



Update for period 17th – 23rd June 2006

1 Important Dates

- **Thursday 29th June**, 12.00-3.00pm, Developments in dairy evaluations, in the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel
- **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
- **Thursday 20th July**, 2.00-4.00pm, Tully Review Meeting, Abbeyleix Manor Hotel

2 Summary of Decisions from yesterdays Board meeting

Decisions taken as yesterdays Board meeting included:

- Adoption of the recommendations of the recent Audit & Finance Sub-Committee.
- To undertake a review of ICBF's structure and costs.
- To approve the Chief Executive's five year plan for achieving full cost recovery, subject to one change pending discussions with Herd Book members.
- The Board fully supports; the development of a breeding scheme proposal, in conjunction of AI and Herd Book members, to achieve optimal rates of gain in dairy and beef breeds, and an approach to DAF seeking support from the 2007-2013 National Strategy for Agriculture.

3 ICAR Meeting - John O'Sullivan's Report

35th ICAR Session, KUOPIO, FINLAND, June 7th –9th, 2006.

ICBF was represented at the ICAR session by myself and the Vice-Chairman, Derek Deane and Martin Burke of ICBF who presented a very well received paper on the development of milk recording in Ireland. It was quite an informative few days and gave an insight into where cattle breeding and recording is heading. First some details about the host Country, Finland:

- 2,219,000 ha of arable land (6.5% of total area) owned by 70,000 Farmers of 30 ha each.
- 15,840 dairy Farmers averaging 21 cows per farm and producing 7,825 litres per cow.
- 71% of dairy cows are Finnish Ayrshire and 28% are Holstein Friesian.
- Agriculture, together with hunting and fishing accounts for 1.2% of GDP.
- 170 young bulls enter dairy progeny testing annually and each produces 200 daughters for evaluation.
- Half of all present dairy farmers are expected to cease production in the next 10 years.

The purpose of the session seemed to be a sharing of views on how animal data recording is going to evolve into the future, how efficiently and easily it can be collected, and to what uses it can be applied to be of benefit to the farmer. It is very clear that European countries, especially the Scandinavian countries and Holland are clear leaders in these fields already and leading innovation.

Among European speakers there was a belief that we are approaching the introduction of a "health history document" that will have to accompany every animal to a European slaughterhouse. The Scandinavian Countries have adapted their databases to accommodate this development and 80-90% of veterinary treatments are being recorded on their cattle breeding databases. This eliminates the need to create another database. A striking point was the very high level of on-line interactivity between their farmers and their respective databases.

Fitness traits (fertility, mastitis, lameness) are being recognised everywhere as very significant contributors to farm profitability (or non-profitability) and they continue to receive greater attention in genetic evaluations and to have more economic importance allocated to them because of the ever increasing costs of dealing with



these problems. An interesting paper from Australia outlining an innovative new farm fertility performance evaluation which benchmarked a farmer's performance against his contemporaries bore a remarkable performance to the ICBF fertility report!

Much emphasis was placed on getting as much information as possible from the milk sample collected at milk recording. Scientists are exploring ways that the sample can be tested for different diseases and I was very impressed with one presentation that is examining a means of testing the sample for sub-clinical Ketosis which is estimated to affect 30-40% of dairy cows in Ireland in their early lactation resulting in reduced production and fertility performance. I do think the tendency we have to move to 8 week recording intervals in Ireland will not provide optimum results if we were to look at these areas.

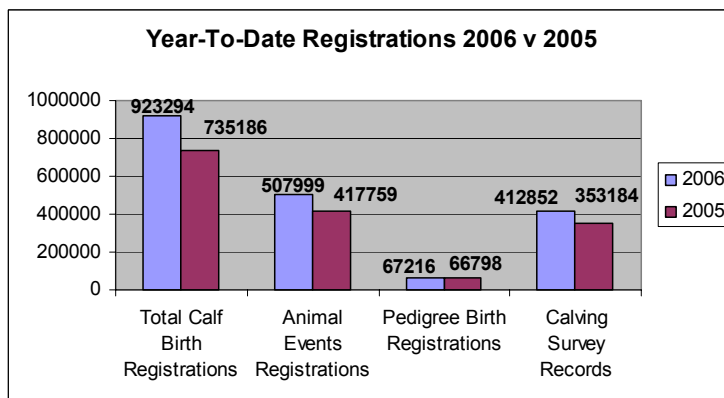
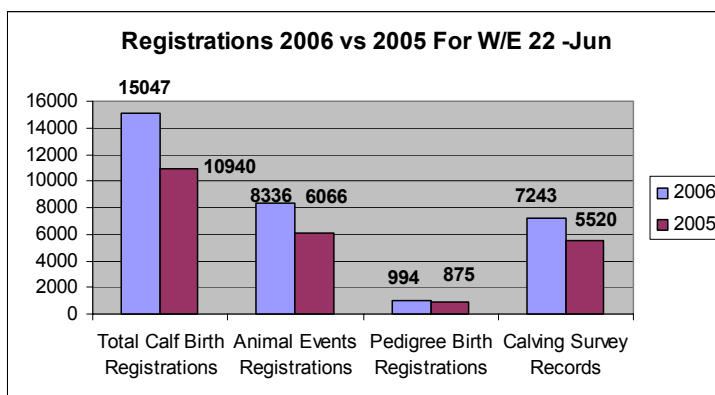
A Finnish Scientist presented a paper on DNA analysis of milk samples to identify the mastitis causing pathogen. Results can be produced in 4 hours resulting in the ability of the farmer to use the appropriate treatment immediately. More expensive than the conventional test but far more effective.

There were many other interesting papers and it was heartening to see the enthusiasm displayed by various presenters of their work and the willingness they displayed to share their research. This is very much to be encouraged and is something that all farmers everywhere should benefit from. Derek and I greatly appreciated the opportunity to get a flavour of what is happening in this field of activity.

John O'Sullivan, Chairman

4 Database Update

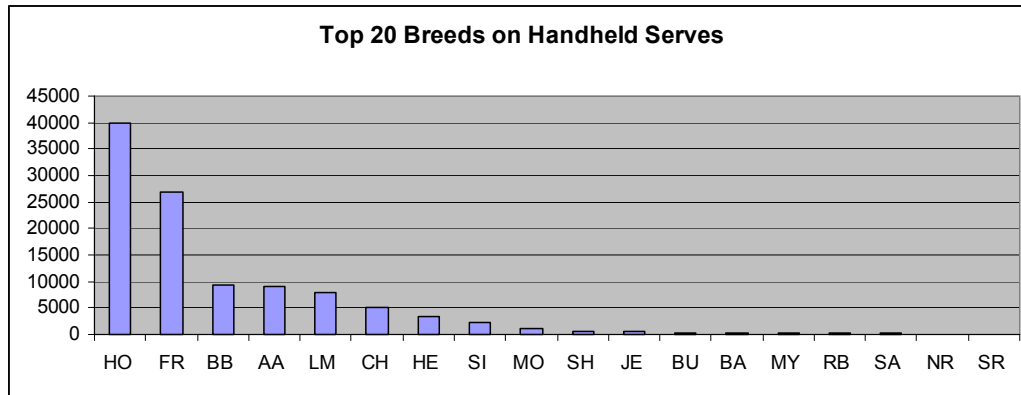
- 43 new herds added to the database last week.
- The 107,000 inseminations mark has now been broken by those technicians using handhelds.
- We will be having a review of the AI system over the coming weeks with the various organisations with a view to refining the system and making any changes required based on lessons learned over the last three months.
- A very constructive meeting with the beef herd-books was held on Tuesday of this week to discuss some refinements to the database front ends that we were proposing. With some 321,000 Dairy and Beef Pedigree Registrations processed by the ICBF database system since 2002, the updates will involve moving to a web-based front end in order to increase the ease of processing registrations that generate queries. A meeting with the dairy herdbooks will be held in the near future to ensure the proposed updates meet all requirements.



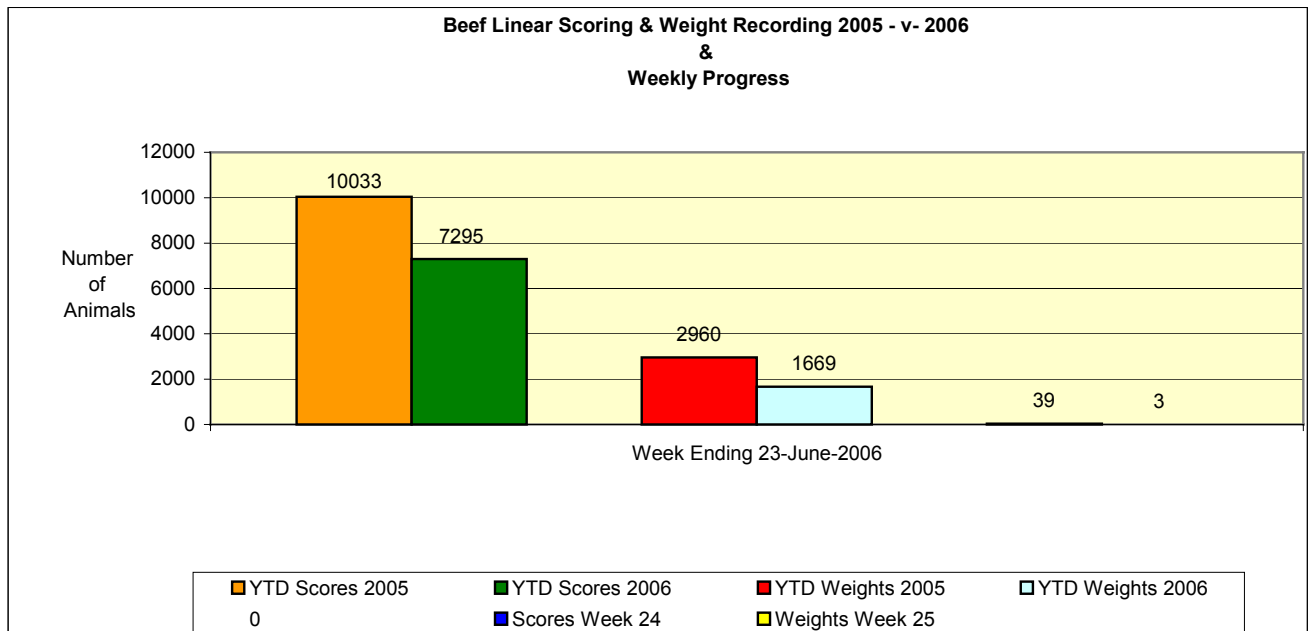
- The on-line recording of Animal Events (other than calf-registration) was well received at Kildalton this week.



- 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.



5 Linear Scoring





6 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 - 23/06/05	YTD 2006 Herds Recorded 01/01/06 - 23/06/06	Year on Year Herds Difference(%)	YTD 2005 Cows Recorded 01/01/05 - 23/06/05	YTD 2006 Cows Recorded 01/01/06 - 23/06/06	Year on Year Cows Difference(%)
Progressive	2,065	2,058	0%	140,212	145,199	4%
Dairygold	1,509	1,536	2%	90,237	97,023	8% *
Kerry	1,064	1,073	1%	63,778	66,538	4%
SWS	934	952	2%	52,231	55,150	6%
Tipperary	141	167	18%	8,843	11,095	25% *
Arrabawn	107	157	47%	6,653	10,313	55% *
Connacht	110	125	14%	6,928	7,750	12%
Donegal	27	56	107%	2,756	4,758	73% *
Total	5,957	6,124	3%	371,638	397,826	7%

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

Milk Recording Stats week ending 23/06/06

Milk Recording Organisation	2006 Herds Recorded Week 16/06/06 - 23/06/06
Progressive	397
Dairygold	257
Kerry	194
SWS	39
Arrabawn	19
Connacht	17
Tipperary	26
Donegal	8
Total	957

7 Tully

- The performance test for the May intake will start from the 27-6-06. A total of 72 bulls will start the performance test.
- The applications for the next intake to Tully will be sent out to breeders by the 10-7-06 based on the new EBI indexes.
- A group of pedigree breeders from Germany will visit Tully on the 26-6-06.



8 Genetic Evaluations

- **International evaluation:** New genetic parameter estimation is underway using more accurate models for the Limousine breed in Ireland, France and Luxembourg. This work should improve the accuracy of the genetic correlations between the countries.
- **Calving Ease evaluation:** Work on calving ease evaluations is progressing. New data editing software is being coded to facilitate more routine calving evaluations.
- **Beef Performance Evaluation:** Extracts of files containing the BPSI and WCSI information for the next Tully intake have been completed. This intake will see the introduction of the new indexes as a selection criteria for entry into Tully for the first time. New data editing software is also being coded to facilitate more routine beef performance evaluations.

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