

BREEDING FOR PROFIT

Advice for Dairy and Beef Farmers

Major uptake in GROW service

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AS well as seeing uptake in its Beef HerdPlus, ICBF are reporting major increases in the number of farmers (pedigree and commercial) signing up to its new GROW service, launched earlier this year. The number of farmers involved has doubled and now stands at 1,500 for the year to date.

What is GROW?

GROW stands for; Genetic Recording Of Weanlings, and as the name suggests, it is a service that gathers cattle breeding information on beef weanlings.

The information gathered is from Linear Scoring and Weight Recording, carried out on-farm. Linear Scoring is the assessment of a weanling for different traits (Loin, Hindquarter, Hind Legs, Docility etc) which are all of economic importance to a Suckler Farmer. There are 20 core traits and up to 20 additional traits scored on each animal. There are three main rules associated with the GROW programme:

- Score and weigh all eligible weanlings.
- Animals are scored in the

age bracket 150 to 300 days old.

- There should be a minimum of five animals available for weighing and scoring.

The scoring and weighing of all available weanlings (i.e. both pedigree and commercial) ensures that all potential data is included in the genetic evaluation process. As a result, reliability for Euro-Star Indexes and BLUP figures is maximised, which in turn increases our ability to identify superior animals for the GEN€ IRELAND programme. For example, the bull in **Figure 1**, Roundhill Botan, was put forward by Doreon Corridan for performance testing at Tully. Following a very impressive performance test, he was selected by NCBC as a young AI Sire in the GEN€ IRELAND Progeny Test Programme. He was linear scored while at Tully. **Figure 1** shows some of the extremely good scores that he received for traits of economic importance. He also had an average daily gain on test of 2.2kg/day. This underlines why weighing and scoring is a valuable tool in helping to identify superior animals.

Why get involved?

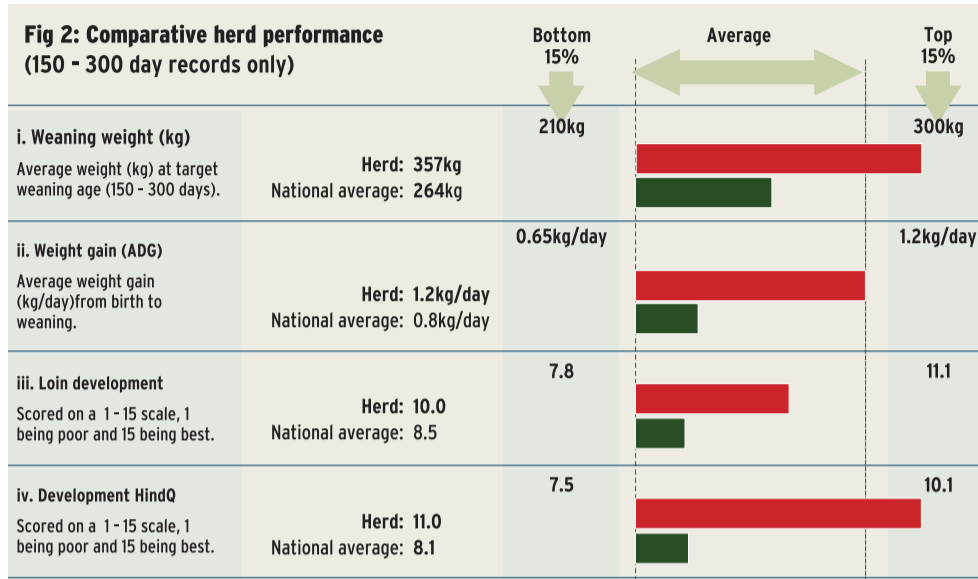
According to breeders and commercial farmers, there are many reasons for getting in-

involved in the new GROW service:

- Get more accurate Euro-Star and figures for your herd.
- Ensure your top bulls are identified for Tully and AI Centres.
- Ensure your females qualify for Breed Society female qualification schemes.
- Get that edge at society sales — performance test stamp for your cattle in sales catalogues.
- Ensure you have genetic evaluations for your cattle on the new Online Herdbook.
- Make breeding and culling decisions based on the excellent management reports that you will receive after the scoring and weighing visit.

Making use of results

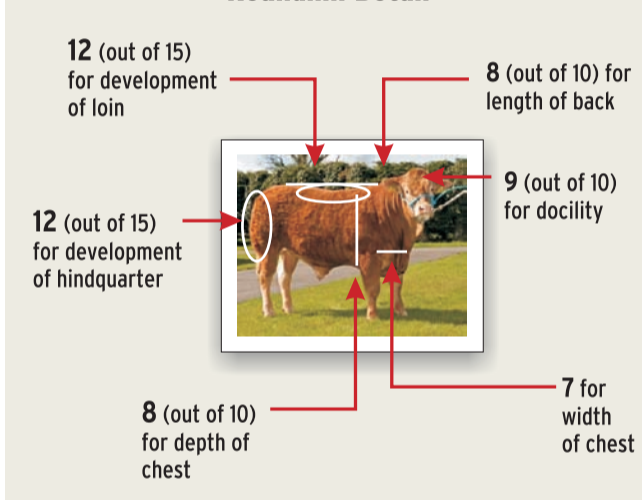
Following a scoring and weighing visit, farmers can also benchmark their herd against other herds that have participated in the GROW performance recording scheme. The report allows you assess in what percentile your weanlings lie for particular traits. For example, the farmer in **Figure 2** is in the top 15% for weaning, with an average weaning weight of 357kg. However, he is just above average for loin development in his weanlings. Having this information allows him to focus on traits to improve for the next breeding season. In addition, a new GROW report is about to be released to all pedigree and commercial farmers in the coming weeks.



The report will have:

- Overall Herd Summary Section — giving an overall summary as to how a group of weanlings scored and weighed
- Herd Comparative Bar Charts — showing how a herd compares to other herds nationally within and across breed.
- Individual Animal Results Section — showing the scores and weights for every animal for core and additional traits.
- Suckler Cow Milk Performance Section — ranks suckler cows within their age groups based on their calves' weight. All beef farmers are urged to get involved in the new GROW service. For more, call 1850 600 900.

Fig 1: Example of Linear Scoring for Limousin bull Roundhill Botan



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