
ICAR: a worldwide organisation for standardisation of animal recording and evaluation

J. Crittenand
President of ICAR

*Fédération suisse d'élevage de la race tachetée rouge
Rüttistrasse, 3052 Zollikofen, Switzerland*

In 1951 an organisation called the "European Committee on Milk-Butterfat Recording" was formed in the Hague, the Netherlands. This was the first formal establishment of an International non-governmental recording organisation.

During the following 20 years the committee was renamed several times and expanded from cows to cover sheep and goats. In 1990, two further steps were taken, to broaden the organisation world-wide and to assume responsibility for all farm livestock recordings that require international standardisation.

Finally the International Committee for Animal Recording (ICAR) was formed. In 1992, new guidelines were adopted. These were the ICAR Constitution, the International Agreement of Recording Practices and the Special Stamp Rules. (A quality label to be applied by the member organisations meeting the ICAR requirements, on their official recording documents).

At the 31st Session in New Zealand in January 1998 very important decisions regarding regulation changes were taken which will enable ICAR to face the new millennium.

The aims of ICAR are to promote improvement of farm animal recording and evaluation through the formulation of definitions and standards for the measurement of traits of economic importance by:

- 1) Establishing relevant recommendations, standards and guidelines concerning animal identification, recording of parentage, performance recording, evaluation and publication.
- 2) Promoting discussion and collaboration in all activities relevant to animal recording and evaluation.

1. History

2. Aims and functions

- 3) Promoting the use of records to assess the merit of animals and of the farm management systems both of which are intended to increase the profitability of farming.
- 4) Promoting the practical interpretation of records.
- 5) Ensuring, with the collaboration of member organisations, the proper implementation and use of the requirements and guidelines contained in the agreement.
- 6) Surveying recording organisations, evaluating new practices and arranging meetings to discuss the results.
- 7) Issuing publications on recording and evaluation practices and on the development of techniques to overcome the problems often associated with these activities.
- 8) Establishing Sub-Committees, Task Force and Working Groups, to cover specific areas of recording and evaluation which require regular updatings such as:
 - a) Recording methods and standards
 - b) Standards for recording and analytical equipment
 - c) Animal evaluations
 - d) Publications and enquiries
 - e) Rules Review / membership
 - f) Other activities as the Board may determine

ICAR follows national and international legislation. Its guidelines and recommendations are to be regarded as minimum requirements set up to ensure a satisfactory degree of uniformity of recording among member countries, together with maximum flexibility in the choice of methods. If they so wish, ICAR member countries may enforce more stringent rules.

3. Infrastructure

The signing of the International Agreement is the main commitment of any member when joining the organisation. ICAR actually has 44 participating countries (Table 1).

New members must meet ICAR's requirements within two years of the signature of the agreement. They must inform the Board (its composition is given in appendix 1) on the requirements to be complied with in their country and submit an annual report.

Full member organisations are entitled to utilise the services of ICAR and attend its meetings. Full members may be entitled to use the ICAR Special Stamp.

The success of ICAR activity depends on the work of its Sub-Committees, Working Groups and Task Forces. Results are presented during the General Assembly, which is held every two years, hosted by a member organisation.

There are three sub-committees, one task force and twelve working groups currently in the structure. Details are given in figure 1.

Table 1. ICAR member countries

Argentina	Holland	Norway
Australia	Hungary	Poland
Austria	India	Portugal
Belgium	Ireland	Romania
Bulgaria	Israel	Scotland
Canada	Italy	Slovak Republic
Croatia	Japan	Slovenia
Czech Republic	Jersey	South Africa
Denmark	Korea	Spain
Estonia	Latvia	Sweden
Finland	Lithuania	Switzerland
France	Luxemburg	Tunisia
Germany	Mexico	USA
Great Britain	New Zealand	Zimbabwe
Greece	North Ireland	

The International Bull Evaluation Service (INTERBULL) a sub-committee of ICAR since 1988, is a non-profit organisation, responsible for promoting the development and standardisation of international genetic evaluations for cattle.

It achieves this through coordinating international communication and research efforts, and providing a number of services to participating countries through the activities of the INTERBULL Centre at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, Sweden.

INTERBULL currently provides four major benefits to its member countries.

4. Sub-Committees

4.1 INTERBULL

4.1.1 Role

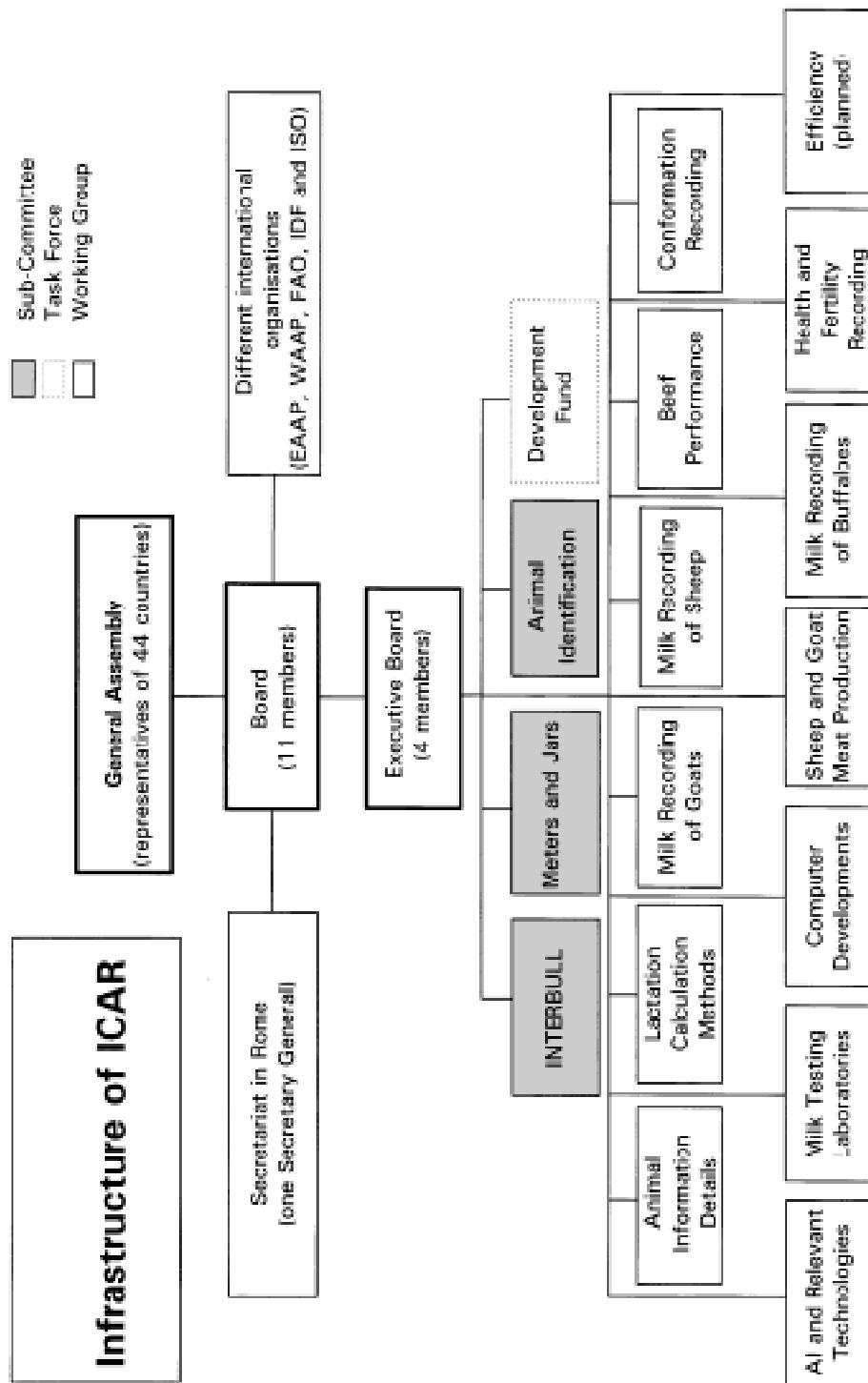


Figure 1. Infrastructure of ICAR

1. International communication

A major benefit of INTERBULL membership is the exchange of information with other member countries. INTERBULL coordinates this international communication through the use of meetings, workshops, surveys, presentations and publications (bulletins and newsletter).

4.1.2 Benefits

2. International research & development

The INTERBULL Centre provides international leadership in researching and developing methods for generating international genetic evaluations. It achieves this through coordinating and reviewing research done in member countries, as well as running its own research program.

3. International genetic evaluation service

The international genetic evaluation service provided by the INTERBULL Centre calculates routine international genetic evaluations for cattle with a scientifically advanced method known as Multiple Across Country Evaluation (MACE). Over 20 countries currently subscribe to this service.

4. International technical support

INTERBULL provides member countries with advice and assistance on all matters relating to the genetic evaluation of cattle. This includes guidance for countries developing joint evaluation or recording schemes, and recommended codes of practice for national evaluation systems.

Through the benefits of combining research and information from around the world, INTERBULL contributes to greater genetic progress for all its member countries.

Participating countries receive the benefits of INTERBULL through payment of annual membership fees. Additional service fees are charged for countries using the international genetic evaluation service.

INTERBULL will continue to provide a world focus for communication and research on international genetic evaluations for cattle.

4.1.3 The future

The INTERBULL Centre has been recently appointed by the EU as the reference body for the across-country genetic evaluation of European cattle. In addition, international genetic evaluations for several non-production traits (conformation, health and fertility traits) are planned for the future.

As the number of member countries increases, INTERBULL will be placing greater emphasis on expanding its range of services and benefits to meet these extra needs.

4.2 Meters and Jars

4.2.1 Objectives

According to its terms of reference, the sub-committee covers the following fields of activities:

- Preparation of updates of the document „The approval and checking of milk recording equipment“ as part of the ICAR Guidelines.
- Survey of the situation of routine checks of approved meters and use of the provisionally approved meters in member countries.
- Stimulation of new developments and report on new equipment procedures and methods for milk recording.
- Advice ICAR Board on approval and/or certification of equipment, procedures and methods concerning milk recording and test centres.

4.2.2 Test centres

Five test centres are approved by ICAR for the carrying out of the tests. They are in the following countries: The Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, USA and France

4.2.3 Actual milk meters

Actually 14 milk meters are approved by ICAR and 10 are provisionally approved. One recorder jar and the sampling device „Shuttle“ of Lely working on the milking robot Lely are under test.

Since November 1996 six new milk meters were provisionally approved. In 1998 the tests of two new milk meters and one recorder jar should be started. The interest of the manufacturers in an ICAR approval of their meters or jars is very large due to the fact that only data of approved milk recording devices are accepted for official milk recording purposes.

4.2.4 Future activities

The Sub-Committee will in the next two years work especially in the following areas:

- Investigation concerning a new statistical treatment of farm test results
- Survey of the milk meters used for goats and sheep
- Update the procedures for the approval of recording jars
- Update the procedures for the approval of milk recording equipment for goats
- and sheep
- Improve the relationship between the Sub-Committee, the test centres and the manufacturers
- Use of robotic milking system and consequences for the milk recording

Unique identification is a basic requirement for all activities where individual animal recognition is necessary, for example:

- farm management
- animal recording
- animal breeding
- animal health
- purposes of trade
- control of subsidies etc.

4.3 Animal Identification*

4.3.1 Introduction and objectives

For farm management purposes it is only requested that the code is unique within the farm. For all other activities national uniqueness is required. With growing exchange of animals from farm to farm even across national borders, uniqueness of the numbering systems used to identify individual animals is of great importance. For many years, ICAR has had the responsibility for identification systems used in animal recording. Consequently, a Working Group on Animal Identification and Registration was inaugurated some years ago by the Board of ICAR. According to its terms of reference, the group covers the following subjects related to identification and registration:

- Preparation of guidelines for the relevant appendices of the International Agreement of Recording Practices
- Stimulation of new developments in and report on new equipment, procedures and methods dealing with
 - a) Electronic identification
 - b) Other identification devices
 - c) Standard layout of eartags for individual animals
- Advice ICAR Board on approval and/or certification of
- Institutes serving as ICAR test-centers
- Identification devices used in individual animal identification

At the 31st ICAR Session the Working Group Identification and Registration was split in a Sub-Committee Animal Identification and a Working Group on Animal Information Details.

The work of the group was very much occupied by the elaboration of two guidelines concerning individual animal identification:

4.3.2 Actual and future activities

- Granting and use of a manufacturer code for ISO compliant transponders
- Performance evaluation and approval of official identification devices

*Based on the report of the Working Group on Animal Identification and Registration given at the 31st Session in New Zealand.

The first of the two guidelines currently under discussion deals with radiofrequency identification (RFID) devices and comprises the description of the procedure for the application of a manufacturer code as well as the respective test procedure. The document has been finished by the group and was submitted to the ICAR Board to be prepared for official voting by the ICAR member countries.

The second document dealing with the description of procedures for laboratory and field testing of all kinds of identification devices used in husbandry and companion animals is still in discussion.

In an early stage of the draft document, only electronic identification devices were taken into consideration. Meanwhile, the group received a lot of requests from ICAR member countries asking for tests to be performed on conventional eartags too.

For each kind of identification device a separate part has to be elaborated. Currently, draft documents for electronic tags, readers and conventional eartags are in preparation. As soon as the group has finished the proposals, they will be made available to the industry for further discussion.

5. Publications

Every two years the proceedings of the biannual meeting are published. The Constitution, Special Stamp and the International Agreement of Recording Practices are also published with its guidelines and regularly updated. A newsletter is published two to three times a year and circulated to all member organisations and to other organisations and individuals interested in the work of ICAR.

6. Funding

ICAR is a non profit making international association which depends on the annual fees calculated on the base of a basic contribution depending on the recorded species and a variable amount depending on the number of recorded animals.

ICAR offers special services exclusively reserved for its full members, the payment of contributions depending on the requested service. Among them, the most important is the use of the ICAR Special Stamp, the certification of approved equipment and devices concerning milk recording practices or animal identification, through laboratory and farm tests in ICAR authorised laboratories and organisations, and the granting of certificates.

7. Future strategy of ICAR

Today livestock farming world-wide is in a difficult position. Pressure on income is coming from both, reduced government support for prices and increasingly free and global market in goods and services. The member

organisations must change their strategy to fulfill the needs and wishes of the farmers. ICAR is best qualified to provide member organisations with information, guidelines and services in a professional way.

In developing a long term strategy plan covering all the activities of ICAR, including the activities of INTERBULL and its Centre, the following points should be considered:

1. ICAR must take world-wide the leadership for standardisation of animal recording. It should be an international organisation covering all aspects of registration, recording and evaluation of data for cattle, sheep and goats. In the future ICAR activities could be extended to include additional species.
2. ICAR should help to improve the quality of the total process of recording and evaluation. Improvement of both management and breeding records must be achieved. New ICAR recommended quality assurance systems could extend the range of assurance options available and could lead to changes in the current rules for granting and for the use of the Special Stamp.
3. The structure of ICAR should bring more flexibility to decision making. The recent changes in the Board and the establishment of an Executive Board are the first steps in this desirable direction.
4. ICAR's financial and fiscal position will be properly ensured by the registration as a non profit international non governmental organisation (INGO).
5. ICAR should follow a growth strategy to attract members from new countries specially from Central and Eastern Europe, South America, Africa and Asia.
6. ICAR should work closer with other international organisations dealing with animal recording. The recent changes of the Constitution are a first step in this direction, allowing the World Breed Federations to become full member organisations.

I am confident that the future strategy of ICAR will be successful thanks to the active support of the member organisations. The current and new services of ICAR will allow the member organisations to prepare themselves for the new competitive conditions for the benefit of their farmers and breeders.

Appendix 1

ICAR BOARD
(*Executive Board member)

PRESIDENT: Dr. Joseph Crettenand*
Stellvertretender Direktor
Schweiz. Fleckviehzuchtverband
Rüttistrasse
CH - 3052 ZOLLIKOFEN, Switzerland
Phone: +41-31-9106111
Fax: +41-31-9106199
e-mail: joseph.crettenand@swisscattle.com

VICE-PRESIDENTS: Mr. Douglas M. Batchelor*
National Milk Records
Fox Talbot House
Greenways Business Park
Bellinger Close
GB - CHIPPENHAM, Wiltshire SN15 1BN, United Kingdom
Phone: +44-1249-462000
Fax :+44-1249-462002
E-mail: dougb@nmr.co.uk

Dr. Brian W. Wickham*
Chief Executive
Irish Cattle Breeding Federation
Shinagh House
Brandon
IRL - CO. CORK, Ireland
Phone: +353 (0)868269911 (mobile phone)
Phone: +353-23-20212
Fax: +353-23-20229
E-mail: bwickham@icbf.com

MEMBERS: Dr. Paul Miller
National DHIA
3021 E. Dublin-Granville Rd
OH 43231- COLUMBUS, USA
Phone: +1-614-8903630
Fax: +1-614-8903667
e-mail: pdmil@aol.com

Mr. Mark Jeffries
Animal Evaluation Executive Manager
Livestock Improvement Corporation
Private Bag 3016
NZ - HAMILTON, New Zealand
Phone: +64-7-8560846
Fax: +64-7-8582741
e-mail: mjeffries@lic.co.nz

Dr. Reinhard Pauw
Landeskontrollverband Rheinland e.V.
Endenicherallee 64
D - 53115 BONN, Germany
Phone: +49-228-7263215
Fax: +49-228-7263223

Dr. Erik Rehben
Institut de l'Elevage
Département Contrôle des Performances
149, rue de Bercy
F - 75012 PARIS CEDEX 12, France
Phone: +33-1-40045192
Fax: +33-1-40045299
E-mail: uibvere@dga1.jouy.inra.fr

Dr. Andrea Rosati
Associazione Italiana Allevatori - AIA
Via G. B. de Rossi, 10
I - 00161 ROMA, Italy
Phone: +39-06-85451304
Fax: +39-06-85451322
E-mail: rosati.a@aia.it

Dr. K. R. Trivedi
Manager (BT)
National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)
IND - ANAND 388001, Gujarat, India
Phone: +91-2692-40148 / 149
Fax: +91-2692-40156 / 165
E-mail: krt@anand.nddb.ernet.in

Dr. T. Vares
Livestock Development Officer
FAO-Sub-Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe
Benzdr utca 34
H - 1068 BUDAPEST, Hungary
Phone: +36-1-4612025
Fax: +36-1-3517029
e-mail: tiina.vares@field.fao.org

SECRETARY GENERAL: Prof. Jean G. Boyazoglu*
ICAR
Via Nomentana, 134
I - 00161 ROMA, Italy
Phone: +39-06-86329141
Fax: +39-06-86329263
E-mail: zoorec@rmnet.it / J.Boyazoglu@rmnet.it

AUDITORS:

Min.Rat Dr. Norbert Ratheiser
Abteilungsleiter
Bundesministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Abt. II C 13
Stubenring 1
A - 1012 WIEN, Austria
Phone: +43-1-71100-6674
Fax: +43-1-71100-6507
Telex: 111145/111780
E-mail: gabriele.hofer@bmlf.gv.at

Mr. Barry Russell
Canadian Milk Recordings Board
c/o Atlantic Dairy Livestock Improvement Corporation
307 Pacific Avenue
CDN - MONCTON, New Brunswick E1E CG7, Canada
Phone: +1-506-8579131
Fax: +1-506-8550456
e-mail: barry@adlic-patlq.mcgill.ca