



Update for period 3rd – 9th June 2006

1 Important Dates

- **Thursday 15th June**, Finance Sub-Committee meeting.
- **Thursday 22nd June**, 10:30-1:00, Board Meeting, Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise.
- **Thursday 29th June**, 2.00-4.00pm, Developments in dairy evaluations, in the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel
(Please note change of date of this meeting from Wednesday 28th to Thursday 29th).
- **Wednesday 12th July**, 2.00- 4.00pm, Beef Breeding Scheme and Data Review
- **Thursday 20th July**, 10.30-1.00pm, Genetic Evaluation Consultation Meeting, Abbeyleix Manor Hotel
(Please note change of date of these two meetings from Wednesday 19th to Thursday 20th July)
- **Thursday 20th July**, 2.00-4.00pm, Tully Review Meeting, Abbeyleix Manor Hotel

2 Beef Breeding – Spectacular Progress

Last week John O’Sullivan (Chairman) and Brian Wickham were interviewed by Pat O’Keefe of the Irish Farmers Journal. The result of that interview was published on Thursday this week and our comments on beef breeding were reported under the headline – “*Slow progress on beef*”.

Lets take this opportunity to reflect on the progress that has been made on beef and suggest, respectfully, that the correct headline should have been “*Spectacular progress on beef*”.

What progress have we made?

- We now have a system that is collecting data on the full range of traits relevant to profitable beef production on pedigree and commercial cattle. These traits include calving ease, calf mortality, weaning weight, linear traits in weanlings, feed intake, carcass weight, carcass grade, carcass fat, age at first calving, calving interval, and cow survival. Very few beef herd books, outside of Ireland, have access to data on commercial cattle, or such a comprehensive range of important and relevant traits.
- We have access to slaughter data on all beef cattle going through Irish factories. This comes at very little cost. Outside of Europe slaughter data on commercial cattle is rarely available to breeders or herd books.
- Our genetic evaluation system in Ireland caters for every beef breed. Evaluations enable farmers and breeders to compare animals across the breeds for a wide range of traits. Few, if any, other countries have this.
- Our new economic index, the beef EBI, enables breeders and farmers to identify the contribution that the genetics of beef animals make to the profitability of beef production. The economic sub-indexes for beef production (BPSI), weaned calves (WCSI), beef calving (BCSI) and dairy calving (DCSI) are already operational. Work on the maternal element is well advanced.
- The research into the optimal breeding scheme design for beef breeds in Ireland has been completed. This research shows that a well organised breeding program is capable of increasing genetic progress from the current €3 per animal, per year, to some €18 per animal, per year.
- The proposal for achieving these higher rates of genetic gain is under active discussion within the breeding industry.
- Ireland is leading the world, with our international collaborators, in the development of International Beef Genetic Evaluations.

So, progress towards giving Irish farmers a world class breeding program has been spectacular. Yes, there is still more to be done, but farmers can be confident that ICBF has a talented and totally committed team that are delivering the goods.



3 ICAR & Interbull meeting Kuopio Finland 3-9 June

The recent Interbull and ICAR meetings were attended by staff from the Genetic Evaluations Unit. Topics under discussion were the timing and frequency of Interbull evaluations, introduction of fertility as a new trait, and the operation of international beef evaluations by Interbull. For Ireland the follow points were most noteworthy:

- It has been decided that the number of International dairy evaluations will be reduced from 4 to 3 per year. The exact timing of these evaluations is still under discussion.
- Fertility traits are to be included in the next test run in September with the first routine evaluation scheduled for February 2007. The benefit of this from Ireland's perspective will be the availability of the most up-to-date fertility information on bulls from all other participating countries.
- Interbull has agreed to integrate Interbeef as part of the existing Interbull service. Pedigree and performance data will be handled centrally by the Interbull centre.

4 Genetic Evaluations – Beef & Dairy

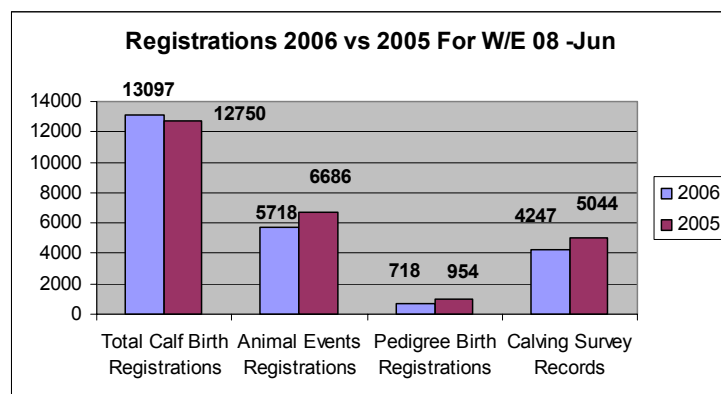
- Proofs from the May 2006 EBI evaluation are operational on the website. The website has also been updated with Top Cow and Top Bull files.
- Research work on beef evaluations is continuing, with particular attention being given to evaluations for beef linear type and beef performance data.
- Genetic parameters have been estimated between France and Ireland for weaning weight for Limousin. These parameters will be used to calculate across country breeding values for weaning weight. Results of this first evaluation will be available in the next couple of weeks.

5 Tully

- The bulls for the May intake are entering Tully. It is expected to have between 70-80 bulls in this intake.
- A group of breeders from Scotland will visit Tully on the 9-6-06.
- Application for the next intake to Tully will be sent out to breeders by the end of June. This intake will be selected on the new EBI figures.

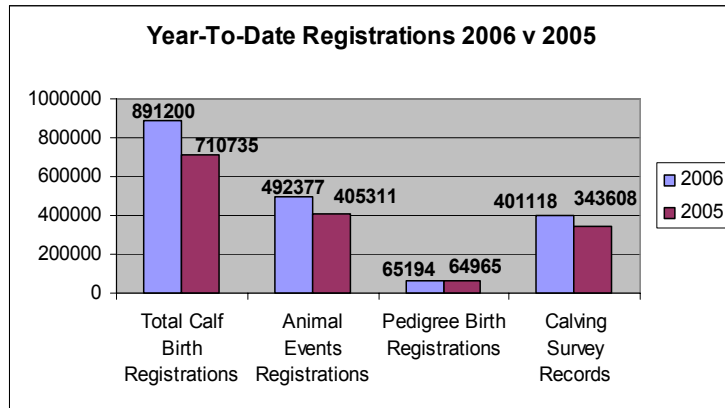
6 Database Update

- 31 new herds added to the database last week.
- The 90,000 inseminations mark has now been broken by those technicians using handhelds.
- We will be having a review of the AI system over the coming weeks with the various organisations with a view to refining the system and making any changes required based on lessons learned over the last three months.

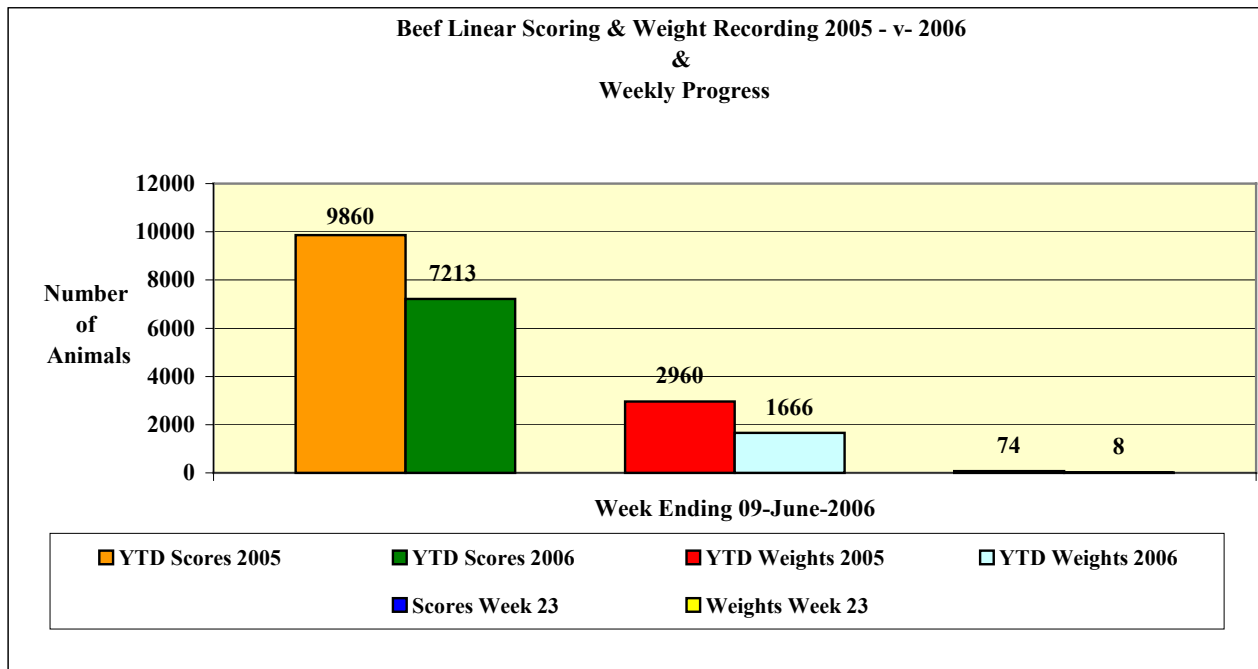




- The last of the fertility reports that we are posting will go out this week. The fertility reports will be posted to the ICBF website on an on-going basis, but enough feedback has been received from farmers at this point to allow us to wind down the pilot.
- Solid progress has been made on expanding the number of Animal Events (inseminations, weight recording, freeze branding, etc) that can be recorded on-line. This will be launched at the Kildalton Agricultural event on June 21st.
- Development of a front-end to streamline the sending and receiving of text messages from/to ICBF is on-going. The aim is to continue to expand the use of text messaging as a means of reducing the ICBF postage costs.
- The design of an application to assist with the management of the progeny testing schemes is on-going. As the programmes expand, this will be key to the efficient management of them.



7 Linear Scoring





8 Milk Recording Update

Milk Recording Herds and Cows Year To date 2006 versus Year to date 2005

Milk Recording Organisation	YTD 2005 Herds Recorded 01/01/05 - 09/06/05	YTD 2006 Herds Recorded 01/01/06 - 09/06/06	Year on Year Herds Difference(%)	YTD 2005 Cows Recorded 01/01/05 - 09/06/05	YTD 2006 Cows Recorded 01/01/06 - 09/06/06	Year on Year Cows Difference(%)
Progressive	2,062	2,027	-2%	136,619	140,385	3%
Dairygold	1,490	1,516	2%	85,694	93,106	9%*
Kerry	1,063	1,073	1%	62,138	64,970	5%
SWS	934	947	1%	51,068	54,414	7%
Tipperary	141	166	18%	8,510	10,646	25%*
Arrabawn	107	156	46%	6,471	9,976	54%*
Connacht	110	117	6%	6,781	7,010	3%
Donegal	25	50	100%	1,740	4,222	143%*
Total	5,932	6,052	2%	359,021	384,729	7%

* For these Co-ops increase in cow numbers attributed to EDIY cells

Milk Recording Stats week ending 9/06/06

Milk Recording Organisation	2006 Herds Recorded Week 02/06/06 - 09/06/06
Progressive	333
Kerry	197
Dairygold	192
SWS	123
Connacht	25
Tipperary	23
Donegal	8
Arrabawn	5
Total	901