Collecting Date of Weaning Information

The Animal Genetics & Breeding Unit (AGBU) has recently requested that members of BREEDPLAN record date of weaning information when submitting performance to ABRI to assist with the further development and enhancement of the BREEDPLAN genetic evaluation system.

Dr David Johnston, Principal Scientist at AGBU, explained that the recording of the weaning date of an animal is becoming increasingly important, particularly as early weaning practices become part of regular management of many seedstock herds.

While the weaning date information will not be utilised by the BREEDPLAN evaluation immediately, David described that once sufficient weaning date information had been recorded, AGBU will investigate using it to enhance the EBVs that are calculated by the BREEDPLAN evaluation by:

- Assisting in the correct management grouping for 200 day weight records and mature cow weights, particularly if early weaning is practiced

- Allowing the identification of data from early weaned animals to enable research into the effects of early weaning on:
  - the partitioning of 200 day weight records into the direct and maternal (i.e. milk) components
  - the estimation of age of dam effects and possible need for separate age and age of dam adjustments for 200 day weights of early weaned calves
  - the expression of female reproductive traits (e.g. days to calving) and the need to modify the definition of mating contemporary group
  - the recording and contemporary grouping of measures taken at the time of weaning e.g. docility scores, IGF-I

Changes have now been made to the paper performance recording forms, the BREEDPLAN Microsoft Excel template and the internet performance submission facility to enable the submission of weaning date information to BREEDPLAN. A copy of the updated Microsoft Excel template can be downloaded from the Technical area of the BREEDPLAN website. The different BREEDPLAN compatible herd recording software packages (eg, HerdMaster, StockBook, CattleLink) are also either in the process of being or have been modified to enable weaning date information to be recorded and submitted to BREEDPLAN.

For further information on submitting date of weaning information, please contact staff at BREEDPLAN.