



**GENE IRELAND**<sup>®</sup>  
Breeding future Profits

# Maternal Beef Breeding Program



Locall

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## Maternal Beef Breeding Program Explanatory Material

### Background

In 2012, ICBF completed a major review of its beef GENE IRELAND (GI) program. One of the key outcomes from the review was the need to increase the number of beef bulls being progeny tested on an annual basis. As a result, the ICBF, Irish Beef Breed Societies and Industry Partners are working very closely together in order to get the very best bulls into the new (GI) Maternal Beef Breeding program.

#### Main aims of the program

##### 1. Identify Top Maternal Bulls:

The main aim of the program is to identify the top Maternal bulls within each beef breed. However, by progeny testing a high number of bulls, the program will also identify bulls that excel on terminal traits, calving ease and other key profit traits.

##### 2. Identify Top Data Recording Pedigree Herds:

Pedigree Herds that constantly record accurate data on their cattle will also be identified through this program. The level of transparency as regards record keeping will give commercial farmers purchasing stock from such herds an extra guarantee as regards the integrity of the data behind an animal's Euro-Star figures.

### Process

#### 1. Sign Up

- ▶ All Irish Pedigree Beef Breeders can sign up to the program by filling in an application form (available from ICBF) & returning it to ICBF. There is an annual fee of €250/herd which must also be included with the application form (Cheque or Direct Debit).

#### 2. Maternal Bull Breeder Qualification Process

- ▶ Once your herd is signed up to the program you will begin the process of getting your herd qualified as an official 'Bull Breeder' herd.
- ▶ Your herd will be assessed using the Herd Data Quality Index (HDQI). This is a new tool which will analyse all of the data that you record on your animals for its accuracy & quality.
- ▶ The data from a herd is assessed for its completeness & timeliness.

For example:

- Dates of birth on all calves recorded accurately and on time.
- Insemination dates recorded for all females at time of insemination.
- ET data recorded correctly.
- Stockbull introduction & removal from the cows recorded accurately.
- Gestation lengths for all females are within biological limits.
- All eligible animals in the herd are linear scored & weight recorded.
- ▶ All cows in the herd will be linear scored to assess their functionality, udder quality etc.
- ▶ All youngstock will be weighed & scored to confirm their birth dates, growth rates etc.
- ▶ All Stockbulls will be weighed & scored to assess their functionality etc.
- ▶ ICBF will work closely with each Breeder to help them improve their index, in order to become a qualified 'Bull Breeder' as quickly as possible.

#### 3. Qualified Maternal Bull Breeder Herds

- ▶ Herds that have achieved excellent 'Herd Data Quality Index' (HDQI) ratings and attain the 'Bull Breeder' status now enter a different phase of the program and start reaping the benefits of being a fully qualified Maternal Bull Breeder herd.
- ▶ Qualified 'Bull Breeder' herds will have to still achieve a very high 'HDQI' rating on an annual basis in order to retain their 'Bull Breeder' status.



## Benefits of being a qualified 'Maternal Bull Breeder' herd

### 1. Bull Breeder Advice

- ▶ Guidance on best practice in relation to herd health & the rearing of young bulls & heifers for breeding. i.e. ensuring that all animals produced from the herd are fit and & ready for breeding purposes.
- ▶ Mating advice on all breeding females in the herd – minimizing inbreeding and maximizing genetic gain.
- ▶ Provide priority access to new technology's such as genomics.

### 2. GENE IRELAND Stamp

- ▶ A GENE IRELAND (GI) stamp will be displayed on all publically available ICBF material for this herd.
- ▶ All Bulls & Heifers being sold will have this stamp printed beside them in Sales Catalogues, on Bull Search Web Pages, in Breed Society Online Herdbooks etc.
  - This stamp demonstrates to a purchaser that the herd from which the animal is being sold from has achieved an extremely high standard of data quality (i.e. correct dates of birth, accurate insemination/mating dates etc.).
- ▶ The herds which have achieved this level of data quality will also be listed as qualified Maternal Bull Breeder Herds on the ICBF & Breed Society Websites & Yearbooks.

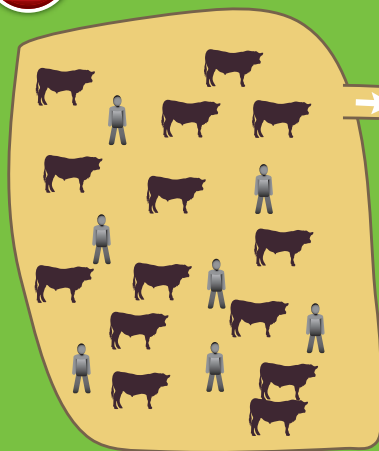
### 3. AI Bull

- ▶ There is the possibility that the GI program will purchase a bull from your herd from which semen will be collected.
  - Bulls will only be purchased from breeders that sign-up to the program.
  - Each bull that is purchased for AI will have 1000 semen straws collected.
  - 500 semen straws will be used as part of progeny testing the bull:
  - The remaining 500 semen straws will be stored until the bull is proven (high reliability for either terminal or maternal index or both).
  - At this stage the semen will then be distributed for use in elite mating's to herds that have signed-up to the program. Only bulls that excel in the program will have their semen disseminated to pedigree herds.
- ▶ As a participating Maternal Bull Breeder, your Herd will have complimentary access to semen from those AI Sires that have been purchased by the program and which have performed extremely well on progeny test. The cost of this semen is covered by the annual fee to join the program.

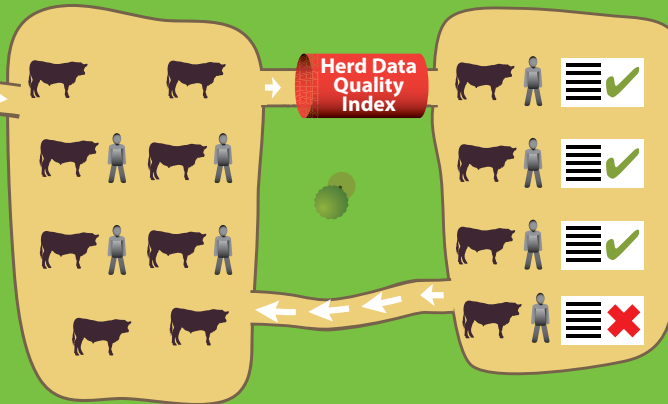


# GENE IRELAND (GI) Maternal

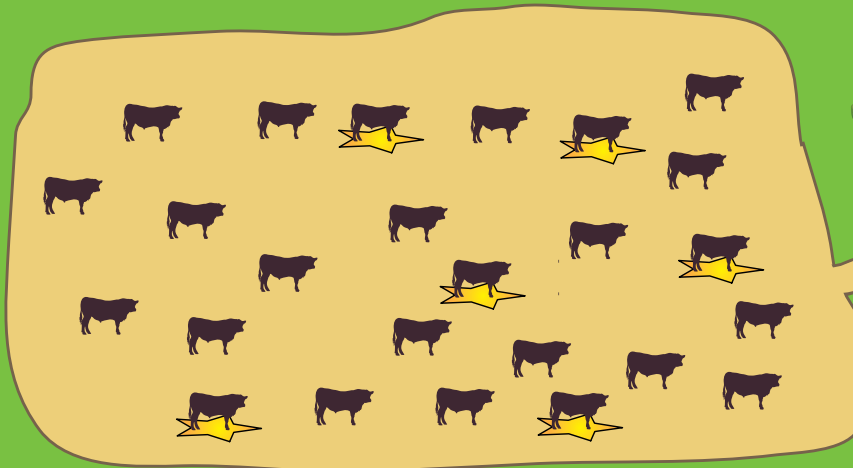
## 1 Pedigree Beef Herds



## 2 Maternal Bull Breeder Qualification Process



## Commercial Suckler Herds



### Bull Sale Catalogue



### Online Bull Search



### Recommended Breeder List



### 1. Sign Up

- All Irish Pedigree Beef Breeders can sign up to the program by completing an application form (available from ICBF - 1850-600-900). There is an annual fee of €250/herd which must also be included with the application form (cheque or Direct Debit)

### 2. Maternal Bull Breeder Qualification Process

- Herds that sign up to the program will begin the process of getting themselves qualified as official 'Bull Breeder' herds.
- All data records are assessed using the ICBF 'Herd Data Quality Index' (HDQI).

### 3. Qualified Maternal Bull Breeder Herds

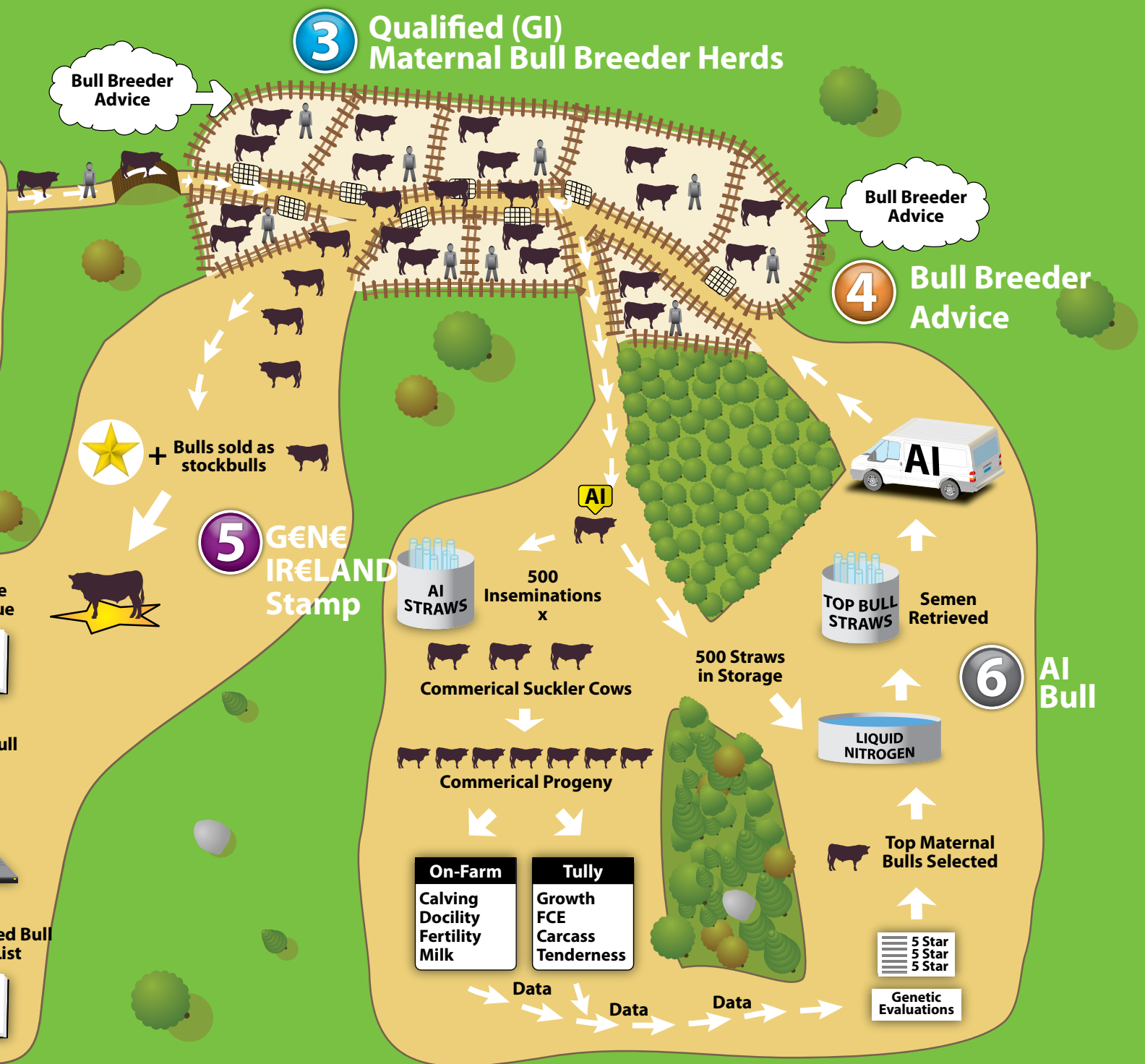
- Herds that have achieved an excellent HDQI rating become qualified Maternal 'Bull Breeder' herds.
- Each 'Bull Breeder' herd will have to maintain a very high 'HDQI' rating in order to retain their 'Bull Breeder' status

### 4. Bull Breeder Advice

- Guidance on best practice in relation to herd health and rearing of young bulls to ensure that all Bull Breeder calves from the herd are fit for breeding.
- Mating advice on all females in the herd to avoid inbreeding and maximize genetic gain.
- Provide priority access to new genetic technologies such as



# Qual Beef Breeding Program



**Advice**

practice in health & the bulls thus produced & ready for all breeding - minimizing maximizing access to new genomics.

## 5. GENE IRELAND STAMP

- A GENE IRELAND (GI) stamp will be displayed on all publically available ICBF material.
- All Bulls & Heifers being sold will have this stamp printed beside them in Sales Catalogues, on Bull Search Web Pages & in Breed Society Online Herdbooks etc.
- This stamp demonstrates to a purchaser that the herd from which the animal is being sold from has achieved an extremely high standard of data quality (i.e. correct dates of birth, accurate insemination/mating dates etc.).

## 6. AI Bull

- There is the possibility that the GI program will purchase a bull from your herd from which semen will be collected
- 500 Semen straws will be used as part of progeny testing the bull.
- The remaining 500 semen straws will be stored until the bull is proven.
- Only 'Bull Breeder' herds will then receive complimentary straws from the very best of these proven bulls.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Bull Breeder Herds

1. **Is this program open to all beef breeds?**  
*Yes, this program is open to all Beef Pedigree Breeders who are members of the relevant breed society in the Republic of Ireland.*
2. **I run a Stockbull with my Pedigree herd. Can I still join the program or is it only for those Breeders that use AI?**  
*Yes this program is open to all types of pedigree breeders. Those that just use Stockbulls or 100% AI as well as those that use a mixture of both may join the program.*
3. **I wouldn't be pushing my cattle as regards feeding them up for shows etc. I treat my pedigrees the same as if it was a commercial herd. Would this be a disadvantage in terms of partaking in the program?**  
*Absolutely not, ensuring that the young bulls for breeding in these 'Bull Breeder' herds are fit & ready to work is very important. Animal Husbandry & Bull preparation pre-sale is something that will be covered in the 'Bull Breeder Advice' part of the program.*
4. **I don't normally sell any of my pedigree bulls at society bull sales. I don't show cattle either. Would joining such a program be out of the question for me?**  
*No, breeders who normally sell their Bulls off-farm through repeat customers etc are ideal breeders for this program. Keeping accurate records on each individual animal in your herd (Insemination, date of birth etc) is what is important in this program – not what your method of herd promotion & sales is.*
5. **If I join the program and don't become a qualified 'Bull Breeder' in the first year am I then expelled from the program?**  
*No, ICBF will be working very closely with all Breeders to help their herds get qualified with the 'Bull Breeder' status as quickly as possible. If a Breeder does not reach this standard in year one of the program then the work will continue in terms of getting that herd's individual animal records up to the required standard.*
6. **I have only 2 pedigree cows. €250 is a lot for me to pay. Is this program really only designed for big Pedigree herds?**  
*No, it is designed for all Pedigree Herds. The €250 (68 cent/day) goes towards covering the cost of the work that will be undertaken with your herd in order for it to achieve and retain its 'Bull Breeder' status e.g. Data collection & keying, weight recording, herd visits etc.*
7. **Do I have to be a member of HerdPlus®?**  
*Yes, everyone has to be a HerdPlus member for the duration of the scheme. Herds that are not currently joined will be given complementary membership for year 1 provided they supply their direct debit details. The cost of HerdPlus® is €60/year.*

### G€N€ IRELAND Stamp

8. **Where will this stamp be published?**  
*The G€N€ IRELAND Stamp will be published on the Bull Search beside the details of any Bull in your herd e.g. young bull being sold off-farm. The stamp will also be published with your animals in the online herdbooks. A listing of all qualified 'Bull Breeders' will also be published on the ICBF & Breed Society websites.*
9. **How long will it take me to get this stamp?**  
*This very much depends on the level of record keeping in the herd. Once a herd's HDQI (Herd Data Quality Index) reaches a certain level then the herd is automatically given the stamp. Herds that have excellent records kept on all animals will obviously receive the stamp quicker than those herds that have to improve their level of record keeping and get their HDQI to the desired level.*
10. **Once I get the stamp – how long does it last for?**  
*Your herd will continue to receive the stamp for as long as it's HDQI is achieving the required 'Bull Breeder' standard.*
11. **Could a Herdowner that is not a qualified Bull Breeder get this stamp?**  
*No, only qualified Bull Breeder herds can receive the stamp.*

### Bulls purchased for AI

12. **If I join the program and pay the €250 does ICBF automatically come out and buy bulls for AI off me?**  
*No. Your herd first of all has to go through the Bull Breeder qualification process. Then bulls from your herd may be considered for AI progeny testing. However, don't forget that all bulls bred in your herd will receive the Bull Breeder stamp – not just any that are selected for AI.*
13. **Who picks which bulls are purchased for AI?**  
*Breeding Committees will be in place for each breed – made up of Pedigree Breeders and ICBF personnel. ICBF will generate the initial list of bulls – which will be obviously strong on the Maternal traits. Different criteria will then be in place to make the final selection decisions i.e. Outcross & new Bloodlines, calving ease & growth rate limits etc.*
14. **If a bull of mine is bought for A.I. can I take a share in him?**  
*No, below are the three ways that a bull is eligible to have semen collected as part of the program.*
  1. ICBF purchases the bull(s) directly from herd owners that are participating in the program.
  2. Breeders put their bull privately onto the program. The bull must meet certain criteria to be eligible and the breeder must make available 1000 doses of semen to the program. 500 doses of the semen go towards progeny testing the bull and the remainder are retained for elite mating's.

3. *All company put their own bulls onto the program. Again the bulls must meet certain criteria.*

**15. If I sell a bull for AI into the program can I request for extra semen to be collected off the bull for my own use & sale while the 1000 doses is being collected off the bull by ICBF?**

*No, if the bull is sold to ICBF then the breeder would not be in a position to collect or request extra semen.*

*However, additional semen can be collected on privately owned breeder bulls which are eligible to be selected for the program. For every breeder owned bull, the herd owner must pay upfront a fee of €1000, which is refundable on the condition that a thousand doses of high quality semen is made available to the program. The fee is non-refundable in the event that (a) the bull produces fewer than a thousand doses of semen or (b) in ICBF's opinion, the semen is not of high quality pre-freezing or not viable post-freezing.*

*ICBF will cover costs incurred in collecting the 1,000 doses to be used in the program such as:*

- ▶ *Transport of the bull to the A.I center.*
- ▶ *Collection and storage for the first 1000 doses of high quality semen that the bull produces.*
- ▶ *Health tests and maintenance costs from the time the bull enters the AI center until 14 days after the first 1,000 doses of high quality semen have been collected for the GI program.*
- ▶ *Allocation of an AI code and payment of relevant A.I code and genetic evaluation fees.*

*The herd owner shall be responsible for all costs in respect of any additional semen collected above 1,000 doses.*

**16. When the 1000 straws is taken off the bull, 500 go for progeny test inseminations, what happens the other 500?**

*The other 500 straws are put into storage. If a Bull comes through the progeny test with excellent figures then this batch of 500 straws is taken back out of storage for use in the Bull Breeder herds.*

**17. Can Pedigree Breeders who are not qualified 'Bull Breeder' herds get access to any of those 500 straws?**

*No, those 500 straws are strictly for use within the Bull Breeder herds. If the bull was purchased by an AI Station or if a Breeder took extra straws off him after ICBF collected their 1000 straws – then farmers outside of the Bull Breeder herds may get access to his straws, but they will have to purchase them and availability would not be guaranteed. Bull Breeder herds do not have to pay for this semen and as it has been reserved for them, availability will not be an issue.*

**18. Where will the young bulls have their semen collected?**

*The Bulls will be divided between all of the participating AI Stations for semen collection.*

**19. The AI Bulls that come out on top of the progeny test – do the 'Bull Breeder' herdowners all have to use these bulls on their pedigree cows?**

*Yes, obviously Breeders will have a choice of which bulls to use but by breeding young bulls and daughters out of these 500 straws –*

*that Sire's superior genes for the maternal traits will be increased within the national suckler herd.*

**20. Although the main objective of this program is to find Bulls that sire excellent daughters, if a Bull comes through with an excellent Terminal Index what will happen his semen?**

*If a Bull comes through with an excellent Terminal index – his semen will also be used within the Bull Breeder herds but only after the matings have been selected for the top ranking maternal bulls.*

## Performance Test Centre

**21. Will all the cattle be finished with concentrates? Will any be finished off grass?**

*Intakes of cattle at the Performance Test Centre will be finished on a concentrate diet however it is planned that in time, as part of the progeny test, that a portion of the cattle will also be finished off grass.*

**22. Where are the cattle that are bought for finishing in the Performance Test Centre sourced?**

*The cattle are bought from commercial suckler herds that are part of the GENE IRELAND® progeny test program. These are the herds that will be using those first 500 straws off the Testbulls that are purchased by the program.*

**23. Is it only the very best progeny of each Testbull that are brought into the Performance Test Centre?**

*No, a random sample of progeny from each Testbull will be purchased. They are weighed on-farm and are DNA parentage tested before they come into Tully.*

**24. What age do the cattle start their performance test at and what age are they slaughtered at?**

*They start their performance test at 11-12 months of age and are slaughtered at about 15 – 16 months old. They are purchased and slaughtered at set ages so as the progeny of each Testbull can be fairly compared against each other.*

**25. Is it possible to go up to view the cattle in the Performance Test Centre?**

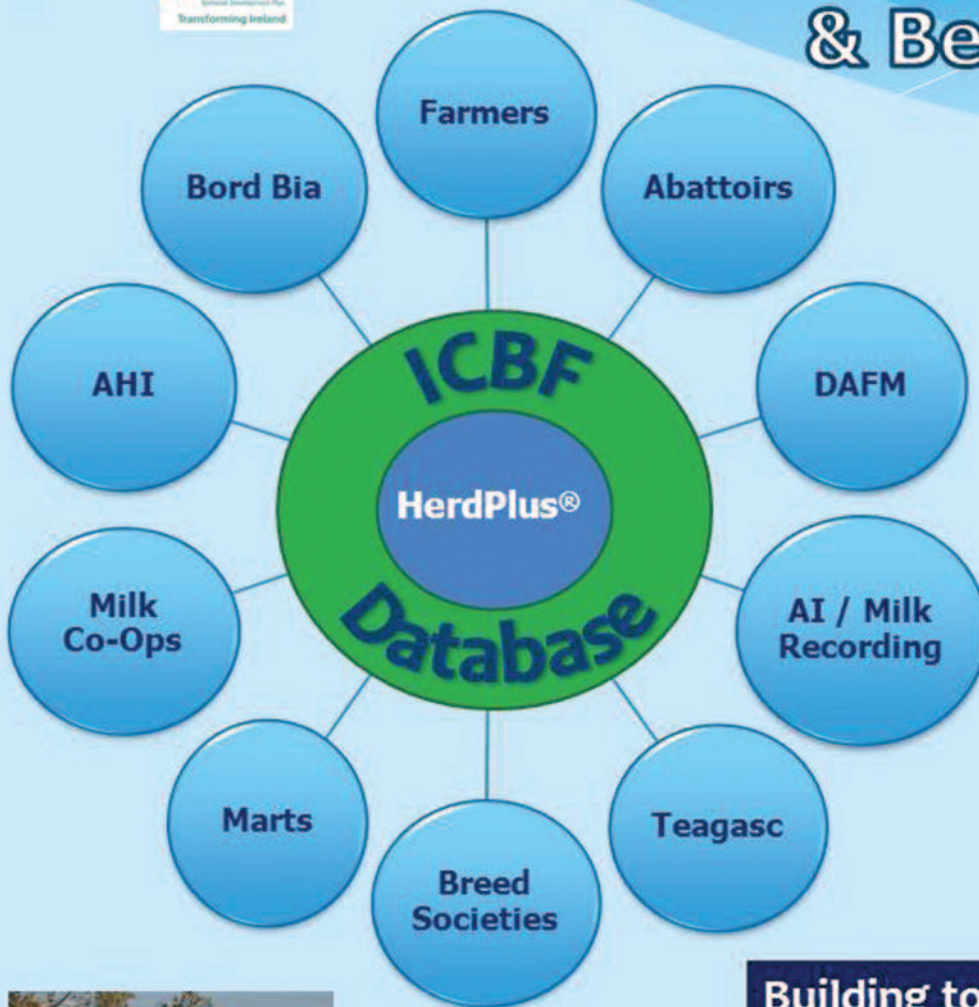
*Yes, ICBF are in the process of developing the Performance Test Centre into a focal point for beef breeding in Ireland. Individuals or groups (by appointment) are always welcome to visit the centre (located near the Irish National Stud).*

**26. Could progeny of other bulls be brought into Tully – for example could ICBF purchase progeny of AI sires with high priced semen who would normally never have progeny fattened & slaughtered?**

*Yes this is a possibility. The priority for the intakes of cattle is that they will only contain progeny from the GENE IRELAND Testbulls. However, there are many different options now available to the Irish Cattle Breeding Industry as regards the usage of the performance test centre which heretofore was not the case.*



# ICBF - Well Connected to deliver profit to the Dairy & Beef Industry



## Some Key Breeding Improvements ...

Calving Interval (days)			
	2010	2011	2012
Dairy	402	403	397
Beef	406	407	396
Calves / Cow / Year			
	2010	2011	2012
Dairy	0.85	0.85	0.89
Beef	0.78	0.79	0.85



## Building towards 2020 ...

ICBF Progress to Date	2002	2012
Weight Recording	5,000	250,000
Carcass Records	5000	800,000
Calving Performance data	15000	1.2m
Animal Health (BVD tests)	0	470,000
AI Inseminations	15,000	700,000



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