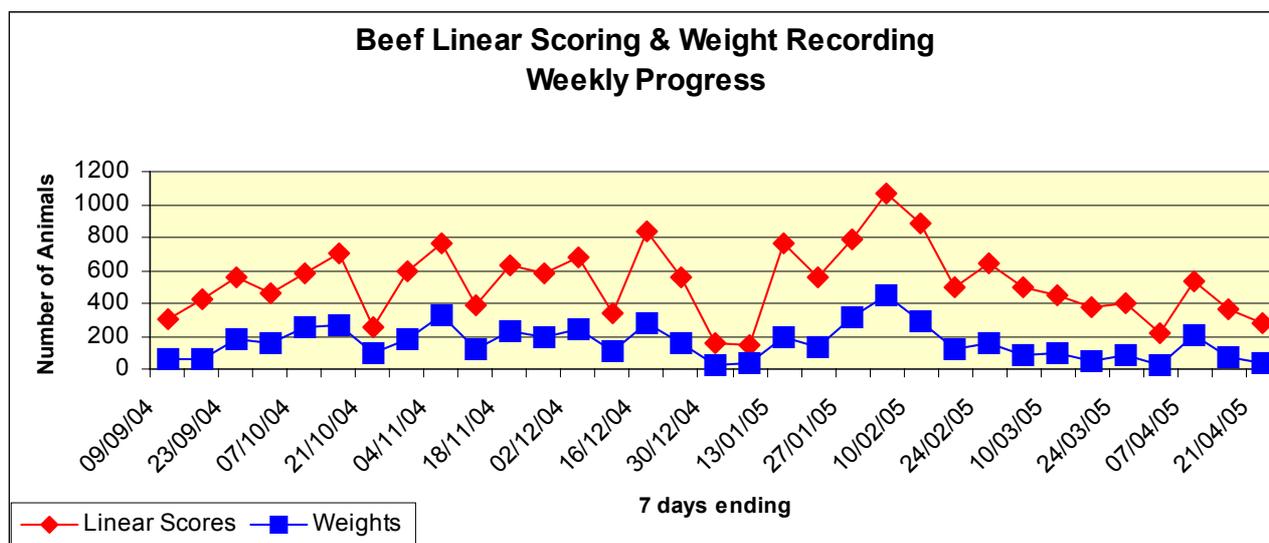




- Teagasc clients have now returned 4,701 Teagasc-ICBF permission forms. Teagasc advisor web access to reports is now live and is being used regularly by Teagasc advisors.
- The development work on the herdbook web based 'Animal Search' function was well received at the Herdbook Operations meeting this week, with the herdbooks encouraging further expansion of the development as soon as possible.
- The redesign of the linear scoring application is moving forward and it is expected to have an outline design completed at the end of next week.
- The generation of files for the May dairy genetic evaluation run have been completed and the files for Interbull are being prepared.
- A redesign of the Milk Recording Reports farmer batch has been completed and testing will begin next week. This, along with other work we will be doing over the next few weeks, should help to relieve some of the problems that have caused the database to be slow at times for the member organisations.



## 11 Beef Linear Scoring & Weight Recording



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Name  
Address 1  
Address 2  
Address 3.  
Address 4.

## YOU MAY HAVE A BULL DAM

21<sup>st</sup> April 2005

Dear Herdowner,

Yours is one of 1,150 herds in Ireland containing cows with high EBI's. We are writing to all such herds to bring to their attention recent developments in Irish cattle breeding and to suggest bulls to use on these cows this mating season.

Earlier this year the National Cattle Breeding Centre (**NCBC**), a joint venture between the breeding programmes and studs of Munster Cattle Breeding Society and Progressive Genetics was formed. This new organisation is focusing on identifying the optimal genetics for Irish herds and is doing this by focusing on:

- Selecting "high EBI" young bulls from Irish and international cow families.
- Progeny testing these bulls in Irish dairy herds.
- Making program graduates available to Irish dairy farmers through AI.

The **NCBC** will be selecting "high EBI" young bulls from Irish farms.

Your herd contains cows that may be of interest to their programme now and in the future.

**ICBF** has provided **NCBC** with information on high EBI bull calves recently born in Ireland and you may be contacted by **NCBC** if you have one of these out of a high EBI cow and by a high EBI sire.

Going forward, **NCBC** will be purchasing a considerable number of bull calves annually from top EBI cows, so it is vital that these cows are mated to the top EBI sires available. So, for the coming breeding season, if you would like to maximise your chance of breeding a bull calf that meets **NCBC's** criteria, please ensure your high EBI cows (in excess of EBI €60) are milk recorded and bred to a suitable high EBI sire, from the **ICBF** Active Sire List, the list below or one of the young bulls from the **GENE IRELAND** list of young bulls (if you are a participant in that program).

The following additional Sires are also suitable for mating to high EBI cows:

<b><u>SIRE</u></b>	<b><u>EBI</u></b>	<b><u>SUPPLIER</u></b>
QGZ (QG EARL CV)	€98	Munster / Progressive Genetics
KTE (KELSTEIN W 132 CV)	€93	Munster / Progressive Genetics
STX (DELTA STILIST)	€84	Munster / Progressive Genetics
PGZ (PEGASE)	€78	Munster / Progressive Genetics
DXA (DE CROB ADEPT)	€78	Munster / Progressive Genetics
RIL (NARISTIC LO)	€62	Munster / Progressive Genetics

You might also consider having your high EBI cows, if you have not already done so, registered and classified by the Irish Holstein Friesian Association to enhance their value.

If you require any further information please contact **NCBC**'s representative:

Robert Helen, **Tel:** 023 38076, **Mobile:** 086 859 0621, **Email:** [roberthelen@eircom.net](mailto:roberthelen@eircom.net)

Yours sincerely



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