



Meat⁺ : a new genetic label for BB meat

Thanks to the breeders' work over the past decades, the Belgian Blue Breed has been tremendously successful in Belgium and abroad. Unequaled producer of first-class meat, the BBB is praised every day by butchers, meat processors and Belgian consumers. With the arrival of the Meat + genetic label, Belgian Blue breeders will further increase the satisfaction of their enthusiast consumers looking for local, tasty and tender meat.

The Belgian Blue Breed, the production and environment asset

By making the best use of local resources, the Belgian Blue Breed has by far the best statistics in terms of quantity of produced meat. Its slaughter yield (carcass weight / live weight) is on average 69% for young bulls and 64% for cows! Its cutting yield is around 82% for young bulls! And the produced meat offers a much larger quantity of premium cuts. Thanks to these performances and to its excellent valuation of pasture and by-products of the local agro-food industries (pulp, spent grains, bran, straw...), the Belgian Blue Breed is also a leader in terms of productivity/hectare and therefore in terms of environmental impact, compared to other European and global suckler beef systems.

Belgian Blue meat, preferred by consumers

The 2018 APAQ-W blind study demonstrated that the Belgian consumer prefers to buy and to eat Belgian Blue meat: aspect, taste and tenderness combined. In a new independent survey, conducted for the Belgian Blue Beef Herd-Book of Élevéo (which will be presented shortly), the reputation of the breed for its quality, flavor and tenderness was once again underlined by consumers.

The Meat⁺ label, towards even more satisfaction

Quantity and quality are therefore closely associated with the Belgian Blue Breed. However, thanks to the work of the Universities of Liège and Gent, it has just been discovered that we could go even further in terms of consistency of the quality and above all of the tenderness. By combining DNA analyzes and observations of carcasses in slaughterhouses and cutting rooms, the researchers put forward the genetic test Meat⁺ : animals carrying this label will offer more guarantees of tenderness on a few premium cuts that sometimes did not meet the requirements of the Belgian Blue Breed quality. Thus the Belgian Blue Breed will still have the best statistics for the percentage of first-class meat!

Based on routine DNA analyzes in the population, it is estimated that around 70 percent of animals can already be labeled Meat⁺!

Should we condemn the 30 percent animals that are not labeled Meat⁺? The answer is **NO**: some of them (60% according to the statistics of the first experiment) express the same level of quality as the Meat⁺ animals. For others, the number of less tender pieces of meat varies and is sometimes average.

Further sampling, associated with detailed analyzes of meat quality, is being done in slaughterhouses in the South and North of the country. Thanks to this, scientific work will make it possible to refine the percentage of these other animals and to better understand the reason for the variations observed, both for males and females. Feeding, fattening time, transport, slaughter or carcass cooling are parameters to consider and which could explain part of the variation.

Although research is still being done, the Belgian Blue Breed decided, without delay, to take the bull by the horns and to undertake the necessary work in order to reach 100 percent of Meat⁺ labeled animals in the coming years.

So from December 2021, this test will be offered to everyone. Insemination centers will be the first to have the opportunity to communicate these values for their bulls.

In practice for breeders

Practically, from December 1st, breeders will be able to go through the same channel as used today for the tests of genetic characteristics in Belgian Blue Breed, either through their breeders association, or directly through the University of Liège. This test will be added, on request and at no additional cost, to the existing genetic characteristics. For most animals already analyzed in the past (those analyzed on an SNP chip), you can also request the Meat⁺ status retrospectively, without having to take a new sample and a new complete test on the animal. It will then cost you only € 10.00 (excluding VAT) per animal.

BWB Fokkers vzw

CRV Vlaanderen vzw

*Belgian Blue Beef
Herd Book (Elevéo)*