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## UPDATE – FOR PERIOD 24<sup>TH</sup> TO 30<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2004.

### 1. Annual General Meeting

- The AGM will be held on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> May starting at 14:00 at the Heritage Hotel, Port Laoise.
- The Annual Report including the Audited Accounts has been sent for printing.
- An electronic copy of the Annual Report is included with this update and it can also be found on ICBF's website – [www.icbf.com](http://www.icbf.com).

### 2. Consultation with Boards of Member Organisations – Beef Breeding

- Further meetings have been scheduled including a joint meeting for the numerically smaller breeds planned for 26<sup>th</sup> May from 11:00 – 13:00 in Kilkenny.
- The purpose of this series of meetings is to discuss the Beef Breeding Development Plan and for ICBF to obtain feedback in relation to its future directions for beef breeding. The plan is to meet with all Herd Book and AI Company Boards by Friday 11<sup>th</sup> June.

### 3. Beef Linear Scoring

- In preparation for the peak of linear scoring in the autumn of 2004 current procedures and systems are being reviewed and a number of significant changes are planned for implementation in July '04.
- All linear scorers and herd books will receive a letter next week outlining our plans and seeking their feedback and support for the changes.
- Our moves to improve the efficiency and accuracy of linear scoring, and thereby reducing the cost to farmers of obtaining valuable breeding information, are based on a few key principles:
  - Accurate scoring through achievement of high scoring standards by skilled scorers.
  - Use of technology to ensure scorers have the information required to operate efficiently and to provide accurate scores.
  - Avoiding unnecessary travel by scorers.
  - Maximizing the number of animals scored on each farm, and
  - Minimizing the time required to score each animal.

### 4. Dairy Genetic Evaluations

- National routine evaluation for calving interval and survival was completed this week. Cow and bull proofs are currently being prepared for loading to IRIS.
- Correlation between January 04 and April 04 proofs were 0.99 for CI and 0.98 for SU. But some changes in individual bull proofs are expected.
- Some change may be observed in the combined reliability of some bulls. The domestic proof and reliability were computed before the implementation of the new EBI weightings in the February. These new weightings have now been applied for all bulls. Increased emphasis on combined reliability of CI and SU may lead to a reduction in EBI reliability of some few bulls. Any specific questions should be addressed to Victor Olori [volori@icbf.com](mailto:volori@icbf.com).
- Forty-four AI bulls had proofs based on one of more of their daughters in Ireland for the first time in this run.
- There is no official International evaluation for longevity in the current round of Interbull evaluation so the usual method would be used to obtain proofs for foreign bulls and blended proofs for foreign bulls with daughters in Ireland.
- Official proofs are due for release on 14th May, 2004.



## 5. Database Project

### a) Newly Live Herdbooks

- 1,91 new attempted pedigree registrations received during the past week.
- 76 new Beef Herds added to the database.
- The first run of BLUP reports and Pedigree Certificates was issued to the Limousin Society - an issue around the printing of predicted vs actual BLUPs has been resolved.
- A significant number of the items on Breed Society Task List's are going through final testing and should be able to go live next week.
- New registration billing files will be issued next week.

### b) Other database activities

- The revised 'New Herd's' process will be tested in parallel with the current process next week for the purpose of final testing.
- The generation of Milk Recording Report PDF files for the Dairygold On-Line services has been completed and these files have been forwarded to Dairygold.
- Some final developments that will help Progressive Genetics migrate the milk records for remaining herds on the IDRC system has been completed.
- Extensive work has taken place on removing older records being held for correction in the IRIS front porch, where the issue has since been resolved.

## 6. Milk Recording

### a) Database Project - Milk Recording

- No. Herdowners Milk Recorded in IRIS to date = 5,735

Dairygold	1,693
Progressive	1,674
Kerry	1,027
SWS	956
Nenagh	133
Tipperary	128
Connacht Gold	124

- No. Herd tests processed in IRIS YTD = 22,920

Dairygold	9,379
Progressive	7,925
SWS	2,506
Kerry	1,885
Connacht Gold	587
Nenagh	436
Tipperary	202

### b) Weekly Update

- No. herd tests processed in last 7 days = 1,034

Progressive	298
Dairygold	262
Kerry	204
SWS	186
Connacht Gold	31
Tipperary	30
Nenagh	23



### c) Other Milk Recording News

- We will be releasing "Turnaround times" for April in next week's update.
- The Milk Recording Management report – can now retrieve a list of processed herds by sub-co-op.
- A list of potential Lab/Weight mismatches is produced routinely for use by Milk Recording Orgs.
- Plans for the June 9<sup>th</sup> Milk Recording Conference are being finalized and invitations will be distributed next week. The program will include contributions from Denmark and New Zealand as well as the results of our pilot scheme using the new electronic meter.

### 7. Tully

- With regard to the Health Status of Tully, we have continued to work closely with DAF veterinary staff on the options available and how to have the bulls ready for sale once they are free to go. It has not been possible to identify a suitable shed to house the bulls for the period required. We are therefore going with the outdoor option and have identified a field close to Tully. Triple strands of electrified fencing wire will be erected to create 1 acre paddocks for the bulls. The bulls will be grouped as they are currently in Tully. They will be fed ration and lucerne at grass. As a gesture of goodwill ICBF will cover the cost of this option for up to 120 days.
- Applications for the next intake (82 bulls), will be sent for testing on 4th May

### 8. Looking to the Future – Dairy Breeding

Now that the cattle breeding database is well established for dairy breeders and the teething problems are resolved it is timely to look towards the future. Over the next few weeks I plan to use this space to put forward some ideas to stimulate your thinking about the future shape of cattle breeding in Ireland.

At last weeks AGM of the Irish Holstein Friesian Assn I suggested that the target for pedigree registrations should be raised from the current 91,000 calves per year to 400,000 calves per year. Why did I make such a suggestion?

- Over 95% of Irish dairy cows are black & whites and all owners would benefit from milking genetically improved cattle. The role of the herd book is to ensure the breed is improved as rapidly as possible.
- If more farmers participated the cost of herd book services could be substantially reduced. At the meeting I suggested a registration fee of €2.50 per calf should be achievable if the volume reached 400,000 per year. Certainly most of ICBF's computer processing costs are fixed, so the larger the volume processed the less the cost per calf.
- If more animals were registered in the herd book the quality of breeding information available to all farmers would be substantially improved.
- If more animals were registered and milk recorded the quality of bulls selected for progeny testing would be improved and consequently the quality of bulls available through AI would also improve.
- Most importantly, if the owners of black & white cattle take more interest in the breeding of their animals they will get better animals.

The challenge for ICBF and IHFA is to work together to evaluate and act on this and other ideas for improving the breed in Ireland for the benefit of Irish dairy farmers. Now is the time to plan for a better future for Irish cattle breeding.

So, get your thinking cap on and see what you can come up with to help place Irish cattle breeding at the leading edge.

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