



Title	The distribution of the beef cow herd in the Republic of Ireland in 1992
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Publication date	1994-07
Publication information	Fallon, Richie J. The Distribution of the Beef Cow Herd in the Republic of Ireland in 1992. University College Dublin. Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis, July, 1994.
Series	Selected Papers, 1993
Publisher	University College Dublin. Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis
Item record/more information	http://hdl.handle.net/10197/8936

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The Distribution of the Beef Cow Herd in the Republic of Ireland in 1992

R.J. Fallon

Introduction

There have been considerable changes in the profile of the Irish cattle industry during the past decade. These changes have taken place in response to marketing trends, farm enterprise support systems and the introduction of the Internal Market within the European Union (EU).

A steady increase in dairy herd size has been apparent for some time and is likely to continue (Sheehy and Christiansen, 1991). Recently there has been a considerable investment in the development of the beef cow segment as a result of the introduction of an EU support system for suckler herds.

The implications of these changes for the progress of the Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication Scheme is unclear. Higher animal densities in dairy herd, in particular on farms on which strip grazing is practised, and the bringing together of cows of varying types from different sources to form beef cow herds, require to be regarded as posing a potential risk for the general health of the livestock. High levels of stockmanship will require to be applied and due diligence exercised in regard to the prevention of such diseases as tuberculosis and brucellosis, if these diseases and their related problems are to be avoided.

This paper describes the distribution of the beef cow herd in the country in 1992. This is based upon the total number of beef cows present in each of the 2,840 mainland District Electoral Divisions (D.E.D.'s).

The data are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

In 1992, the beef cow population consisted of approximately 1,000,000 cows distributed in 88,500 herds, giving a mean cow herd size of 11.7 cows. The main concentration of beef cows was in the area west of a line drawn from Limerick to Drogheda (Fig. 1). A total of 13,000 herds had more than 20 cows per herd; the majority of these latter herds were more evenly distributed throughout the country (Fig. 2).

These data will provide a basis for further studies on the effect of enterprise type on the occurrence of tuberculosis in cattle.

Reference

Sheehy, S.J. and Christiansen, K.H. (1991). In "Cost/Benefit Analysis of Irish Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication Schemes". University College Dublin.

Figure 1. Total Number of Beef Cows per District Electoral Division (1992)

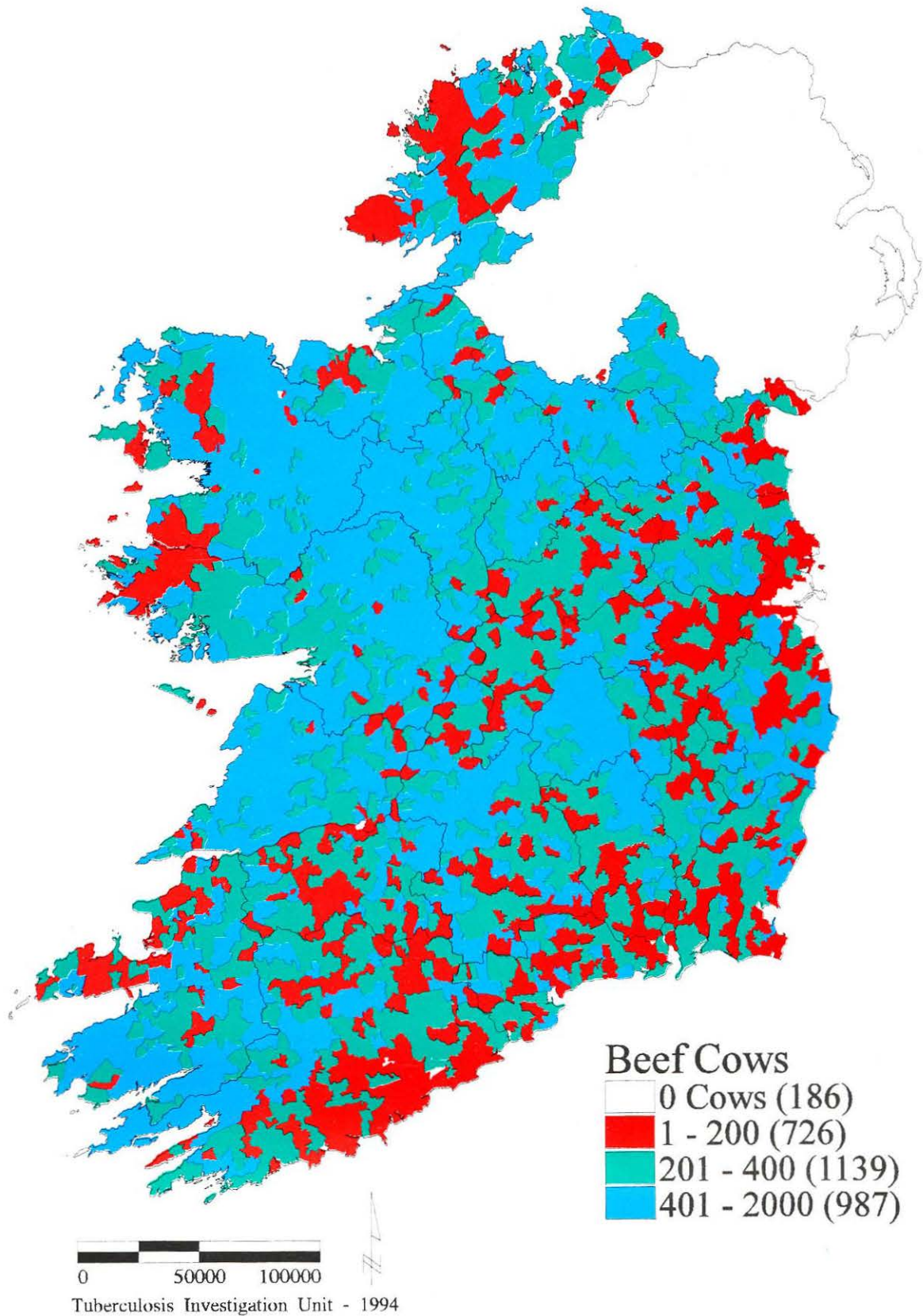


Figure 2. Distribution of Beef Cow Herds with 20 Cows or More (1992)

