

BELGIAN BLUE

Breeders

History of the Belgian Blue Beef Breed



As the name implies, Belgian Blue Cattle originated in the small European country of Belgium. While today Belgian Blue cattle are their own fullblood registered breed, their roots can be tracked back well over a century to a crossing of Durham Shorthorns and Friesian cattle.

Initially the Belgian Blue was developed, as most European cattle are, for their use as a dual purpose breed or, more simply, for both milk production and meat production. For most of the early to middle 1900s the breed tried to exist in the dual role. However, even at this early stage of breed development there was an increasing movement among many breeders to develop cattle of a more 'meaty type'. Following the second world war, a liberated European economy quickly demanded an increased quality and quantity of meat, particularly those cuts of high retail value. This economic demand accelerated the development of Belgian Blue cattle in a more heavily muscled direction.

Finally, in 1974, the breed was divided into two branches, one for continued use as a dual purpose animal and the other exclusively for meat production. The vast majority of breeders concentrated their efforts on breeding the Belgian Blue for beef production. Today we see the result of the 150 years of work in the modern Belgian Blue. An animal that is structurally correct and sound, docile in temperament, fertile in breeding, and above all the ultimate beef machine.

Nutritional Information

Healthy & Flavorful

The final judgment as to the success of a beef breed lies in the hands of you, the consumer. Today's beef consumer is more health conscious than ever before and is increasingly educated about the food and beef industry. Belgian Blue meats have been repeatedly shown to contain less fat, less calories, and less cholesterol than skinless baked chicken breast, while still maintaining all the high nutritional elements for which beef is renowned.



The same genetic trait that results in a healthy meat item also creates a tender, moist, flavorful product as well. A cross-section of Belgian Blue meat will contain more and shorter muscle fibers than traditional beef. This significantly contributes to meat tenderness. Since there is minimal fat content, Belgian Blue beef has greater moisture content. These two items together help establish a base for an exceptionally flavorful product.

A Belgian Blue cross dressout % can be from 62% to 71 % depending on the cross used. The Belgian Blue also showed 16% less marbling and 14.2% more rideye area than the average carcass according to previous research and breeding information.



Youth Program and Awards

ABBB Ken Schlichte Memorial Scholarship

Criteria for the Scholarship Program

Enrolled in a 2 or 4 year college

Age 18-22

ABBB junior member for at least 1 year

Must be a U.S. citizen

May only receive the scholarship once

Be an ABBB junior member in good standing

Youth or family own Belgian Blue Cattle



ABBB Belgian Blues Junior Awards

ABBB has developed an awards program for its Junior exhibitors. The purpose of this program is to encourage development of our Junior cattlemen and women and to promote the Belgian Blue breed.

To be eligible for the program the youth should not have reached his/her 21st birthday. Awards will be given for the top Junior and the Reserve Junior. To be awarded the honor of top Junior, the young man or woman must be a junior member of ABBB and accumulate points based on class placings, showmanship, and presentations.

Open Shows Sanctioned for Youth Points

Iowa State Fair (National Show), Tulsa State Fair, Houston Livestock Show. Cattle must be family or farm owned for at least 30 days prior to the show. Entry must be in juniors' name to qualify for class and overall points.

(Based on a 4 oz. raw serving)	Certified Belgian Blue Ground Beef*	USDA Regular Ground Beef**	USDA Average Chicken Breast (w/skin)***
Fat (g)	7.0	30.0	10.5
Moisture (g)	71.7G/per 100g	63.34	79.18
Protein (g)	25	18.78	23.7
Cholesterol (mg)	64	96	72.1

*Warner Lab, USDA Cert#4786 Report 9/19/96
 **USDA Handbook AH 8-13 (1985), NDB No. 13309, Pg. 339
 ***USDA Handbook AH 8-5 (1978), NDB No. 05057, Pg. 83

Medical Quote

"A heart-healthy diet containing up to 6 ounces of lean red meat lowered the risk of heart disease in the study participants, by positively impacting blood cholesterol levels," says cardiologist, Dr. Michael H. Davidson, M.D., study. "For those individuals at-risk for coronary heart disease, consuming lean red meat is not only acceptable – it encourages compliance to a heart-healthy diet," states Dr. Davidson.

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Belgian Blue Cattle

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. *Where do the cattle originate?* The Blues originated in Belgium. There are also genetics from England, Ireland, and Denmark. They have been in the United States since approximately 1987.

2. *What is the basic color of the Blues?* They can be anything from white to black. The predominate colors are white, white with blue markings, white with black markings, blue roan, and black.

3. *What are the main attributes of the Belgian Blues?* They are bred for docility, low bone, high yield lean meat, tenderness, extreme muscle, and thin skin. The intention of the breed was to cross the Blues with other commercial animals to produce lean tender beef.

4. *Where do they get all the muscle?* The muscle is a natural development for the breed. Crossbreds are not born with that extreme muscle, but start developing it at 4 to 6 weeks old.

5. *Calving Issues?* Most of the Belgian Blues in North America are natural calving. As any breed develops, the genetics keep improving with each generation. Using a fullblood or purebred Belgian Blue bull on a commercial herd will yield no more calving problems than using any other purebred bull. It is very uncommon to have difficulty calving a halfblood calf. As the percentage of Belgian rises in the calf the possibility of calving problems will increase a little depending on the genetics used.



Fullblood Bull

Don't be misled by the rumor that all Belgian Blues have to be C-sectioned no matter what the percentage may be. Calving practices in Belgium and other European countries are very different than in the U.S.

6. *Can they walk correctly?* Yes, they can walk and function out in the field. Like any other breed, it stems back to bloodlines and genetics. Fullblood and purebred Belgian Blues will walk differently than most other breeds due to the extreme muscle.

7. *Is the meat tender or tough?* The meat is tender. The fine muscles fibers don't allow the tough connective tissue to grow which results in lean tender meat. Cooking the beef is different than standard beef. Belgian Blue beef cooks in about 1/3 of the time than normal beef.

8. *Are they docile?* Yes, they are very docile. They are generally very easy to work with.

9. *How do they tolerate cold winters and hot summers?* Belgian Blues tolerate cold winters very well as is evidenced by the number of breeders in Canada. They are also rather tolerant of the hot summers. Many breeders in Texas and Florida are also successful in raising Belgian Blues.



Limousin x Blue Calf



Fullblood & Calf

10. How are Belgian Blues shown?

The cattle are shown slick sheared to see the muscle development of the animal. No show sticks are used and the animal is shown in a natural square standing position. They have a good hair coat like most cattle. The judge will touch the animal to check the muscle, skin, and growth of the animal. Some crossbred classes are shown with hair due to being shown in FFA and 4-H programs. When showing crossbreds at a Belgian Blue show the hair should be brushed with the direction of the hair growth. Crossbred Belgian Blue calves are excellent for show steers and the club calf market.



Halfblood

11. I'm interested in raising Belgian Blues. How do I get started?

First, you need to decide what type of breeding program you are interested in: halfbloods, high percentage or fullblood. Halfbloods make tremendous meat carcass and are the most common. Put a fullblood or purebred bull on any commercial herd and be amazed at how the calves become a little thicker and leaner. The higher the percentage the thicker and leaner the calves will be. A fullblood or purebred program gives one the true characteristics of the breed. The best way to get started is let the association help you find a breeder in your area.



Crossbred

12. *Where can I see some of the cattle?* There are three association sanctioned shows: the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in Houston, Texas, the National Belgian Blue Show currently at the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines, Iowa, and the Tulsa State Fair in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Also other events are listed on the association website.

To become a member of the American Belgian Blue Breeders, please visit www.belgianblue.org and print out a membership application.

Following are some of the many benefits your membership offers:

- Complete Registry
- Youth Program
- Scholarship Program
- State Affiliates
- Listing in the Membership Directory
- Internet Advertisement in the Membership Directory
- Link your site to ABBB
- Listing on the ABBB Website Members Directory
- Free Newsletter and Classified Ads
- Breeder Referrals
- Parent Verification & DNA Testing
- Internet Updates & Advertising on the Internet
- International Recognition

ABBB is a member of the Belgian Blue International Association

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