Munster Cattle Breeding Group

MCBG are driven to deliver the best outcome for the herdowner which generates healthy, high genetic, easy managed cows. MCBG have a proven record in providing the highest quality service, through our Genetic, Milk Recording and Health departments, we believe we are well equipped to help and deliver with the National Farmed Animal Health Strategy. We can aid in the areas of parasites, SCC, mastitis, contagious diseases and genetic improvements in the dairy cow and genetic improvements in the beef animal. We have a strong relationship with the milk processors, which we have used to increase the efficiency of our services. We have a strong working relationship with ICBF through all departments, we have worked with ICBF on Milk Recording and Herd Health improvements, as well as working closely to improve the genetic potential of the national dairy and beef herd.

MCBG believe that bulk screening can deliver the knowledge needed to expand into individual cow testing. With milk recording there is an excellent opportunity to test over 50% of the national population of cows in a non-evasive way. One milk sample from a cow can be tested for a wide range of diseases accurately, this can have the increased benefit of providing the next generation of bulls with an increased ability to fight against infections. The AI bulls already have SCC figures based around the milk recording results which can be expanded greatly with increased disease testing through milk. The SCC trait that is developed in the bull proofs enables herdowners to select animals with a high resistance to mastitis infection thus reducing the level of antibiotics needed.

MCBG have been working on the surveillance of herds through bulk tank samples for 6 years. We currently have approximately 1500 herds testing the bulk tank sample for a wide range of diseases.

The scheme is based around;

1. The collection of relative, useful factual data through the testing of individual herd recording samples. The samples are taken and tested quarterly in one of our partner accredited labs that is then processed by ICBF.
2. Individual reports are created for detailed analysis to identify any underlining issues
3. Bulk tank milk samples tested for diseases
4. All herd owners have a one to one with one of our in-house vets annually to review the results and draw up an implementation plan to outline corrective action when necessary.

Currently the programme tests for a range of diseases including IBR, BVD, Leptospirosis, Neospora, Salmonella, PI3, RSV and Schmallenberg. We also test for parasites including stomach worms and Liver fluke. MCBG can increase the range of diseases tested for to tailor to the national needs.

MCBG have been working closely with the major co-ops in the Munster region and Galway. We have developed systems with the co-ops to collect and test the milk sample. MCBG can combine this with individual testing through milk recording, which is an excellent non evasive way to get accurate information on cows.

MCBG have developed an electronic system to send the herdowner’s vet the results so they can combine them with the knowledge they possess about the farm to increase the preventative plan on the farm.
MCBG also have vets contracted to MCBG to advise herdowners on results and fertility issues. Working together with the herdowner to draw up a plan to minimise disease risk and spread on the farm. They also devise up a dosing plan based on the liver fluke and stomach worm results. We can also monitor year on year the results achieved from the dosing plans. The results from the monitoring and planning can be seen with the reduction of parasites in herds over time and the greater controls around contagious diseases decreasing the negative impact of disease on herds.

Through the bulk tank testing we can evaluate the trends in the diseases within farms and within areas. This can be useful to follow trends of diseases and the movement of disease over time. The bank of data built up can enable the vet to examine the herd and provide the plan to reduce the need to treat sick animals. MCBG can also compare each herd with the overall average of the herds.

In addition to the testing the outlined above, standard Milk Recording reports are also produced detailing individual animal Somatic Cell Counts (SCC), Protein and Fat results and animal energy balance.

Through the information from milk recording herds can move from blanket antibiotics at drying off to selective treatment. Using the SCC figures that come from the milk recording the farmer can identify the cows that need treatment. Milk recording also enables a herdowner to select cows to get bacterial cultures carried out on so the correct farm management is applied to reduce the spread of infection and reduce the need of antibiotics. The real benefit from milk recording can be seen in the reduced SCC level in milk from milk recording herds compared to non-milk recording herds. The somatic cell count from milk recording has three great advantages; firstly, to identify cows early so prevention of clinical cases can happen and change management so you can isolate the infection, secondly, keeping a healthier herd and thirdly, reducing the need for antibiotics at drying off.

Through our relationship with the milk processors, in respect to disease testing, we are in a great position to monitor and reduce drug usage. From the disease testing, our vets can see if vaccines are required to prevent outbreaks and reduce the loss of production and spread of disease.

Through using milk recording when making breeding decisions herdowners have the ability to increase the profitability of the herd through greater matching of AI bulls for breeding with cows in the herd to increase the genetic potential of the next generation. We have had great success in the area of fertility and production through Munster bull’s genetics and fertility meetings. MCBG have aided herdowners in reducing the spread of calving, by identifying issues around heat detection and disease. Combining this with the excellent genetic potential of the MCBG bull’s the herdowner has a compact calving, this results in increased milk solids production and a decrease in the carbon footprint.

Beef genetics can, and are, improving the industry. Through the BDGP the maternal and paternal traits are coming to the fore, the aim and the goal of MCBG’s bulls are to make management easier and safer through docile animals. An increased food conversion ratio to decrease the carbon footprint. Cows calving once a year with enough milk to maximise the calf’s potential. The beef to dairy scheme is highlighting beef bulls to use on dairy cows to provide better carcases at cull and having an increased conversion ratio. The bulls selected by MCBG also promote easy calving so the
animal need less recovery time and short gestation bulls increase the compactness of the calving pattern.

Breeding for good genetics can lead to gains in fertility, production, quality, survival, reduce the waste from milk and the carbon footprint. Munster has the experience and knowledge to further enhance the gains that can be made by the farmer.

MCBG believe that combining information from all our departments and adding new diseases highlighted by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine we can aid in the delivery of the surveillance of disease. Through our experience and expertise in genetics MCBG can aid in the generation of a nationally healthier, disease resistant, low carbon footprint and more profitable dairy and beef herd.