

Abstract by Ross Evans - The benefits of using farmer scored traits in beef genetic evaluations

Voluntary farmer scored traits for calving difficulty, calf mortality, weanling quality, weanling docility, cow docility and cow milkability are included in the genetic evaluations undertaken by the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) for the Irish beef and dairy industry. Predicted transmitting abilities (PTAs) arising from the evaluation of calving difficulty and mortality scores are published as the official measure of genetic merit for calving ease and mortality for both beef and dairy animals. PTAs based on weanling docility scores are also published routinely while the remaining three traits are used as predictor traits in genetic evaluations. These traits are evaluated and published on an across breed basis (across beef and dairy animals for calving ease, mortality and across beef breeds for the other four traits). The routine collection of these farmer scored traits has helped to fill the void in data for traits where the ICBF industry integrated database is deficient in knowledge. The heritability of these traits and their genetic associations with other economically important traits are of a sufficient nature to warrant industry encouragement for their ongoing recording and use from a genetic improvement perspective. Knowledge transfer and communication to herd owners on the importance of recording these traits is vital to maintain ongoing levels of recording and usefulness of data received.