



ICAR Newsletter

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International Committee
for Animal Recording



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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

At the time of publication of this Newsletter, many of our colleagues will have already arrived to Niagara Falls to attend the 36th ICAR Biennial Session, but the large majority will pursue their daily work in servicing their clients – identifying and registering of farm animals, recording their performance and estimating their breeding values, analyzing their products, advising farmers, producing devices, tools and instruments... For all of them, in this Newsletter, we have compiled information on events and activities which took place in the last six months. Here you will find also a brief content of activities planned for the Biennial Session and profiles of our new ICAR Members. A comprehensive report on what has happened in field of technologies related to the ICAR mandate and mission and on the work of ICAR during the past two years will be published in the proceedings of the 36th Biennial Session.

36th ICAR BIENNIAL SESSION

From 16 to 20 of June, the National Dairy Herd Improvement Association of the United States will host the 36th Biennial Session of ICAR. As usual, the Session is structured in plenary and parallel technical sessions, including meetings of Sub-Committees, Working Groups and Task Forces and sessions and meetings of the ICAR Governing Bodies – General Assembly and the Board.

Plenary and parallel technical sessions will deal with:

- New technologies.
- Impact of new technologies on performance recording and genetic evaluation.
- Management of recording and evaluation organizations.
- Use of molecular genomic tools in animal breeding.
- Breed organization services – data transfer.
- Milk recording.
- Beef recording.
- Animal fibre recording.
- Small dairy species recording.
- The importance of recording of AI data for the genetic systems and new technologies in the field of recording and managing AI data.

ICAR Sub-Committees, Working Groups and Task Forces will hold their regular meetings during the Biennial Session. The **ICAR Reference Laboratory Network** will discuss the ICAR analytical strategy, providing an international platform for analytical harmonisation in the state and perspectives of the international collaboration in the field of analysis of animal products. **INTERBULL Sub-Committee** during a four-day meeting will discuss developments and advances in national and international genetic evaluation, new traits for genetic evaluation and beef evaluation.

PROPOSALS OF THE BOARD FOR APPROVAL BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Change of the official seat of the association

On 22nd of January 1998, the Rotorua Session of the General Assembly empowered the Board to register ICAR as an international non-governmental and non-profit organization. With this

decision, ICAR commenced its growth and transformation from a small regionally bound structure into a global organization for development and standardization of animal identification, recording and genetic evaluation as essential components of a contemporary animal industry. At that time, the best conditions for registration were found to be offered by the French legal system and ICAR was registered in France and recognized by the French Republic as an *Association Loi 1901*. However, the ICAR secretariat continued to be located in Rome, Italy, and in spite of benefits acquired by the official registration in France, additional costs of management and related administrative procedures caused by the existence of two locations remained to be a cause of concern of ICAR Board and Inspectors. In the meantime member states of the European Union harmonized national legislation on associations. The Board considered that in the given situation, it would be appropriate to change the seat of the association from Paris to Rome, where the Secretariat is based. In April 2008, the ICAR Secretariat informed that all administrative measures related to the move of the seat had been arranged with notary public in Italy. The procedure would be completed after the June 2008 session of the General Assembly.

Amendments to the ICAR statutes

In view of the changing environment in which ICAR operates, change of seat of the association and need for efficient management of its activities, the Executive Board agreed to propose to the Board the approval of amendments to relevant articles of the ICAR Statutes. Proposals have been circulated to ICAR Members for their views and comments. The final text will be submitted to the Session of Extraordinary General Assembly to be held during the 36th ICAR Biennial Session. The changes and amendments will be detailed in Niagara Falls at the various meetings.

New ICAR strategic plan

ICAR initiated a formal planning process in 2000 with its first strategic plan. The strategic plan is intended to guide the annual program of actions of ICAR by providing the long-term direction. The strategic plan is further used in guiding the development of short-term plans. After consultation with ICAR Members and the collection of their views and suggestions, the ICAR Board submitted to the Niagara Falls General Assembly the draft Strategic Plan for the approval. The full draft is available on the ICAR web site. Here we present a part of the document.

'The Future Vision of ICAR

As the animal recording and evaluation industry evolves, so will ICAR membership. The recently revised by-laws provide the opportunity for expanded membership and a broader level of participation. Membership is expanding from a primarily dairy organization base to include more individual agencies from member countries. Various industry sectors (by species as well as activity) will participate in ICAR as members in order to participate and access the global network, expertise and exposure that ICAR provides'

Amendments and changes in the ICAR guidelines

The ICAR Board approved changes and amendments to parts of the ICAR Guidelines proposed by the relevant Sub-Committees and Working Groups within their field of competence.

Animal Identification Sub-Committee

The Animal Identification Sub-Committee proposed

- *Eartag Family of Identification Devices*

The Sub-Committee Animal Identification in collaboration with the manufacturers and test centres has developed a concept called 'Eartag Family'. The ear tag products to be ICAR tested and approved under this concept have to meet a number of common characteristics such as the same overall shape and dimensions, the same body, plate and chemical composition and similar locking mechanism.

- *Performance evaluation and approval of official permanent identification devices*

The proposal contains rules and guidelines related to performance evaluation and approval of conventional permanent plastic eartags with or without machine readable printing and of electronic permanent plastic eartags with or without machine readable printing.

Recording Devices Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee has prepared a comprehensive revision of Section 11 of the ICAR Guidelines for the General Assembly approval in June.

Genetic Analysis Working Group

The Group has developed new:

- *Rules and guidelines for accreditation of DNA paternity testing in cattle*
- *Questionnaire on paternity testing in cattle*

Animal Fibre Task Force

The Task Force, considering that the management of alpaca herds and individual animals before and during shearing have the critical impact on the fibre quality, economic return and animal welfare, proposed the approval of

- *ICAR Guidelines for alpaca shearing management, fibre harvesting and grading*

It also proposed the approval of the

- *Standards and guidelines on methods of alpaca identification*

NEWS FROM THE ICAR GOVERNING BODIES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS AND TASK FORCES

Agreement on international genetic evaluation of beef breeds - INTERBEEF - has become operational!

ICAR, the Swedish University of Agriculture (SLU), Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) and Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA – France) have developed a system for international genetic evaluation of beef breeds and traits which will form the basis of a service that the INTERBULL Sub-Committee will provide to members of ICAR. Partners will develop a

code of practice that will form the basis for routine beef international genetic evaluation. The code will contain description of services rendered, prerequisites for and responsibilities of participants, decision making process and method of evaluation. Partners will propose necessary updating of the ICAR Guidelines to enter into the International Beef Genetic Evaluation.

USE OF THE ICAR LOGO

Full Members of ICAR will have the right to use ICAR logo on its letterhead and official documents. Associate Members are not allowed to use the ICAR logo on advertisements, promotional and commercial information. The Secretariat would prepare a draft By-laws on the use of ICAR logo. By-laws will be distributed to Members for comments and then to the Board for approval. It is expected that By-laws would enter into force shortly after the Niagara Falls biennial session.

TAGGING OF RECORDING DEVICES

In 2007, the ICAR Board launched a project for the tagging of ICAR-approved recording devices. The project aims to provide manufacturers of ICAR-approved milk meters with a special certification tag. The tags are to be obligatorily applied on all ICAR-approved milk recording devices to ensure clarity of approval to the end-user. The ICAR Secretariat invited all manufacturers to provide information on the recording devices they produce, and then proceeded to the manufacture and distribution of the tags. By the end of April 2008, more than 100.000 tags had been distributed to a number of manufacturers.

The tags will constitute a means of unique identification of each ICAR-approved recording device, thus facilitating logistic management, calibration process, control of production, etc. The Secretariat and the Sub-Committee for Recording Devices will review in due course the experience gained by the implementation of the tagging project and will consider the eventual need to revise part of the ICAR Guidelines referring to the calibration of recording devices.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

FAO support to the task force developing countries

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and ICAR signed a letter of agreement on collaboration in the provision of assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition for planning and implementing sustainable animal identification and recording systems which will contribute to improved traceability and productivity of livestock and enhance food security and rural development.

To achieve the above objective, ICAR, with FAO support, has re-established its Task Force for developing countries and countries with economies in transition to:

- share experiences in animal identification, traceability and performance recording, so that lessons from past successes and challenges can be drawn;
- expand ICAR activities to developing countries; and
- support FAO in preparing a new manual for animal identification and performance recording in low and medium input-systems, based on existing standards and guidelines, and which would be recognizable for ICAR and FAO.

The first meeting of the Task Force will be held in Budapest, Hungary, 26-28 May 2008. In the preparation of the meeting, Badi Besbes, member of the ICAR Board and the Chairman of the TF has conducted e-mail consultations among the TF members to compile past experiences in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The meeting will prepare the outlines of a position paper which will be used as a background for the new FAO manual.

The World Animal Health Organization (OIE)

Andrea Rosati, Secretary General and Ole K. Hansen, Chairman of the Identification Sub-Committee, met with representatives of OIE and discussed possible cooperation in fields of common interest. It was agreed that a letter of understanding be exchanged regarding future activities in the field of animal identification.

European Commission (EU)

The European Technology Platform on Sustainable Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction (FABRE TP), in which ICAR participates as a partner, has developed a Strategic Research Agenda containing priorities for the coming 25 years. Milena Kovac, Convenor of the Pig Recording Task Force, represented ICAR in the Steering Committee of the Platform. Andrea Rosati, Secretary General, visited 22 European countries in which he presented the Platform and the Agenda to scientists, administrators and representatives of industry. His visits also contributed to better visibility of ICAR and its activities, particularly within the European animal industry.

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS OF ICAR

ICAR family has got five new members and ICAR Board approved associate membership for Gepe-Geimuplast GmbH, Germany; Holstein Association of Hellas (HAGR), Greece; Panazoo Italiana SRL, Italy; SCR Engineers Ltd, Israel; WestfaliaSurge GmbH, Germany. ICAR currently has 76 members from 46 countries.

Gepe-Geimuplast GmbH

Gepe-Geimuplast GmbH, Germany, is manufacturer of products for animal identification. Ear tags are produced in two production sites, one located in Germany and one in Sweden, while the Gepe Holding is located in Switzerland. All factories are ISO 9001 certified and equipped state of the art manufacturing facilities allowing economical manufacturing of polymer components of the highest quality standards. Reasons for joining ICAR are twofold: Gepe wants to learn more about requirements of ICAR and its members regarding standards in animal identification and to share with other ICAR members its experience in animal identification and know how in design, tool manufacturing, injection molding, raw material and electronic identification.

Holstein Association of Hellas

Holstein Association of Hellas (HAGR), Greece is the countywide organization having a basic goal the genetic improvement of Holstein breed of dairy cattle and the efficient management of dairy farms. The Association is based in Thessaloniki, the second largest city in the country, and has local Regional Subsidiaries in other administrative regions of Greece. Currently, in the country there are 27 000 recorder dairy cows of Holstein breed. The Association represents dairy farmers having

Holstein breed, closely cooperates with private and public entities as well as international organizations having similar interest. Services it provides to dairy farmers are compatible with standards defined by the Greek Ministry of Agriculture, the European Union and ICAR.

Panazoo Italiana SRL

Panazoo Italiana SIR (Italy) produces electronic devices for milking machines, especially systems for measuring milk quantity and for qualitative analysis of milk. Panazoo exports its technology to 62 countries and supplies several large companies with its products. It also produces parts and components of milking machines. Panazoo joined ICAR, because its management believes in objects and mission of the Association and hopes that their membership in ICAR would contribute to the better understanding of needs and requirements of ICAR members active in animal recording.

SCR Engineers Ltd

SCR Engineers Ltd, Israel, develops and produces milking automation devices and identification systems. The company is located in Netanya, Israel. Few years ago, company started to cooperate with ICAR in fields of milk recording and animal identification. As a new member of ICAR, it expects to establish better contacts with ICAR members involved in animal identification, dairy farm management and milk recording.

WestfaliaSurge GmbH

WestfaliaSurge GmbH is a division of the GEA AG group in Bochum, Germany. WestfaliaSurge itself is located in Boenen, Germany. 12 production facilities all over the world belong to WestfaliaSurge. WestfaliaSurge has subsidiaries in more than 50 countries and exports its technology to more than 100 countries. WestfaliaSurge produces farm technology with the focus on livestock production. WestfaliaSurge offers wholly solutions for dairy farms including parlors, milking machines, milking robots, equipment for milk cooling and storage, manure technology and advanced herd management systems. Under the brand Houle WestfaliaSurge offers as a leading supplier in North America manure technology also for other types of livestock business, like pigs. With one of the strongest service networks in the industry WestfaliaSurge can offer worldwide the required service for livestock farms.

WestfaliaSurge stands for leading technologies and solutions in animal recording and management information systems. WestfaliaSurge is well known for accurate milk metering. To optimize the competence in this area WestfaliaSurge is cooperating with ICAR since years. Therefore it is logical step to join ICAR as a member. With the membership WestfaliaSurge strengthens the cooperation with ICAR and its individual members. The objective is to enhance the understanding of the needs and requirements in animal recording.

ICAR CERTIFICATE OF QUALITY – HOW TO OBTAIN IT

The ICAR General Assembly agreed that the ICAR Special Stamp be gradually replaced by the system of certification of quality of specific activities carried out by ICAR Members and services provided to their clients. Although the ICAR Certificate of Quality has already been accorded to several Members, a short case study could contribute to the better understanding of “how to obtain the ICAR Certificate of Quality”.

CASE OF NATIONAL MILK RECORDING – NMR, UK

NMR applied for the ICAR Certificate of Quality for bovine identification and production recording. Mr. Kaivo Ilves from Estonia was requested by the ICAR Board to effect an audit of methods and procedures applied by NMR in these fields. Mr Ilves has reported to the ICAR Board that there is a functional identification and registration system based on national and international legislation and standards. The system guarantees that ID numbers issued by Breed Societies and NMR are identical to numbers used by the NMR and British Cattle Movement Service. NMR inspects parentage certificates issued by Breed Societies. All recording devices are regularly checked in accordance with ICAR Guidelines. All events are recorded by farmers or by recorder electronically or in the written form and checked for accuracy. NMR has an efficient and sustainable organization for milk recording service. NMR trains and regularly supervises recorders. There is a systematic training of farmers as well as a technical support through the use of telephone help lines.

The ICAR Board agreed to attribute to the NMR (UK) the ICAR Certificate of Quality for Bovine Identification and Recording.

FROM OUR PATENT SENTINEL AND ACTION SERVICE (PSAS)

Use of molecular genomic tools in animal breeding is gaining momentum all over the world. ICAR Members have been confronted with impact of patenting on the use and application of new technologies in animal recording and evaluation. Here we copy a reply of Dr. Erin R. Ogden, PSAS legal adviser, to one of the reader of PSAS web site. You can visit PSAS website for free at: www.psas-web.net.

Question

Can a person or organization patent an entire genomic region around one SNP?

Can a person or organization patent SNPs or SNP regions without evidence of any association with the traits of interest?

Answer

In order to obtain a patent on genetic sequences, whether a SNP, an EST, or a gene, the applicant must:

1. Identify the novel genetic sequence;
2. Specify the sequence's product;
3. Specify how the product function in nature: its use or utility; and
4. Enable one skilled in the field of use to use the sequence for this stated purpose

SNP's are difficult to patent because they have a hard time passing the "utility" test for patents. The applicant has to state why the SNP is useful. That statement has to be fairly explicit, especially for DNA sequences. Gone is the time for "it makes a great probe." Patents are not granted on raw fundamental gene, EST or SNP sequence data.

In order for DNA sequences to be distinguished from their naturally occurring counterparts, which cannot be patented, the patent application must state that the invention has been purified or

isolated, is part of a recombinant molecule, or is now part of a vector. In addition, it must state how the patented sequence functions in nature. The USPTO rules call for a statement giving “specific and substantial utility that is credible.”

Due to these requirements, in order to patent an entire genomic region around a SNP or any region whatsoever, you must be able to state what sequence is involved, what that region does, and why that sequence is useful. Thus, if an applicant is able to do that for a region, then whether it is centered on a SNP, EST, or other sequence, it may be patentable. As for evidence, it isn't necessary to a given standard. That is, you do not have to prove the utility beyond a reasonable doubt. But applicant does have to state the use of the sequence with a good faith belief what he is saying is true. If an applicant makes stuff up without any or a poor basis, they are opening themselves up to trouble.

www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/280/5364/689 is a 1998 article written by John J. Doll, the Commissioner of Patents at the USPTO regarding the USPTO's viewpoint of DNA patents.

2009 GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE WORKSHOP ON MANAGEMENT OF ANIMAL RECORDING AND EVALUATION

The Executive Board of ICAR at its 23rd meeting accepted the offer of the Croatian Livestock Center (CLC) to host the 2009 session of the General Assembly. It agreed to propose that the session be held on 12 May 2009 at Porec, Croatia. Porec is located on the west coast of Istria, with good air connections (airports Pula 40 km, Trieste 50 km and Ljubljana 100 km) and good roads and highways.

After the session of the General Assembly, managers of ICAR members will have an opportunity to participate at the workshop on **“Management of new recording and evaluation technologies”**. Invitations for participation will be sent to all ICAR Members. In view of recent trends in recording and evaluation technologies, such as on-farm recording, marker assisted selection as well as structural changes affecting all sectors of animal production – decreasing numbers of farms and increases in farm size and in yields of individual animals – exchange of views and experiences among managers will contribute to finding the best solutions in adjusting business approach and methods of management in new social, technological and economic conditions. The preliminary program proposed by the host organization also includes a field trip to local production units and to visit some interesting historical and cultural sites.



Presentation of Porec, seat of the 2009 General Assembly and of the Workshop on "Management of animal recording and evaluation"