

New sheep indices launched

DARREN CARTY
BEEF & SHEEP

A LARGE crowd attended the Irish Grassland Association sheep conference and farm walk on the farm of John Renehan, Johnstown, Kilkenny to have the first viewing of the new Euro-star profit indices.

Flock owners can use these new indices as an important ram purchasing tool for the first time this year. The indices are based on the same profit principles as the EBI and beef Euro-star systems that livestock farmers have now become accustomed to.

Great interest from farmers and breeders raised plenty of questions into the

working of the scheme and how it will deliver real benefits to the sheep industry.

The four main indices — production, lambing, maternal and health will combine to give an overall index. All of these will have values represented in euros for breeding values of rams and given a number of stars between one and five, depending on breeding value.

Accuracy figures will also be demonstrated in percentages and will increase as additional data recorded is collected for particular rams.

The most accurate index at present is the production index, with growth weights and carcass scores available for calculating this.

It will take longer for firm figures to be established for health and lambing indices, with traits for these not recorded until progeny are born from ewe lambs. Andrew Cromie, ICBF, said that the system was the start of a three-year programme and will take two to three years to fill out information for a full, clear, accurate picture. Belclare sheep breeders

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At the Irish Grassland Association sheep farm walk and conference on the farm of John Renehan, Johnstown, Co Kilkenny, when the new Sheep Ireland indices were launched, were: Tim Byrne, Abacus Bio, consultants to ICBF; Brian Wickham, ICBF; host farmer John Renehan and Anne Murphy, Gorey, interim board member.

were also happy to hear that they will now be included in data recording under Sheep Ireland, with all data currently being transferred from Dr Seamus Hanrahan, who has been looking after the Belclare breeding programme for many years.

Also of interest on the farm was an insight into how John Renehan is managing his farming system to deliver such good results from grass

and also new technologies being used by Sheep Ireland.

These included the use of electronic identification as a management aid, the Prately Auto-Drafter for weight recording and handling and, also, the use of DNA technology for facilitating multi sire mating.

Pat Donnellan, Sheep Ireland, said that the subject of EID tagging is generating much debate with Sheep Ire-

land not advocating the use of tags in the general flock, but using them as an essential performance monitoring tool to make it possible to collect the necessary large range of data in a cost effective and accurate manner.

A demonstration by Graham Potterton showed how the Prately Auto-Drafter can be used to read required information, in addition to drafting and splitting lambs

into different groups.

The conference proceedings transferred to the Horse and Jockey in the afternoon, where top sheep farmers Andrew Kinsella and Crosby Cleland along with industry experts Michael McHugh, Teagasc; Dr Michael O'Doherty, UCD and Dr Peter Amer, New Zealand gave their view on many aspects of the sheep industry.

• Full report on page 33.

Milk price agreed with Glanbia/FMP

PAT O'TOOLE
NEWS DESK

GLANBIA has agreed a price for liquid milk with Fresh Milk Producers (FMP). Having paid 24.5c/l on account for April, suppliers will receive an extra 0.5c/l, bringing the price up to 25c/l.

A rate of 24c has been agreed for May/June, and it is hoped that, should markets not further deteriorate, this price will be maintained for July/August.

IFA Liquid Milk chairman,

Eamonn Bray, welcomed the fact that an agreement had been put in place for the summer, but is unhappy at the share of the consumer price producers are receiving.

"The likely average price for liquid milk this year will be about 32c/l," Bray said.

"Add manufacturing costs of 16c/l to that, and the gross cost to the processor is 48c/l. We know that processors are receiving a minimum of 70c/l, and up to €1/l, for this milk, giving them a margin of at

least 22c, which equates to our milk price over these summer months."

Bray points to the door-to-door delivery operators as further proof of inequity.

"These people have a margin of about 40c/l to cover their costs, which include a van/vans, a refrigerated store, and running costs. Meanwhile farmers, who have invested millions in their business, are left with less than the cost of production — it's just not a sustainable situation," he said.

€450m for improved water quality

DARRAGH MULLIN
NEWS DESK

FARMERS in the West of Ireland have spent €450m on improving water quality, Galway IFA chairman Barry Donnelly told delegates at a Environment Protection Agency Water Conference in Galway this week.

Donnelly said: "Farmers in the West have just completed one of the most substantial on-farm investment programmes in the history of

the State. This investment programme involved building sheds, slurry storage and milking parlours. The single biggest beneficiary of this investment programme is the environment."

The Galway County Chairman added that almost 22,000 farmers in Connacht participate in the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS). "This is a programme which focuses on conservation, landscape protection and habitats and often

means farmers have to reduce output, yield and earning potential."

He said: "Farmers in Galway and the West often don't get the opportunity to tell the positive side of what they do for the environment. I am delighted to highlight our achievements and show that farmers' commitment to environmental sustainability is real. They put their money and time into improving and enhancing Ireland's environment."

Organic Farming Open Days 2009
June – September

A nationwide series of national organic farming open days will take place this summer. Teagasc, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and organic organisations invite all interested to see organic farming in practice and to meet and speak with the producers and the sector's experts.

Wed, 17 Jun	Kildare	Peter and Jenny Young, Castlefarm, Athy at 7pm	Dairying, Tillage
Thur, 18 Jun	Cork	Colm O'Regan, Ballyregan, Dunderrow, Kinsale at 7pm	Horticulture & Poultry
Thur, 25 Jun	Galway	Eagles Farm, Teagasc Mellows Centre, Athenry at 7pm	Organic Beef & Sheep Research Centre
Wed, 1 Jul	Sligo	Danny Kilcullen, Seaview House, Enniscrone at 7pm	Beef & Tillage
Thur, 2 Jul	Donegal	Ian Witherow, Inch Level, Speenoge, Burt at 7pm	Dairying & Tillage
Tue, 7 Jul	Monaghan	Derrick Forde, Drumcannon, Latton PO at 7pm	Beef & Sheep
Wed, 8 Jul	Kildare	Trevor Harris, Cooltrim, Donadea, Naas at 7pm	Tillage, Beef & Sheep
Wed, 15 Jul	Offaly	Sean Clancy, Tonelmore, Cloghan at 7pm	Beef
Thur, 16 Jul	Cork	John Forde, Knockatullera, Newmarket at 7pm	Beef, Sheep & Tillage
Wed, 22 Jul	Cork	Noel Lynch, Ballymakeera, Macroom at 7pm	Beef, Sheep & Tillage
Fri, 24 Jul	Limerick	Harry O'Grady Finnisterstown Hse, Adare at 7pm	Beef, Sheep & Tillage
Wed, 12 Aug	Laois	Dominic Leonard, Castlewood House, Durrrow at 7pm	Beef, Sheep, Pigs & Tillage
Thur, 13 Aug	Leitrim	David Nottle, Aughamore, Carrick-on-Shannon at 7pm	Beef and Sheep
Wed, 26 Aug	Cavan	Richard Moeran, Farrenconnell Estate, Mountnugent at 6pm	Beef, Sheep, Pigs & Tillage
Fri, 28 Aug	Kildare	Peter and Jenny Young, Castlefarm, Athy at 2pm	Farm Shop, Horticulture, Farm Diversifications
Thur, 3 Sept	Offaly	Philip Dreaper, Coolnagrower, Fortral, Birr at 2pm	Fieldscale Vegetables
Tues, 8 Sept	Cork	Batt and Ger Sheehan, Ballymounteen, Ballynoe, Mallow at 6pm	Dairying & Tillage
Wed, 9 Sept	Tipperary	Fintan Rice, Everardgrange, Fethard at 6pm	Dairying
Thur, 17 Sept	Galway	Padraig Fahy and Una Ni Bhroin, Beechlawn Ballinasloe at 6pm	Horticulture Crops
Fri, 18 Sept	Wexford	County Wexford Organic Centre, Cushingstown, Foulksmills at 2pm	Horticulture Crops & Fieldscale Vegetables

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