



1. How has ICBF become involved in Sheep Breeding?

“Sheep Ireland” is the trading name of Sheep Database Ltd. In 2008, “Sheep Ireland”, was formed after a period of extensive consultation with the sheep industry. The key events in the history of how ICBF has become involved in sheep breeding are briefly outline as follows;

June 2006; The ‘Sheep Industry Development Strategy’ report was completed, under the chairmanship of John Malone. This report recommended that ICBF should become involved in sheep breeding.

Feb 2007; ICBF developed a proposal for sheep breeding & sheep information services. This proposal gave details of a way forward for sheep breeding in Ireland along similar lines to that achieved by ICBF for cattle breeding.

April 2007; The Sheep Strategy Implementation Group, also chaired by John Malone, reported on progress with implementation of the recommendations of the ‘Sheep Industry Development Strategy’ and the funding arrangement for involving ICBF in sheep breeding.

July 2008; First meeting of the Interim Sheep Board.

Sep 2008; A strategy project team lead by Dr Peter Amer (Abacus Bio Ltd) completed a review of sheep breeding in Ireland. The Interim Sheep Board adopted, with minor modification the 20 recommendations contained in the report.

Oct – Dec 2008; The ICBF team with considerable help from Timothy Byrne of Abacus Bio Ltd proceeded to establish ‘Sheep Ireland’ and the ‘Lambplus’ service. A unique lifetime identification system for participating flocks based on the official NSIS number was agreed with DAF. Flocks using the PSBIP service provided by DAFF in 2008 were invited to join Lambplus for 2009. Flockbooks were consulted on the features of Lambplus®.

2. What is Lambplus®?

Lambplus® is the Sheep Breeding Information Service arm of ‘Sheep Ireland’, which has replaced the old PSBIP. It is the section of ‘Sheep Ireland’ that will record relevant on-farm data & then give flockowners back genetic evaluation & reports that will allow them compare their Flock’s performance against other Lambplus® Flockowners. Flockowners who join Lambplus ® get the following service:

- a. **Online Flock Inventory** – Allows Flockowner reconcile NSIS tag with within flock ID & also add any extra information. This Inventory will be a permanent & accurate record of all sheep in the flock.
- b. **Lambing Pocket Book** – Lambplus ® clients will be furnished with a pocket notebook to record lambs as they are born.
- c. **Performance Recording** – Flockowners will be able to record a series of relevant on-farm data e.g. birthweight, 40 day weight, Pregnancy Scanning, Foot Scoring, Ewe Culling, Dag Scoring etc.
- d. **Genetic Evaluations** – Only Lambplus® animals will receive Genetic Evaluations for recorded traits. These evaluations will be widely published & promoted throughout the industry.
- e. **Flock Reports** – Flock reports will be designed for each Lambplus® Flockowner based on the Lambing, Mating, Rearing & other on-farm data as well as data collected throughout the industry e.g. slaughter records. These reports (similar to the Herdplus® reports) will be specific to each flock but will allow Flockowners compare their flock’s performance against national average figures.
- f. **Lamb Scanning & Weighing Service** – Lambplus ® flockowners will also have access to a lamb scanning & weighing service. The results from this service will be used in the genetic evaluations that will be subsequently produced.

3. How much is it to join Lambplus®?

Internet €50/annum (Direct Debit) / (€60 Cheque/Cash)
Postal €90/annum plus €1 per ewe (Direct Debit) / (€100 plus €1 per ewe)

4. How do I find out more about Lambplus®?

Phone Lambplus on Locall: 1850 – 600 – 900 or alternatively go online www.sheep.ie and in the ‘Reference Documents’ section there are documents about all of the developments that are currently taking place in sheep breeding.

5. Plans for the year ahead?

a. Pedigree Breeders

The main focus of the first year is to put the various systems (Webscreens, Tagging procedures, scanning equipment etc) in place and act upon the 20 key sheep breeding recommendations. Initially we will be working with those pedigree flock owners that were involved in the PSBIP programme in 2008. As soon as we have these systems working to our satisfaction we will welcome other flockowners to get involved..

b. MALP – Maternal Lamb Producers Group

This is a new development. Over 20 flocks have been located for the purposes of demonstrating the benefits of choosing good rams. Rams in these flocks will be DNA typed and used across the flocks. Their lambs will be DNA typed and linked back to their sires and dams. Performance data will then be collected & used in genetic evaluations to demonstrate the benefits of using good rams. Graham Potterton will be coordinating the data recording in these flocks.



Pictured above is the ‘Pratley’ sheep handling unit, purchased by ‘Sheep Ireland’, which Graham Potterton will be using in the MALP flocks.

c. CPT – Central Performance Test Flocks

This is another new development. The intention here is to get a small number of flocks to intensively record data on the progeny of selected rams of all breeds and thus provide links between all pedigree flocks. The progeny of these rams will be raised under uniform conditions thus allowing the genetic merit of each ram to be evaluated for a range of traits important to commercial producers.

6. What kind of feedback have you received so far?

Feedback from flock owners has been very positive. The majority of the systems that will be put in place will be new to sheep breeding in Ireland. We need feedback to optimise these systems for farmer use. Therefore as Lambplus® becomes more developed we would urge everyone involved to contact us with any suggestions as to how any area of the service could be improved.