



UPDATE – for period 17th – 23rd December 2005



*Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year from all
at Irish Cattle Breeding Federation*

1 Important Dates

- ✚ **Thursday 19th January.** Tully review meeting to finalise plans for sale on Saturday 4th March.
- ✚ **Herds Not Using Animal Events** – a campaign to encourage more herds to use the Animal Events forms for calf registration will be run jointly with TEAGASC and ICBF's members in early 2006.
- ✚ **Herds with high EBI dairy and beef bulls** – a series of meetings to help beef and dairy breeders ensure they can meet the health requirements of AI Centres and Tully is being organised jointly with CVERA, Veterinarians, TEAGASC and AI service providers. The key presentations will address the steps a herd owner can take to ensure freedom from diseases such as Johnes, IBR, and BVD in the animals destined for Tully and or AI. The meetings will include a special session for beef breeders to learn more about the new indexes for beef cattle.

Date and Location of Meetings for Breeders of high merit dairy and beef cattle	
Date	Location
Tuesday 24 th January	Macroom
Wednesday 25 th January	Kilcoran
Thursday 26 th January	Kells
Tuesday 31 st January	Carlow
Wednesday 1 st February	Carrick on Shannon
Thursday 2 nd February	Lough Rea

Timetable and Topics to be Discussed	
Approximate Time	Topic
14:00 – 14:30	Set scene & identifying high genetic merit animals.
14:30 – 16:00	Herd health initiative, understanding & dealing with diseases.
16:00 – 17:00	New beef evaluations

- ✚ **Thursday 2nd February.** ICBF Board meeting.

2 Proposals for Consideration by the Breeding Industry

Three proposals were distributed this week for consideration by the breeding industry.

- ✚ The Breeding Information Service discussion paper was provided to all member organisations who were not on the initial distribution list. Discussions with interested groups have been continuing.
- ✚ A proposal that ICBF and its members adopt a code of good practise for breeding animals was distributed to all member organisations. Members have been asked to give their views on the proposal.
- ✚ A draft proposal for a Genetic Improvement Incentive Scheme has been provided to all member organisations and the private AI sector. Views are being sought with the objective of taking an agreed proposal forward early in 2006.





3 AI Handheld Support Team

Training commenced this week in Bandon for the three field support technicians.

John Moloney, Craig Vigors and Raymond Hunt (see photo) have recently joined the ICBF team. They will work from their homes providing support to AI Technicians as the Handheld computers are introduced over the next few months.

Niall Naughton, who is based in our Bandon office will be co-ordinating the support team. Training has focused on ensuring the technicians are familiar with the new insemination recording system and the equipment required for its successful operation.



Left to right: Niall Naughton, John Moloney, Craig Vigors, Raymond Hunt and assorted AI Handheld and Notebook computers.

4 The Year in Review

2005 was the year that the true value of the ICBF database became clear. This brief review of the year will focus on some of the ways the database is delivering benefits for Irish cattle farmers.

GENEIRLAND[®] commenced operation this year for the Holstein Friesian breed. The database is the tool which is the key to identifying the best young bulls for progeny testing, ensuring the test bulls have enough daughters for an accurate progeny test and for collecting all the data required. Although GENEIRLAND[®] is still in its infancy it is already very clear that it has the potential to greatly increase the profitability of Irish dairy cattle.

Electronic do-it-yourself (EDIY) milk recording expanded from a small scale pilot scheme in 2004 to four operational cells in 2005. The two new Dairygold cells are now close to capacity and many teething problems associated with expanding the service have been resolved. We are in the process of taking delivery of eight more cells, some 600 new meters and eight vans, and now look forward to the challenge of expanding the service to all service providers in 2006. The support of DAF in securing NDP funding to assist with this expansion is gratefully acknowledged. Electronic DIY milk recording is made much simpler through the existence of the ICBF database. Handwriting and paper recording has been eliminated from the milk recording process. Initial results suggest that EDIY milk recording will lead to a significant increase in the level of milk recording.

A new system for recording inseminations by AI Technician's has been developed and rolling-out to 250 technicians is now underway. This system uses mobile phone communications technology (GPRS) to ensure the ICBF database and the AI Technician have the latest information about the cows being inseminated and the bull being used. It will help prevent inbreeding, reduce risks from lethal genes and provide accurate insemination records.

When ICBF was established beef breeding was identified as a major priority. In 2004 the beef herd books started using the ICBF database and Animal Events, to support pedigree registrations. In 2005 the number of calvings recorded on the database increased by some 200,000. A number of initiatives led to both a greater volume of data and much higher quality data. These included a request to herd owners for the identification of sires of suckler cows. Also, linear scoring & weight recording of some 7,000 non-pedigree weanlings took place over the last few months. This extra data is now being used in computing the new sub-indexes for



beef production (BPSI), weaned calf (WCSI), dairy calving (DCSI) and beef calving (BCSI). These indexes enable a fair economic comparison of the genetic merit of males and females of all cattle breeds in Ireland. Routine access to slaughter data has been one of the keys to this major achievement in 2006. The database ties all the data together and makes the new beef evaluations a practical reality. No other country in world has such a good system for providing breeding information to beef breeders.

The beef bull performance test centre at Tully has continued to gain in reputation as the place to find the best beef bulls in Ireland. Tully is now fully integrated with the ICBF database. This has resulted in a much more streamlined data collection process and has eliminated the need for a separate evaluation system for the Tully bulls. With the new beef indexes now available for all Tully bulls we look forward to the full power of this testing facility being utilised to the benefit of Irish beef farmers.

The power of the database to provide useful information for farmer decision making is now being demonstrated in our collaborations with TEAGASC and CVERA (at the UCD Vet College). In both cases intellectual knowledge from TEAGASC and UCD is being used to design reports which farmers can use to help make better management and disease control decisions. The required information is readily available to the farmer and the relevant advisor(s) from the ICBF website (www.icbf.com).

As we search for better ways to realise the full potential of the database for the benefit of Irish farmers we find ourselves questioning aspects of the current structure of cattle breeding. This can only be healthy for the industry. As farmers face into the prospect of competing in the world market it is crucial that every opportunity to improve the efficiency of the cattle breeding industry be pursued with vigour, enthusiasm and the best available science. The ICBF team is proud of its achievements in 2005 and looks forward to making a lot more progress in 2006.



5 International Beef Genetic Evaluations

ICBF welcomed Thierry Pabiou to the genetic evaluation team last week. For the last three years Thierry worked for Institut de l'Élevage in Paris. His role there was with genetic evaluations for the French beef breeds. His previous experience includes a period as a sheep farming consultant in the Burgundy region of France, and a stint as a herd manager milking 250 Holstein cows in the UK.

Thierry is a qualified Agricultural Scientist and in his final year six-month placement worked at INRA conducting an analysis of the reproductive traits in the French Gasconne beef breed.

The focus of Thierry's work over the next year will be the development of operational systems for international evaluations for beef breeds and traits. His first priority is to refine the systems for resolving identification differences for the same animals in different countries. He will be using the Charolais and Limousin breeds in France, Ireland and the UK as initial working examples. His work

will eventually transfer to Interbull when it takes over the operation of international evaluations for beef cattle.



Thierry Pabiou in the genetics office, Highfield House.

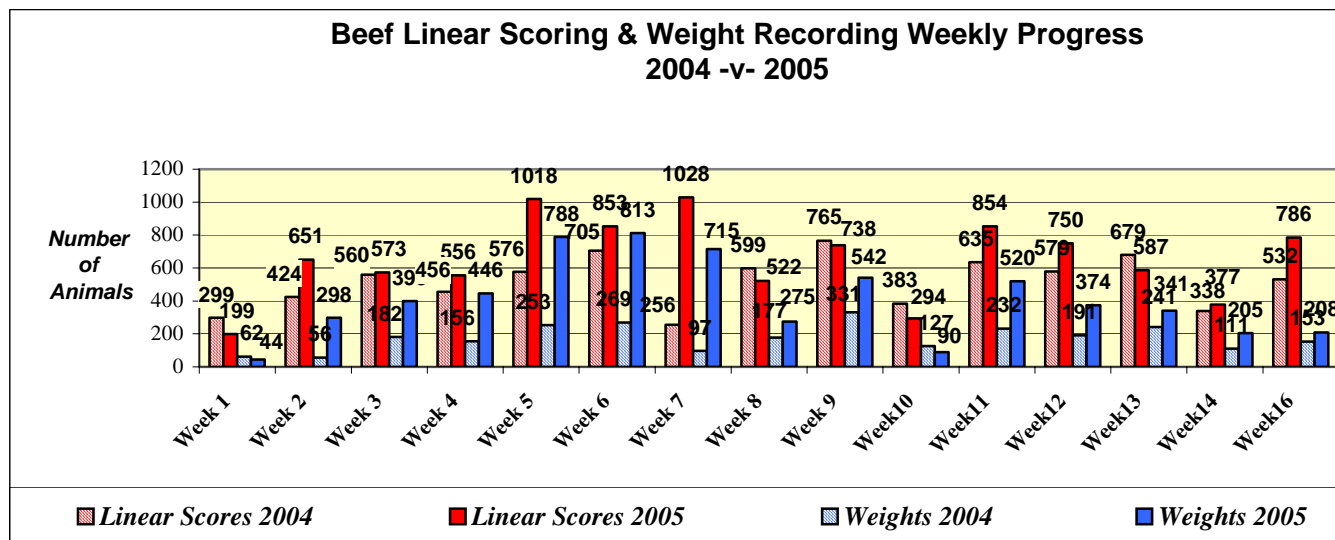
6 Tully

- ✚ A record number of bulls (238) will be at Tully for the start of 2006.
- ✚ A total of 125 bulls entered Tully for the October intake. This intake will be for sale at Tully on the 4-3-06.



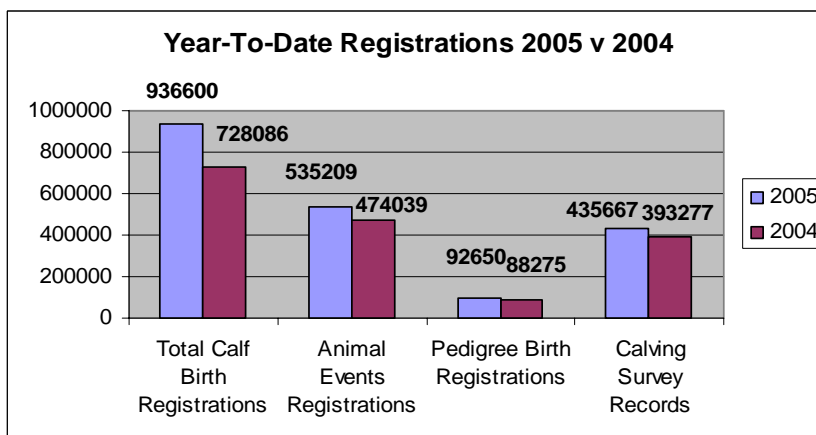
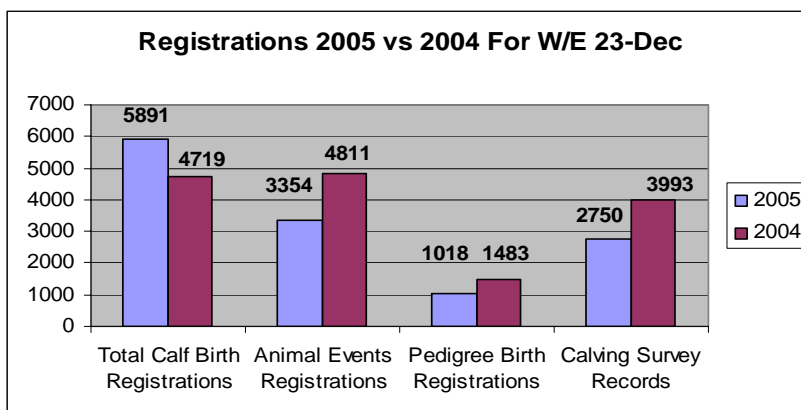
- 113 bulls have entered Tully in the November intake. This intake will be sold on the 6-5-06. The quality of bulls at Tully is up on the previous 3 years. The intake started their performance test on the 19-12-05.
- The catalogue for the March sale at Tully will be up on the ICBF web site from the 3-1-06.

7 Beef Linear Scoring & Weight Recording



8 Database Update

- 344 new herds added to the database last week.
- A large number of authorisation forms have been received from both Dairygold AI and Dovea AI.
- The return of dry-off sheets is now slowing down, though a lot of herds still have dry-off information outstanding. Without this information, the Annual Milk Recording report can't be issued.
- Testing is being completed on the revised Annual Milk Recording report. The first reports will be issued in early January.
- Further solid progress continues to be made with preparations for the roll-out of AI handhelds. The sign-up of herds continues to be a cause for concern, though good progress is being made in Dairygold and Dovea AI.





Field support personnel began training this week in preparation for the launch after Christmas.

- ✚ The Christmas period will see further work done on the upgrade of the production machine. As a result, the production database will not be available on Thursday, December 29th.
- ✚ The pilot issue of the Beef EBI reports took place this week, and we are expecting feedback in early January.

9 Milk Recording

Weekly Processing

Milk Recording Organisation	2005 Herds Recorded Week 16/12/05 - 23/12/05	2004 Herds Recorded Week 16/12/04 - 23/12/04
Progressive	356	291
Dairygold	0	81
Kerry	106	96
SWS	131	119
Tipperary	13	7
Connacht	18	23
Arrabawn	7	12
Others (Donegal, OAD)	3	0
Total	634	629

Annual Processing

Milk Recording Organisation	HERD Count		COW Count	
	2005 No. Herds Owners Year to Date Jan 01st - Dec 23rd	2004 No. Herd Owners at Year End	2005 No. Cows Year to Date Jan 01st - Dec 23rd	2004 No. Cows at Year End
Progressive	2,087	2233	154,992	156,588
Dairygold	1,529	1620	98,832	102,778
Kerry	1,066	1099	68,193	66,952
SWS	939	964	56,257	56,753
Tipperary	142	147	9,412	9,268
Connacht	110	121	7,359	7,597
Arrabawn	109	120	7,188	7,369
Others (Donegal, OAD)	57	0	4,837	0
Total	6,039	6,304	407,070	407,305



We would like to thank everybody for their contribution during the year and we look forward to another very productive year in 2006.



We will close today for Christmas and return on Tuesday 3rd January 2006, if you need to contact ICBF urgently, please telephone Brian Wickham on his mobile 086 826 9911.