

Recording Management Groups for BREEDPLAN

The recording of management group information is one of the most important aspects of BREEDPLAN. This document provides information regarding management groups and when they should be submitted to BREEDPLAN.

Introduction

BREEDPLAN analyses cattle in contemporary groups to take out the influence of as many of the non-genetic effects as possible (eg. feeding, years, seasons). The underlying principle is that only animals that have had an equal opportunity to perform are directly compared together within each contemporary group.

If the contemporary groups are not correctly formed, the EBVs calculated will be less accurate and possibly misleading. Most of the problems that breeders encounter in “believing” their BREEDPLAN EBVs can be traced back to incorrect contemporary grouping – either calves being fragmented into isolated groups of only one or two animals (and thereby virtually eliminating those calves from any comparison with their peers) or by not differentiating between calves that have had different levels of management or feeding.

Importantly, the breeder has a major influence on deciding which animals will be directly compared within each contemporary group. This influence is through both their on farm management and the submission of management group information to BREEDPLAN. In this manner, it is vital that breeders understand the factors that influence the formation of contemporary groups to ensure they maximise the effectiveness of their BREEDPLAN recording.

Breeder Defined Management Groups

There are two different forms of breeder defined management group.

- a) the “Birth Management Group” allows breeders to describe different treatments of the cows prior to the birth of the calf. For example, where one group of cows have had different feed availability that may affect the birth weight and/or calving ease and/or gestation length when the calf is born.
- b) the “Post Birth Management Group” allows breeders to identify animals that have received different treatment or management following birth that has influenced their performance. This treatment may be deliberate (eg when some of your young bulls receive supplementary feeding and others do not) or accidental (eg if a calf is sick).

Providing BREEDPLAN with management group information is the responsibility of the breeder. By assigning animals into management groups, breeders are acting as “eyes” for the BREEDPLAN evaluation.

Management Groups in Practical Terms

Animals should be assigned into different management groups in any situation when either individually or as a group, they have not had equal opportunity to perform. By assigning animals into management groups, only like treated animals will be grouped together and therefore directly compared in the BREEDPLAN analysis.

Some examples of where animals should be recorded in separate management groups are:

- sickness gives some calves a permanent set back;
- some animals are fed for show or sale;
- grain fed animals versus paddock reared animals;
- some animals being given growth promotants;
- animals reared in different paddocks in which feed is of different nutritional value;
- a bull has been fighting and clearly lost weight prior to recording;
- yearling bulls used as sires compared to those not used as sires;
- different stages of pregnancy for heifers (try to weigh before joining and certainly before two months);
- spayed heifers as compared to non-spayed heifers;
- calves weighed on different scales;
- calves weighed straight from the paddock as compared to those off feed for say three hours or more.

Importantly, if you are in any doubt as to the correct management grouping of your animals, please contact staff at BREEDPLAN.

For further information regarding management groups, please contact staff at BREEDPLAN.