



*Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year  
from all at ICBF & Sheep Ireland*

## ICBF Weekly Update 19<sup>th</sup> December 2014

### 1 Important Dates

✚ **ICBF Board Meeting** – Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2015, 10:30 to 13:30, Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise.

✚ **Sheep Ireland Board Meeting** – Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2015, 14:00 to 16:30, Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise.

### 2 ICBF - A Review of 2014

As 2014 draws to a close, it is a good opportunity to reflect back on the year that was, for ICBF.

The headline project at ICBF early in the year was the Beef Genomics Scheme. Over 35,000 farmers joined the scheme, and at farm level, farmers responded extremely well to the job of tagging the stock bull, and a number of cows. The quality of DNA extracted in the lab was extremely high. It augurs well for the follow-on programme in 2015. As part of the research work, a major Beef Genomics Conference was held in Dublin in November, the first InterBeef workshop of its kind. We look forward to the first of the genomic evaluations for beef starting to appear in the second half of 2015.

Adoption of dairy genomics at farm level continues to grow. In 2014 over 60%, up from 50% in 2013, of some 650,000 recorded dairy inseminations were from genomically selected bulls. The results from both the Next Generation Herd in Moorepark, and the 'Daughter Proven' results continue to show that the genomic predictions are holding up well across the teams of genomic bulls. The AI companies continue to invest very significantly in genotyping, ensuring that the best possible selection of young bulls are going into the Gene Ireland programme for progeny testing. This is key to the on-going validation of the genomic indexes.

Our genetic evaluation activities continue to be at the very heart of ICBF's role in dairy and beef. The extra data collected through the Beef Data Programme and other initiatives coupled with improvements in our evaluation methods has resulted in a substantial improvement in the accuracy of our beef genetic evaluations. The evaluations continue, however, to be at the mercy of good quality data for real progress to be made. We have seen good uptake of the Eurostars on the terminal side, but there is still significant progress to be made in terms of using the Eurostars to help choose female replacements. The on-going roll-out of the Beef Genomics Scheme will play a key role in improving progress here.

The GENÉIRÉLAND® dairy progeny test program continued in 2014. The implementation of a revamped GENÉIRÉLAND® beef programme continued in 2014, and the roll-out of this will continue in 2015, with the first progeny being born next spring. Another element of the ICBF infrastructure that has continued to make great strides in 2014 is the Tully Performance Test station. The installation of the new feeding system early in 2014 has allowed us to begin testing steers as part of the process, and the investment in the feeding system continues with the help of DAFM. Tully is now also providing a rich stream of data in the area of meat eating quality, and the results emerging have great potential in continuing to position Ireland as producers of top quality beef.

HerdPlus® membership has exceeded 17,500 dairy and beef herds. These herds have access to a wide range of valuable breeding information which farmers can use to breed more profitable cattle. On the service income side, both Milk Recording and AI service income rebounded well after a difficult 2013, thanks to excellent work by the service providers. Our Bull Search facility (on [www.icbf.com](http://www.icbf.com)) continues to be the facility on our website that farmers and breeders find most useful with, again, over 1,000,000 searches in the last twelve months.

We continue to do significant development work in conjunction with Animal Health Ireland (AHI) in the area of IT infrastructure for management of the BVD programme. Significant progress was also made in relation to the CellCheck and Johnes programmes. ICBF's ability to generate genetic evaluations for animals in relation to disease resistance is becoming an increasingly important area, and initial results are showing significant

potential for genetics to assist with national animal health programmes. As such, our relationship with AHI will continue to be extremely important.

2014 saw the continuation of the OptiMIR partnership focusing on the use of spectral data from milk testing, and involving ICBF, Teagasc and 15 other partners across Europe. The project is focusing on making good use of the extra data (the MIR spectra) that can be collected from milk sample testing.

Irish farming benefits greatly from the unique partnership that exists between Government and the industry. The ability of ICBF to put DAFM funding to good use is widely acknowledged and in 2014 was particularly evident again through the progress being made across a range of areas, and adoption by farmers. Without DAFM support it would be much more difficult for ICBF to deliver so much benefit to the industry and wider community, through the services it provides.

### Summary

2014 has been another very exciting year in the cattle breeding community. There are many challenges ahead, but also lots of opportunity. The key to ICBF's success remains the same as ever - the application of good science, a focus on the needs of farmers, working closely with our stakeholders and a 100% commitment to delivering by a talented and dedicated team. We are most fortunate to operate in an environment where ICBF's vision is shared by our Board, our members, DAFM, Teagasc, and, most importantly, Irish Farmers.

## 3 Sheep Ireland - A Review of 2014

Sheep Ireland ([www.sheep.ie](http://www.sheep.ie)) continued to make excellent progress in 2014, with strong leadership from its Chairman, James Murphy. Commercial and pedigree farmers are becoming much more aware of the existence of the EuroStar indexes, and how they can play a significant role in removing the risk around ram purchases, and help the industry to ensure that it does not lose ground to other countries in terms of gains through genetic progress.

The commercial farms that make up the CPT and MALP programmes have again put in a huge amount of work this year, and data coming from these farms is hugely valuable in generating accurate genetic evaluations for Sheep.

LambPlus has again expanded significantly in 2014, and numbers are continuing to rise. This means that over 50% of the rams sold this year would have EuroStar figures available. We expect this number to rise again in 2015, and current indications are that this is achievable.

STAP continues to have a major impact in terms of raising the awareness of Eurostars on Sheep, especially rams, and the fact the Eurostar concept is similar to that in cattle also helps in this regard. It is critical for the success of Sheep Ireland that (a) farmers use the indexes in their purchasing decisions and (b) that the performance of the sheep correlate with the indexes – i.e. high index sheep perform more profitably than low index sheep.

The revamp of the Eurostar indexes at the end of last year, splitting them into a 'Replacement Index' and a 'Terminal Index', has been well received, and has made the catalogue presentation of the indexes more understandable for farmers. EuroStar catalogues are now routinely generated for the majority of society sales.

Very significant updates to the systems infrastructure supporting Lambplus has been launched this week, and they provide LambPlus members with as good a web infrastructure as exists anywhere in the world. It is the culmination of a huge amount of work from the Sheep Ireland team, and it puts Sheep Ireland in a strong position next year as we continue to grow the levels of participation in the various activities.

Irish Sheep farming is benefitting from the unique partnership that exists between Government and the sheep industry. The ability of Sheep Ireland to put DAFM funding to good use is widely acknowledged and in 2014 was particularly evident again through the LambPlus and STAP programmes. Without DAFM support it would be impossible for Sheep Ireland to deliver to the industry and wider community. We are most fortunate to operate in an environment where Sheep Ireland vision is shared by our Board, DAFM, Teagasc, and, most importantly, Irish Sheep Farmers.

## 4 ICBF Board Meeting 18<sup>th</sup> December

Topics covered at the ICBF board meeting last week included:

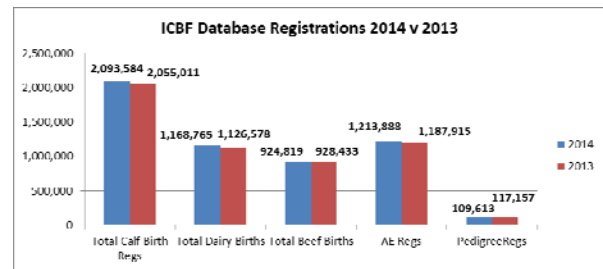
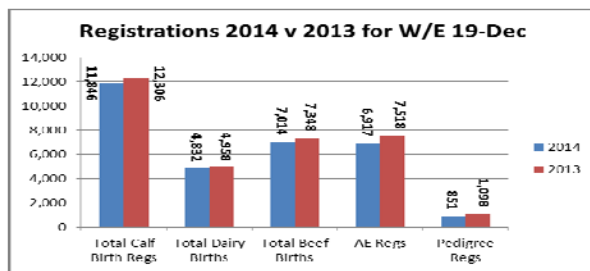
- ✚ Adoption of the recommendations from the Audit and Finance Sub-Committee around the 2015 budget.
- ✚ A discussion on the recent visit to New Zealand and Australia
- ✚ A discussion on the Beef Genomics Scheme
- ✚ A discussion on Quality Control in Milk Recording

## 5 Sheep Ireland Board Meeting 18<sup>th</sup> December

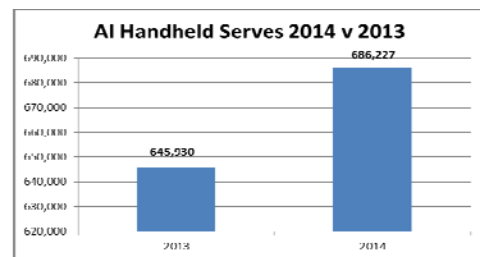
Topics covered at the Sheep Ireland board meeting last week included:

- ✚ Adoption of the recommendations from the Audit and Finance Sub-Committee around the 2015 budget.
- ✚ A discussion on the plans for CPT and MALP 2015
- ✚ A discussion on the positive contribution the Ovigen project will make towards the objectives of Sheep Ireland

## 6 Database



- ✚ The stats above are compiled with the assistance of DAFM AIM systems.
- ✚ BVD test results continue to be received at ICBF and are being processed accordingly. There have been 2,264,000 results received since January 1<sup>st</sup>, of which 14,000 have come in the last 7 days. Since the beginning of the voluntary phase in 2012, 4.92 million results have now been received.



- ✚ The graph shows Inseminations recorded on AI Handhelds in 2013 compared with 2014.

## 7 Herd Plus®

- ✚ To date there are a record 17,800 HerdPlus members across dairy and beef.
- ✚ 4,000 pocket notebooks, expected calving reports & 12 week calving patterns have been posted to HerdPlus Dairy farmers. The remaining reports will be posted in early January.
- ✚ Co-op reports for all Dairygold suppliers were generated this week and are available online.



### ICBF Mobile

- ✚ This week we launched the ICBF mobile version of the website. This will support users of mobile devices. Not all features are currently available on the mobile version so you will still have the option to switch to the desktop version at any time. The following screen shots are an example of what a dairy herdplus member will see when they access the website via their mobile device. We hope you enjoy using this new development and we look forward to adding more features to it in 2015.

**ICBF** Home Menu

Welcome to the Mobile Version of our Website

It is now possible to record events, view your reports and animal details on your mobile device.

Some features are not accessible on the mobile version, e.g. Inbreeding checker, Sire Advice, Record Pregnancy Diagnosis.

To use these features switch to the desktop version of the website via the menu.

**Latest Reports**

- Annual Report - 01-JAN-15
- 12 Week Calving Pattern - 04-DEC-14
- Expected Calving List - 04-DEC-14
- Sire Advice Report - 12-NOV-14
- Co-Op Performance Report - 06-NOV-14
- Milk Recording Farm Summary Report - 04-NOV-14

**ICBF** EBI Profile Menu

Search Filter Columns...

| Jumbo | EBI € | Milk € | Fert € | Calv € | Beef € |
|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1     | 221   | 94.4   | 112.5  | 18.8   | -0.5   |
| 3     | 91    | 46.3   | 32.6   | 26.7   | -1.1   |
| 4     | 211   | 57.7   | 106.4  | 44.7   | 3.3    |
| 6     | 111   | 41.9   | 66.9   | 15.4   | -10.1  |
| 7     | 139   | 17.4   | 94.2   | 30.0   | 1.4    |
| 8     | 113   | 40.8   | 66.5   | 25.2   | -11.5  |
| 10    | 180   | 59.5   | 93.5   | 33.3   | 1.0    |
| 16    | 70    | 26.5   | 29.2   | 21.0   | -12.1  |
| 18    | 205   | 127.3  | 56.9   | 29.1   | -1.4   |
| 20    | 192   | 46.8   | 119.3  | 20.4   | -6.8   |

Prev 1 2 3 4 5 Next

Recently we started a publicity campaign with the Irish Farmers Journal to promote the Gene Ireland Bull Breeder Programme. Please find the first week's advert at the end of this update.

## 8 Genetic Evaluations

Files of official proofs for dairy and beef AI bulls were circulated earlier this week. Processing of proofs for remaining animals is continuing. Preparations for the Interbull test-run in January are under way. Preparation of files for the January 2015 Interbeef official run for weaning weight has also started.

## 9 Milk Recording

| National Milk Recording Statistics - Herds, Cows & EDIY 19/12/14 |                                   |                             |              |                                      |                            |             |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| Milk Recording Organisation                                      | Total Herds Recorded YTD 19/12/14 | No. EDIY Herds YTD 19/12/14 | % Herds EDIY | Total No. Cows Recorded YTD 19/12/14 | No. EDIY Cows YTD 19/12/14 | % Cows EDIY |
| Munster  | 3,910                             | 1,174                       | 30%          | 337,863                              | 107,185                    | 32%         |
| Progressive  | 2,525                             | 1,102                       | 44%          | 247,738                              | 107,363                    | 43%         |
| Tipperary  | 117                               | 46                          | 39%          | 10,411                               | 4,133                      | 40%         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>6,552</b>                      | <b>2,322</b>                | <b>35%</b>   | <b>596,012</b>                       | <b>218,681</b>             | <b>37%</b>  |

| Recorded Cows by Milk Recording Organisation - Year on Year Comparison |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| Milk Recording Organisation  | YTD 2013 Cows Recorded 01/01/13 - 19/12/13 | YTD 2014 Cows Recorded 01/01/14 - 19/12/14 | 2014 vs 2013 Year on Year Difference (%) |
| Munster  | 314,488                                    | 337,863                                    | 6.9%                                     |
| Progressive  | 240,414                                    | 247,738                                    | 3.0%                                     |
| Tipperary  | 10,176                                     | 10,411                                     | 2.3%                                     |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>565,078</b>                             | <b>596,012</b>                             | <b>5.2%</b>                              |

## 10 Sheep Ireland

### Sheep Ireland web screens

On Monday the new Sheep Ireland performance recording screens were launched. The purpose of updating the screens was to make performance recording more straightforward and to improve the quantity of data being returned to the performance recording flocks. Feed back to date has been positive with breeders commenting on the speed and ease of navigation compared to the old screens. These screens are still not the finished article with more aspects to be added throughout the next year, but the functionality to maintain a flock inventory and record lambing information is fully operative. The username and passwords have been sent out to all signed up LambPlus breeders that selected the option of recording online, as well as the Sheep Ireland pocket lambing notebook. Material to the remainder of the paper recording flocks will be sent out before Christmas.

### Sheep Industry meeting

The meeting took place in the Killeshin Hotel in Portlaoise yesterday (Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>) with a wide range of industry representatives present (80 in total). There were update presentations by Teagasc, UCD and Sheep Ireland, followed by the main component of meeting, the Ovigen project which was presented by Donagh Berry, Noirin McHugh and Eamon Wall. There was some very good points and encouraging feedback from the audience which will also be taken on board.

The Ovigen project is a new 4 year research project exploring the possibility of genomic selection in Sheep. This is a hugely exciting project which will need the collaboration of several industry bodies to insure its successful completion. It is proposed that a DNA sample will be collected from each stock ram and ewe that lambs down in 2015 from flocks that are members of LambPlus and with breeds that have enough phenotypes (ie, weights, scanning, lambing difficulties, etc.) recorded on the Sheep Ireland database. This will equate to approximately 10,000 animals, the DNA from these animals will be collected by Sheep Ireland technicians, with the time of collection being dictated by a flocks lambing patterns (ie, when lambs are old enough to be herded). This project will at a minimum deliver parentage verification, major genes and better inbreeding reports which will all help deliver higher more reliable EuroStar evaluations. The presentation from the meeting will be available on [www.sheep.ie](http://www.sheep.ie).



The next meeting will take place in about 9 months when the first phase of the project has been completed.

*We would like to thank everybody for their contribution during the year and we look forward to another very productive year in 2015.*

*We will close for Christmas on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December and return on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2015.*

*Wishing you all the Best  
for Christmas and the coming Year*

**Sean Coughlan** Chief Executive, ICBF & Sheep Ireland, Highfield House, Shinagh, Bandon Co. Cork., Phone: +353 238 820 222, Mobile: +353 872903121, Email [scoughlan@icbf.com](mailto:scoughlan@icbf.com), **Registered Office:** Irish Cattle Breeding Federation Society Ltd trading as "ICBF", Highfield House, Shinagh, Bandon, Co Cork. Registered Dublin, Ireland. Registration Number 4914R, Industrial and Provident Societies Acts, 1893 to 1978. Web: [www.icbf.com](http://www.icbf.com). **Registered Office:** Sheep Database Ltd trading as "Sheep Ireland". Highfield House, Shinagh, Bandon, Co Cork. Registered Dublin, Ireland. Registration Number 465004, Companies Acts 1963 to 2006. Web: [www.sheep.ie](http://www.sheep.ie).



## National Milk Recording Results for the 10 day period, 10-DEC-2014 To 19-DEC-2014

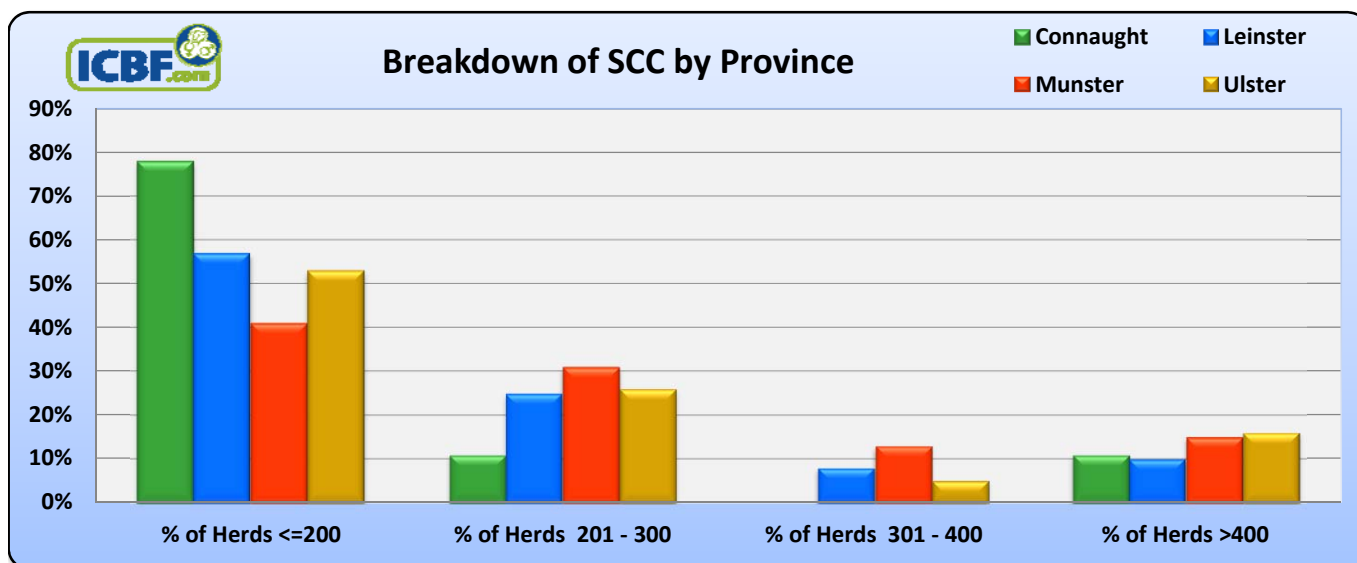
| ICBF                       | No. Herds Recorded | No. Cows Recorded | Avg Herd Size | Avg Milk kg/Cow | Average Fat % | Average Protein % | Average F+P kg | Average SCC* |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Connaught                  | 9                  | 406               | 45            | 20.4            | 3.99          | 3.25              | 1.47           | 161          |
| Leinster                   | 122                | 7,733             | 63            | 20.2            | 4.30          | 3.40              | 1.55           | 182          |
| Munster                    | 198                | 11,466            | 58            | 18.2            | 4.29          | 3.46              | 1.40           | 226          |
| Ulster                     | 19                 | 935               | 49            | 18.6            | 4.21          | 3.35              | 1.39           | 211          |
| <b>National Statistics</b> | <b>348</b>         | <b>20,540</b>     | <b>59</b>     | <b>19.0</b>     | <b>4.28</b>   | <b>3.43</b>       | <b>1.45</b>    | <b>207</b>   |

\* Geometric Mean Herd SCC

## SCC Distribution for the 10 day period, 10-DEC-2014 To 19-DEC-2014

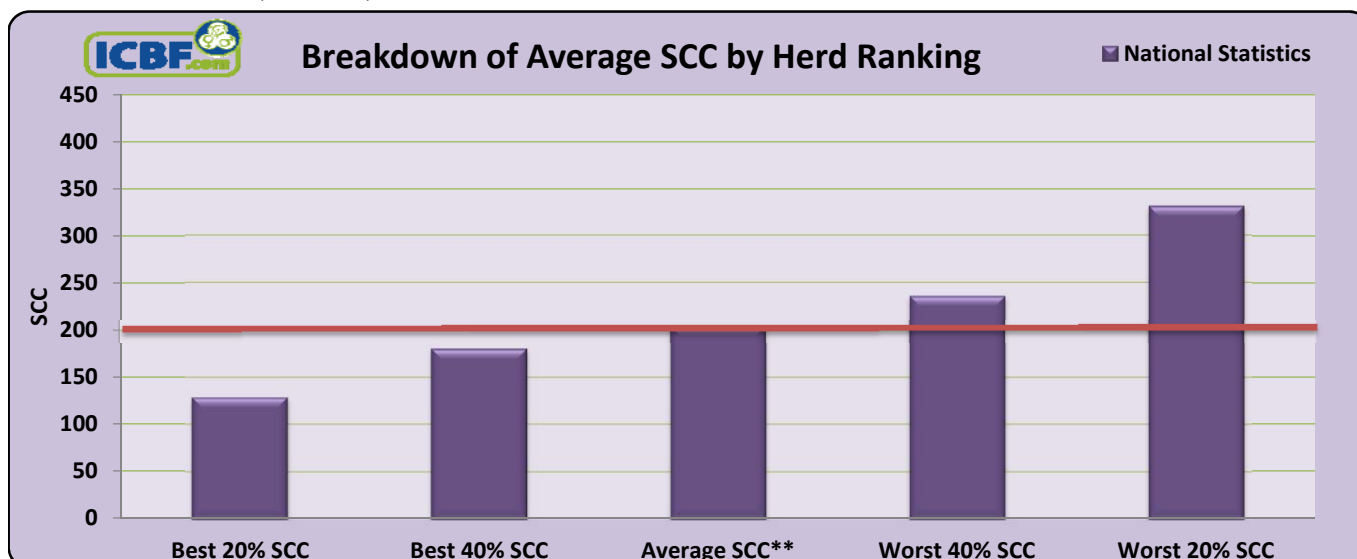
| ICBF                       | No. Herds Recorded | No. Cows Recorded | Avg Herd Size | % of Herds <=200 | % of Herds 201 - 300 | % of Herds 301 - 400 | % of Herds >400 | Average SCC* |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Connaught                  | 9                  | 406               | 45            | 78%              | 11%                  | 0%                   | 11%             | 161          |
| Leinster                   | 122                | 7,733             | 63            | 57%              | 25%                  | 8%                   | 10%             | 182          |
| Munster                    | 198                | 11,466            | 58            | 41%              | 31%                  | 13%                  | 15%             | 226          |
| Ulster                     | 19                 | 935               | 49            | 53%              | 26%                  | 5%                   | 16%             | 211          |
| <b>National Statistics</b> | <b>348</b>         | <b>20,540</b>     | <b>59</b>     | <b>48%</b>       | <b>28%</b>           | <b>11%</b>           | <b>13%</b>      | <b>207</b>   |

\* Geometric Mean Herd SCC



| % Herd Breakdown for the 10 day period, 10-DEC-2014 To 19-DEC-2014 |                    |                   |               |              |              |               |               |               |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| ICBF   | No. Herds Recorded | No. Cows Recorded | Avg Herd Size | Best 20% SCC | Best 40% SCC | Average SCC** | Worst 40% SCC | Worst 20% SCC |
| Connaught  | 9                  | 406               | 45            | 129          | 139          | 149           | 159           | 181           |
| Leinster   | 122                | 7,733             | 63            | 101          | 167          | 187           | 217           | 287           |
| Munster  | 198                | 11,466            | 58            | 138          | 199          | 215           | 254           | 342           |
| Ulster   | 19                 | 935               | 49            | 154          | 181          | 196           | 207           | 279           |
| <b>National Statistics</b>   | <b>348</b>         | <b>20,540</b>     | <b>59</b>     | <b>129</b>   | <b>180</b>   | <b>205</b>    | <b>236</b>    | <b>331</b>    |

\*\* Percentile Herd SCC Rank (Median SCC)



# G€N€ IRELAND Maternal Program Breeding Profitable Suckler Cows

**What?** The Gene Ireland Maternal Program's main aim is to improve the milk, fertility and calving ability of Ireland's suckler cows. However, we need more beef pedigree breeders to join the program in order to breed the bulls with the genetics to make these improvements.

**Why?** Maternal traits in the national suckler herd have been showing no signs of improvement for a number of years (see Figure 1). ICBF and the wider industry realised that a targeted approach on maternal breeding was required in order to correct this trend.

**How?** The approach for correcting this deteriorating trend is to work closely with pedigree beef breeders to breed bull's out of milky & fertile cows, that have excellent Euro-Star ratings for the 'Replacement Index'.

The G€N€ Ireland Maternal Program will then look to purchase these bulls, collect semen from them, progeny test them and return the semen (free of charge) of the best of them back into participating herds.

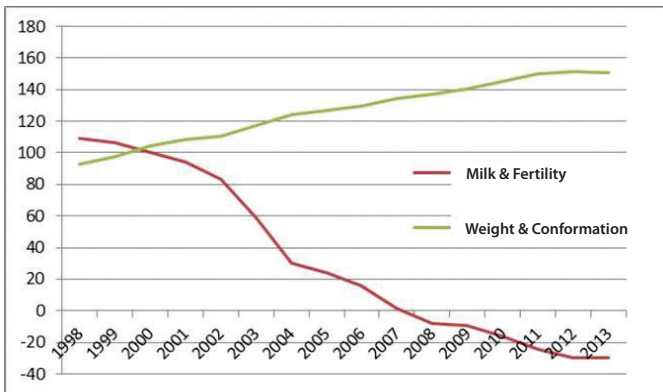


Figure 1: Graph showing decline in maternal traits and increase in terminal traits in the national suckler herd since 2000. It clearly outlines the "seesaw" relationship that exists between maternal and terminal traits.

## Benefits for a Pedigree Breeder?

### 1. Gene Ireland Stamp

The Gene Ireland stamp is designed to identify pedigree animals that have been bred in qualified Gene Ireland Pedigree herds. The stamp is displayed beside animals in Sales Catalogues, ICBF Bull Searches & Online Herdbook outputs

### 2. Bull purchased for AI

In 2014, for the first time, The G€N€ Ireland Maternal Program began purchasing maternally strong young beef bulls. Bulls with high Euro-Star ratings for the 'Replacement Index' are identified in participating breeder's herds. They are inspected with their dam's and if passed, an offer is made to purchase them. If the bull goes on to be a success a bonus payment will also be recouped by the breeder.

### 3. Bull Breeder Advice

Gene Ireland has put in place a team of 5 'Herd Liaison Officers' who are there to assist participating breeders with any queries about their herd's Euro-Stars as well as assist them with their mating decisions.



Above: A group of recently purchased young pedigree Beef Bulls with excellent 'Replacement Index' Euro-Star ratings, prior to semen collection.



## BULL BREEDER FEATURE



G€N€ IRELAND Maternal Bull Breeder Participant, William O'Halloran with 'Curaheen Beyonce'. She is sired by 'Hillcrest Butcher' and is out of a 'Carnkern Titan' dam.

**Background of the herd:** The herd was started in 2009 with females bought from a number of herds such as: 'Cruithill', 'Curaheen', 'Ballyduff', 'Dripsey' and 'Clonagh'.

**Maternal Breeding:** The herd of 15 pedigree Simmental cows has an overall replacement index of €132 (27% reliable). The young-stock in the herd have an even

higher replacement index value of €176 (24% reliable).

**Top Maternal Cows:** One of the best breeding cows in the herd is 'Mohona Alana'. She is sired by 'Kilbride Farm Newry' and out of a 'Marbelhill Liam' cow. She is a 5 star cow for both the 'Replace-

ment' (€208/34%) and 'Terminal' (€93/32%) indices. **Breeder's comment:** "Having got into pedigree breeding only a few years ago I have been carefully building up numbers by only retaining females that are able to rear a good calf themselves. Anything that is slow to go in calf isn't kept in the herd - simple as that. I want a herd of cows that are all hard workers, not requiring any special treatment.

A good number of bulls have been sold out of the yard so far and it is a market that I have to look after by only producing good quality stock that deliver the goods for their new owners."



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**Counties:** Tipperary, Limerick, Clare, Kilkenny

**If you are a pedigree beef breeder who is interested in participating in the program please ring one of our Herd Liaison Officers today.**