



## UPDATE – for period 22<sup>nd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> January 2005

### 1 Genetic Evaluations

A large amount of work has been completed on both beef and dairy genetic evaluations. All of this work has been reported to regular consultation meetings with the cattle breeding industry. The most recent of these was held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January.

This development work is focused on making best possible use of all available data to determine the ability of animals (male & female) to contribute to Irish farm profitability. The resulting evaluations are targeted at providing the information required by dairy farmers to breed replacement females (dairy evaluations) and that required by suckler farmers and dairy farmers for breeding beef progeny some of which become suckler herd replacement females (beef evaluations).

#### Beef Evaluations

A prototype evaluation system for a large number of beef related traits was discussed at the Consultation Meeting. This system operates on an across breed basis (including all dairy breeds) and provides evaluations for:

- **calving traits** - calving difficulty, gestation length and calf mortality,
- **beef production traits** - weaning weight, calf quality, feed intake, carcass weight, carcass conformation, carcass fat, and
- **maternal traits** - calving difficulty, gestation length, cull cow carcass weight.

Research on three other maternal traits (calving interval, cow survival, age at first calving) is on-going.

Five economic sub-indexes have been developed and four of these:

- Dairy calving,
- Beef calving,
- Weaned calf, and
- Beef production, are in prototype form.

Examples of these subindexes including bull lists based on them were considered at the recent consultation meeting.

The fifth, the maternal sub-index, is awaiting the outcome of work on evaluations for the other maternal traits.

At the consultation meeting the following was agreed:

- ICBF is to focus its work on providing Active AI Beef Sires lists for the Spring Beef AI Supplement of the Irish Farmers Journal due for publication on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2005.
- These Active Sires lists will be based on genetic evaluations produced by a further iteration of the prototype system taking account of issues identified during the meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> January.
- A further Beef Consultation meeting has been scheduled for Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February to review developments.
- Priority for later in 2005 will be the incorporation of beef linear scores for the relevant traits, provision of evaluations for stock bulls and females, and developing the evaluation system to provide results for weanlings within one week of linear scoring.



## Dairy Evaluations

The Dairy Evaluation consultation meeting held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January considered recent developments and agreed to the following:

- That economic sub-indexes should be published for the groups of traits that contribute to the EBI. The groupings being Milk Production, Calving Interval & Survival, Calving and Beef.
- That ICBF should give priority to researching and developing enhancements to the EBI to incorporate udder health traits and linear traits with a view to implementation in February 2006.
- That ICBF work on establishing genetic evaluations for calving and beef traits for sires proven in other countries.
- ICBF will proceed as rapidly as possible to implement across breed evaluations for milk production traits and the calving interval & survival traits. This includes provision of evaluations for cows milking in Ireland, participation in the relevant INTERBULL services and provision of EBI's for AI bulls of all other breeds with sufficient information in Ireland.

On the question of whether the EBI should be updated to incorporate the newly developed economic subindexes for calving traits and beef traits there was a division of opinion. On the basis of a show of hands it was approximately one third in favour and two thirds against. On the basis of the organisations represented it was approximately two thirds in favour and one third against.

The key issues in relation to this decision are:

- Dairy farm profitability per year in 10 years time will increase some €2 million across the industry if the EBI is updated and used in sire selection decisions. This is the mission established for ICBF and there would need to be a very good reason why ICBF should not make those decisions that contribute to this mission.
- TEAGASC researchers and advisers have expressed the opinion that the credibility of the EBI will diminish if it is not updated as new information becomes available.
- Some of the AI Companies expressing opposition to the proposal have linked it with the Board's recent recommendation<sup>1</sup> to DAF in relation to the reliability to be used in determining if a bull can be approved for widespread usage. Because they do not support the Board's recommendation they are opposed to updating the EBI.
- ICBF is working with IHFA to develop a sire-of-sires list targeted at the longer-term development of the Holstein-Friesian breed in Ireland.

I have therefore recommended to the Board of ICBF:

***That the EBI be updated to incorporate the economic contributions from calving and beef traits for the February 2005 evaluations.***

This recommendation will be considered by the Board of ICBF at next weeks meeting.

## Reliability for Widespread Usage

The recommendation<sup>1</sup> passed at the last ICBF Board meeting has been communicated to DAF. DAF were represented at the Dairy Genetic Evaluation Consultation meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> January and invited the industry to make submissions in relation to the recommendation. They advised that the proposal would be subject to due process and that in the meantime no change to existing criteria would be made for the current AI season.

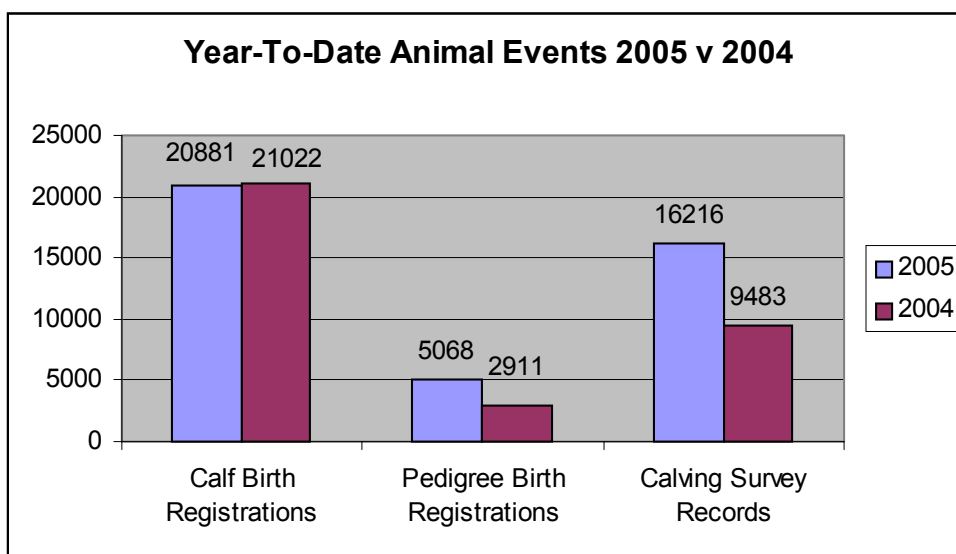
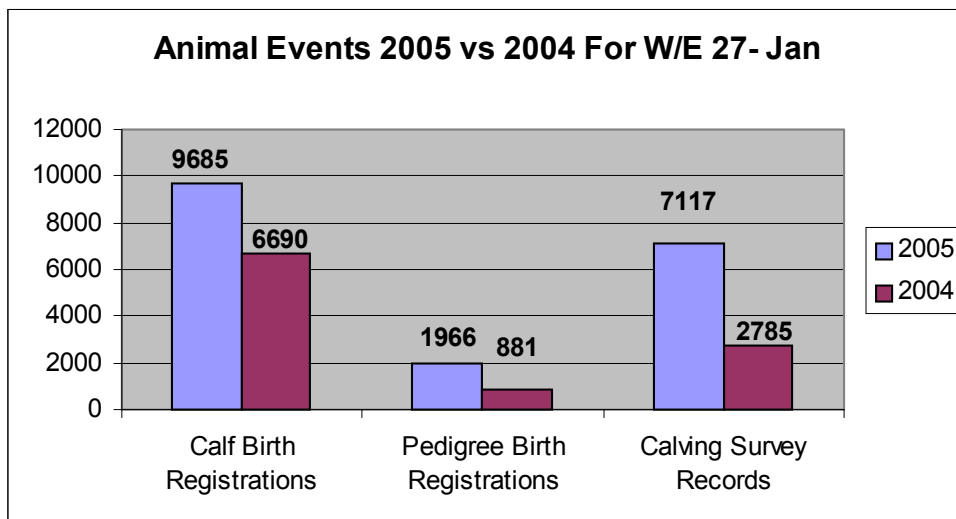
---

<sup>1</sup> That the reliability of the EBI be used in place of the reliability of the milk production proof. Further that the minimum for a bull to be approved for widespread use be set at an EBI reliability of 50%.



## 2 Database Update

- 201 New Herds added to the database - the new herds this week are primarily those who are members of AI organisations.

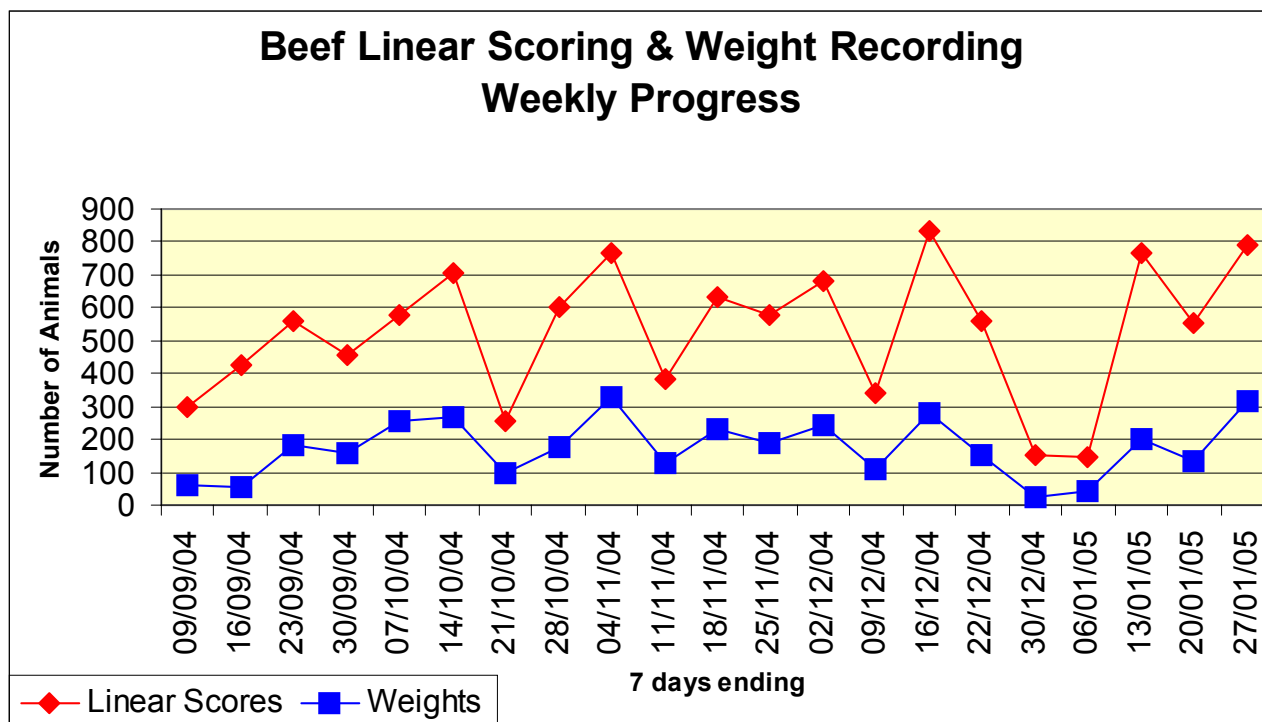


- The production version of the AI handheld was being tested this week. A meeting with the various AI companies to discuss the handhelds and their potential roll-out for the Spring will be held next Monday.
- 2888 Teagasc ICBF permission forms have now been returned by Teagasc clients. Testing is almost completed on the internet application which allows on-line access to reports. This will be ready to rollout at the end of next week.
- Work on the development of 7 extract files to support international genetic evaluations for beef are being worked on and will be completed early next week.
- Work on the generating complete statistics from the database for 2004 is on-going and will take a number of weeks to complete.
- Preparatory work on a solution to allow reporting from within the IRIS application is beginning in advance of a meeting in Holland on Feb 8th
- The Irish Angus herdbook was loaded to IRIS today.



- The scanning of Animal Events sheets is on-going in the Animal Events office - this will assist the member organisations in dealing with farmer queries in a more timely fashion.
- Work on the full integration of SMS text messaging to the database is continuing.

### 3 Beef Linear Scoring & Weight Recording



### 4 Milk Recording Processing

Milk Recording Organisation	Herds Recorded Week 21/01/05 - 28/01/05
Progressive	358
Dairygold	74
SWS	74
Kerry	58
Connacht	15
Tipperary	9
Arrabawn	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>589</b>



## 5 Tully

- A group of pedigree Angus breeders from Cork will visit Tully on the 28-1-05 to view the 24 Angus bulls on site.
- Applications for the April 2005 intake will be sent out on the 1-2-05 earlier than expected. Applications will be printed from the ICBF database. This intake will cover the birth period from the 18-7-04 to 7-11-04 and will be on show for the May sale.
- There has been a lot of interest from Ireland and the UK for the sale on 5<sup>th</sup> March.
- Construction of the seating in the Sales ring will be finished by 5-2-05.

## 6 British Cattle Breeders Club

This annual meeting provides a useful forum for cattle breeders to discuss a wide range of issues. This years meeting was held this week and Nicholas Grubb of ICBF attended the part of the meeting most relevant to beef breeding. The following are some of the main conclusions he drew from the meeting.

- Most important thing of all is to know all costs. Profitability will come from trimming unnecessary costs and greatly increasing efficiency. Not by getting more money from the product.
- Farmers must aim for a specific market and be able to choose the right stock for that purpose. This looks like making the ICBF system a real World winner as it is the only system that can get data from and give data on cross-bred cattle.
- Very useful to know type as well as performance. Having type recording as well as performance recording is a major tactical advantage for us.
- Attending this meeting and talking privately to a number of others there, one thing is absolutely clear to me. We are at a time of massive change and attendant opportunity and the most important thing is to know exactly what everything costs, be it inputs, services or performances. It is thus very clear that it could not be more opportune for ICBF to be coming forward with a new breed evaluation system that distils each vital component down to a Euro value, plus or minus.
- It is also very clear that Ireland is the envy of the knowledgeable UK scientific and breeding fraternity over what has been and is being achieved with particular regard to our central database and more especially our close and very co-operative relationship with so many industry partners in particular DAF and the processors. The ability of our system to effectively gather the greater part of its data from the commercial cross-bred sector is seen as a tremendous tactical advantage over our competitors.

Brian Wickham Chief Executive Irish Cattle Breeding Federation Soc. Ltd, Highfield House, Shinagh, Bandon, Co. Cork, Ireland, [Phone office +353 \(0\)23 20222](tel:+3532320222), [mobile +353 \(0\)86 826 9911](tel:+3530868269911) [Fax office +353 \(0\)23 20229](tel:+35302320229) E-Mail [bwickham@icbf.com](mailto:bwickham@icbf.com) ICBF Web site [www.icbf.com](http://www.icbf.com) Assistant: Mary Madden. © Irish Cattle Breeding Federation Society Limited 2005.