



## Interbull Business Meeting Minutes 2024

### Business Meeting 1, Monday 20 May 2024

#### 1. Opening and welcome

The Interbull Steering Committee Chair, Matthew Shaffer, welcomed all attendees. He asked the Delegates to sign the attendance on the sheet made available for this.

#### 2. Adoption of Agenda

Delegates were notified that some of the agenda has changed order compared to what was distributed, but no other changes had been made. There were no additional items added to the agenda by the Delegates.

#### 3. Acceptance of the minutes of the 2023 Interbull Business Meetings

No notifications of amendments were tabled. The minutes were accepted as a true and correct record.

#### 4. ICAR Update

ICAR President Daniel Lefebvre introduced the work of ICAR and its vision and mission. His talk described some of the work of ICAR including groups and sub-committees. Right now an area of focus is to reach out to external, international organisations and strategic partners.

Currently there are 130 members in 60 countries, but ICAR would like to be able to reach members who do not always attend annual meetings.

Services that ICAR offers were summarised and the new Bull-semen proficiency test was explained in more detail as well as some additional information regarding the work of ICAR Working Groups.

The Wiki project transposes guidelines into wiki format, which is easier to maintain. This is a work in progress to have all guidelines into the wiki. Going forward, all new guidelines will be in the wiki.

Dr Lefebvre notified attendees that the next ICAR annual conference will be in India from 29 March – 4 April 2025 in collaboration with IDF/ISO Analytical week.

Questions/Comments: Laurent Journaux, France – The move to wiki guidelines is an important step. The translation of guidelines formula to API or WS could give a high added value to the wiki (we have to think about machine to machine information exchange).

Raphael Mrode: Asked about services in Africa. Encouraged ICAR to organize a conference in Africa and to get in contact with the ILRI organisation, which is active in Kenya.



### 5. Interbull Strategic Plan

The current plan ran from 2020-2023. Matthew explained the process of the Strategic Planning and encouraged attendees to provide any feedback. The 4 strategic pillars were explained: promote, enhance, explore and support, and what each of these pillars mean for customers and services through different focus areas.

Detailed information regarding the new strategic plan is available in the documents that were distributed ahead of the Business Meeting.

Matthew asked for questions from the participants and requested feedback at any time. No questions were raised.

### 6. Interbull Governance

Matthew summarized how the Interbull Centre and the services are governed.

Key achievements for 2023 included

- Completion and implementation of Governance Review Recommendations.
- Reviewing Business Models and Service Fees.
- Maintained high quality delivery.
- Annual Meeting and Technical workshop.
- Interbull Bulletin publications.

The priorities for 2024 were reviewed.

The Steering Committee membership structure was explained and the nominations for Italy, Portugal and Spain – Daniele Vicario, and The Americas - Filippo Miglior (in replacement of Brian Van Doormaal who will step down from the Steering Committee after 27 years) were announced.

The Chair asked for the support of the Business meeting for these nominations – which was received.

A tribute to Brian's long service on the Steering Committee, including as Vice Chair, was presented, and Brian reported on some highlights during his 27-year Steering Committee membership.

Matthew then thanked the Interbull Technical Committee and explained the rotation of members and the subsequent call for nominations. Paul VanRaden and Tom Lawlor have reached the end of their terms and will be stepping down.

Gerben de Jong, Chair of the Interbull Technical Committee was invited to say a few words regarding departing members. They were thanked for their expertise and contributions to the group and Interbull as a whole.

Two new members of the Interbull Technical Committee were introduced: Hongding Gao (LUKE) and Iola Croué (Geneval).



### **7. Interbull Centre Director's Report - Part 1**

Toine Roozen thanked members of the Interbull Centre Team, and acknowledged the presence in the audience of Ewa Camara, European Commission representative and thanked her for attending.

A report on the Interbull Centre organization was presented including objectives, staffing and finance.

It was reported that two vacancies had been advertised at the Centre, one position for a geneticist has been filled (starting in September) and one for an European Union Reference Centre (EURC) coordinator, where recruitment is underway.

With regards to finance, it was noted that spending was increasing in 2024 and some reserves will be spent, with the majority of funds being spent on salaries. The intention was not to have a large reserve; the current reserve has been due to gaps in staffing in the past few years.

Delegates were informed that 2024 invoices have now been sent out to the majority of service users of MACE, still using the current method of milk-recorded cows. The new service fees that were proposed in 2023 were then explained. In the next few weeks, information will be sent on how these are calculated and what differences are likely in the invoices for next year. Some issues regarding the calculations are not expected to be resolved before such information is sent.

The participants were invited to ask questions/comment. No questions were asked.

### **8. New Traits Pipeline Working Group report**

Ezequiel Nicolazzi, member of the New Traits Pipeline Working Group and Interbull Steering Committee, presented an overview of the Working Group activities: the working group was established in 2021 with the aim of creating a clear pipeline on how to identify new traits that could be suitable for an international evaluation. Since then a pipeline was put together and all its steps and checking points have been presented and explained. These check points involve feedback/decisions from Steering Committee, Interbull Technical Committee and Business Funding Models Task Force.

Using the new PREP database as a platform to collect general information of nationally evaluated traits, a set of new traits of interest for inclusion in international evaluations has been identified: claw health traits, metabolic diseases as well as gestation length. These traits seem to be available especially for Holstein breed, but also for some additional breeds like RDC and Jersey.

Importantly, for these newly identified traits, clear ICAR trait definitions are available that can be used for collecting data for an international evaluation.

Gestation length has been recommended to be included in the current calving trait group currently evaluated by Interbull while for the other two groups of traits specific new trait groups will be added.



The Business Funding Models Task Force had also the possibility to review the proposal from the working group and the recommendations from the Task Force were flagged as part of the next presentation.

The Steering Committee will now review all available information and decide on the next steps.

Questions:

Reinhard Reents, Vit, Germany, asked for a possible timeline on implementation of such new traits. Further information will be provided at the next Business Meeting on Tuesday.

### **9. Business Funding Models Task Force report**

Brian Van Doormaal, chair of the Business Funding Models Task Force ('The Taskforce') thanked the other members of The Taskforce.

Brian presented two topics: New Traits and GMACE.

New Traits include Claw Health, Metabolic Diseases and Gestation Length.

Claw health and Metabolic diseases were developed as New Trait Groups and Gestation Length was added to the Calving trait group.

The discussion of how to introduce the service was presented.

The proposed fee structure for two new trait groups, Claw health and Metabolic Diseases, were explained, and is based on the time it will take staff to perform these new services. As it is proposed to include Gestation Length in an existing trait group (Calving) no additional fee is proposed for Gestation Length.

A GMACE Survey was issued to all organisations participating in MACE with the Holstein breed. The GMACE survey results were presented. GMACE, up until now has not had its own fee associated with it. The survey users were asked about the use and value of GMACE to help identify if a fee should be implemented.

Twenty-three out of 30 invitations to the survey were completed and the results to date were summarized for delegates, and those who had not submitted their views were informed that the survey is still open, as the Steering Committee would still like to receive and consider all views.

The results and conclusions were explained. Including the recommendation to maintain the GMACE service and not implement a fee. However, it was also noted that the service fee for GEBV validation should also be reviewed and applied.

The consideration for this was to require participation every 2 years for countries submitting data to GMACE.



### Questions/discussion

Joao Durr, CDCB, USA: It was commented that it is interesting regarding how the importance of the service is ascertained and that providing a service without a fee lowers the significance of the service. Joao did not consider using the associated fee to the GEBV test as a good solution to finance the service. If Interbull service staff work on it then there should be an associated fee.

Brian clarified that the reason behind such approach is that GMACE is really considered more as a service that is part of MACE rather than a separate service.

Paul VanRaden, USDA, USA: Commented that when techniques were developed, they were first describing the benefits. There was a 2-3% gain when combining reference populations. This seems to have been forgotten now.

The Chair thanked all speakers and the audience for the questions and closed the first Business meeting.

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## Business Meeting 2 Tuesday 21 May 2024

Matthew welcomed the delegates to the second Business Meeting.

### **10. Interbull Centre Director's Report - Part 2**

The Interbull Centre Director summarised services available through the Interbull Centre, including the different evaluations for dairy as well as beef.

He provided more detailed information on data exchange and the need for increased exchange of accurate information and the benefits of the ability of Interbull Centre to streamline this exchange of data through the Interbull Datahub. Delegates were also notified of Interbull webinars available to them.

### Question/discussion

Brian Van Doormaal, Lactanet, Canada: asked whether countries can upload genetic traits information for females and males or just for males.

Countries who sign up to the service may upload genetic traits for both males and females as long as the animal's pedigree record is also provided in IDEA.

There was a query about reporting genetic traits information for either domestic or foreign animals. The part of the database dealing with additional animal's information works as a bucket; therefore a



given user can always upload any genetic information for any type of animals (foreign/domestic) as long as such user does have the information available in their own database. It would then be up to specific procedures within the database module to avoid storing repeated information and provide feedback to the user making the upload.

Paul VanRaden, USDA, USA – it is important to de-list the traits that are not around anymore, as much as it is important to list new traits. Some are not relevant to the population anymore.

Suzanne Harding, World Holstein Friesian Federation: The exchange of genetic traits is really great and everyone should be encouraged to share this data. There is also discussion in the ICAR Breed Associations Working Group – and DNA Working Group - to try and streamline, and enhance the procedures, for other breeds.

### **11. Interbull Technical Committee / Research and Development**

Gerben de Jong, CRV, The Netherlands, updated the participants of the Business Meeting on the work of the Interbull Technical Committee in the last year.

There were a few recommendations during the last year which related to Fertility harmonisation, new GEBV-test software and Genomic Reliabilities Guidelines. All of this information is available on the Interbull website.

The Validation Working Group is finalising the GEBV test software enhanced with a new methodology to better deal with any genomic pre-selection bias. The Working Group is also working on reviewing a new version of the Mendelian Sampling Variance test, reviewing biological limits applied in GEBV tests and starting to review the Interbull Test III so that it can be used on young genomic bulls

There is a new Working Group for reviewing MACE coding types. This group is chaired by Raphael Mrode and is tasked with reviewing current Types of Proofs coding, assessing the needs of new coding and providing guidelines on the application of such coding.

Another new working group of the Interbull Technical Committee is reviewing the current service schedule to see if there can be any improvements. A survey will be sent to evaluation centres for their input.

The Future MACE working group activities was reviewed by Pete Sullivan: Pete reviewed information that was previously presented and emphasised the benefits of a new MACE system. He then summarised progress since the Lyon Business Meeting in August 2023, including preparations for a pilot run during the second half of 2024.

Valentina Palucci presented the latest activities at the Interbull Centre. Many have already been extensively discussed at the Open Meeting or the first Business Meeting.

Valentina shared the guiding principles of the Interbull Centre that make the staff proud of what they do at the Interbull Centre, reminding attendees of the Centre's principles and how it aims to deliver the best services to the customers.



The annual operating plan has been based on the four strategic pillars of the new Strategic Plan. Some of the activities currently under development by the Centre have been shown in line with abovementioned pillars: The webinar series has continued with two already delivered, on PREP and GenoEx-PSE, and more to come. All past webinars are available to view online on the related platforms they covered (IDEA, PREP, GenoEX).

Improving validation methods for dairy is ongoing, as seen by previous reports, and development of new validation methods for beef is currently ongoing.

The development of a new website is also on going. The new website, besides being based on a more modern layout, has also been developed having the customers' feedback, over the past few years, in mind: easier navigation and access to information, increase awareness of current services for future and current users.

Further developments to improve the usability of the Centre's platforms is ongoing: The GenoEx extraction's query has been improved so to mark any required fields left unselected, so that the extraction would no longer abort silently without feedback to the user. Work has also commenced on improving the GenoEx-GDE extraction specifically related to animals having an updated permission status from the time they were first uploaded into GDE and the time of extraction. Work has also commenced to expand the GenoEx-GDE to other species than just cattle, currently the development has started for sheep and horse's genotypes. New standardized electronic forms for longevity, udder health and workability are currently under their final step of development and soon been made available in PREP, also a development of standardized electronic form for collecting descriptive genomic information is ongoing.

### **12. European Union Reference Centre**

Toine Roozen now asks for the delegates to think about Interbull Centre as the EU Reference Centre. Toine reviewed EU legal framework applicable to breeding, trade and entry into the EU. Within the context of European Union Reference Centre, we have a mandate for the promotion of harmonisation or improvement of the methods for performance testing or genetic evaluation. For example, if you have information about genetic defects that is not being shared, it is important to share for the greatest benefit of farmers/other stakeholders.

Toine summarized how Validation is one of the most important roles of Interbull Centre/EURC. He asked the delegates to think about the wider benefits of what they are participating in.



### **13. Other Matters and Open Discussion**

Matthew asked the delegates:

How many thought about using genetic defects exchange mechanism?

How many actually use it?

What are the roadblocks? It would be really useful to understand what the roadblocks are. It is good to know if there are things we can change.

Brian Van Doormaal, Lactanet, Canada: suggested a roadblock is project prioritisation. It is on the list, but has not got to the top, and this list may need amending.

The chair encouraged delegates to come and talk to staff and Steering Committee about these things.

#### **Timeline**

A possible timeline for introducing new trait groups that was asked about in the first Business Meeting was presented. The general feedback from the audience was that a speedier timeline was desired. As a result, the Interbull Centre will revisit this.

#### **Patents**

Matthew reported the two patent filings that were reported on during last year's Business Meeting have now been withdrawn.

#### **Cyber-attacks**

It has come to Interbull's attention that there have been a number of cyber-attacks globally on genetic evaluation units.

#### **Business Funding Models**

Matthew asked about business funding models that were discussed yesterday.

Reinhard Reents, Vit, Germany: connected the discussion on GMACE and New Traits. He pointed out it was interesting that GMACE is not valued very high, and suggested that the Steering Committee discusses putting resources currently going into GMACE into New Traits to speed up their introduction.

Matthew commented that not everybody responded to the GMACE survey and it is still open, so delegates were encouraged to respond. (please contact [simone.hazas@slu.se](mailto:simone.hazas@slu.se) if you would like a new link to the survey)

No further questions were raised.

### **14. Future Events**

Matthew showed past locations for events and announced that Interbull is working with ADSA to have its annual meeting in Louisville, Kentucky in June 2025.

### **15. Close**