The Milk and Beef of Fleckvieh cattle are of superior quality!

In general, Milk Processors are currently paying dairy farmers for milk volume, components and milk quality i.e. cell count, but are reluctant to reward suppliers for certain characteristics such as protein variants or content of special fatty acids. Almost no abattoir pays a premium for grass fed slaughter cattle, so why should we consider certain components of milk and beef that we do not yet get paid for?
Quality of Fleckvieh products

As a producer of food it is important to supply what the consumer wants and today the consumer is becoming more health conscious, interested in food safety, environmentally aware and responsible, he enjoys quality food and wants to have the convenience to readily purchase the product. Consumers are more and more interested in naturally produced, unprocessed foods. Why not follow this trend and promote naturally produced Fleckvieh products with added value?

Fleckvieh as a balanced dual purpose breed has a great potential to be associated with all things natural, therefore in future, we have to place more emphasis on the promotion of the health benefits and the naturalness of Fleckvieh products, in order to take advantage of this unique selling proposition!

Influence of Feed

As the cost pressure on producing agricultural products is rising, it is necessary to think about lending an additional benefit to milk and beef. There are several possibilities to influence the quality of cattle products. Of course, one of them is feeding. Some dairies in the Alpine region for example already market products from milk of cows that are only fed with hay and grass. They promote their products as „Hay Milk“- products that are naturally enriched in CLA. Compared to products that are made of milk from silage-fed cows, the CLA content of „Hay Milk“ products is much higher. But also in other areas farmers feed their cows a grass based ration with as little corn silage and concentrate as possible and found that the milk they produced also had a higher level of CLA.

Holzmichl-daughter in Upper Bavaria.
An animal’s diet can have a profound influence on the composition and nutrient make up of its products.

**Influence of Genetics**

Some of the quality traits like A2 and Kappa-Casein are genetically determined. This means that the composition of a product depends on the genetic constitution of an animal. In this case farmers should select their cattle according to the favored traits in order to get the desired nutrients in the milk. Thus it becomes obvious that it is possible to add value to Fleckvieh Milk and Beef through a natural, thought-out production system without any industrial processing or additives. We should take advantage of the excellent genetic constitution of Fleckvieh and promote the superiority of its products to the public.

However, a lot of research is still needed to find out which nutrients produced by ruminants are important for humans and how their content is influenced by genetics or feeding. For some nutrients there seems to be great differences between breeds and we try to find out what the results of Fleckvieh are and where we eventually can influence the content of favorable nutrients through genetics and a careful and directed selection of our bulls.

Bavarian Fleckvieh Genetics supports several studies both financially and in practice to find out more about the potential of Fleckvieh. We are engaged for example in a study at Elsenburg / South Africa to find out about the CLA and Omega 3/6 content of milk and beef produced with Fleckvieh and Fleckvieh crossbreds (Fleckvieh x Jersey) that are grazed on pasture.

Bavarian Fleckvieh Genetics tests its sires for several important milk traits such as A2 and Kappa-Casein or beef traits like marbling and tenderness. We publish the results with every bull tested and we also recommend bulls that are especially well suited for Pasture grazing systems or Organic farming.

Our clients can choose from a broad variety of sires which best fit their production requirements, climate and special needs.

**A word on Genomic selection**

We are convinced of the natural strength of the Fleckvieh breed and therefore are a little skeptical about the emphasis being placed on genomic selection.

We follow the development with some concern, because in our opinion, in some cases, the focus is set on the wrong traits. We are afraid that we will lose important traits when we concentrate on traits like milk yield or...
beef yield. Therefore, when buying in new bulls we still pay great attention to type traits, pigmentation and cow families. In our opinion a sire should still be thoroughly progeny-tested before he is used on a larger scale.

Environmental awareness

Dairy production with the dual purpose breed Fleckvieh has several advantages for the consumer. The most important point certainly is that it stands out through a superior product quality, but Fleckvieh as a dual purpose breed is also very well suited to fulfill the demands of animal welfare and as the animals do not go to the extremes; neither as far as milk production nor beef production is concerned. The breed is climate friendly and moreover ideally suited for the preservation of cultivated landscape. This, of course, is primarily important for the tourist regions like the Alps and other rural areas, where often, grazing cows have an adverse impact on the natural scenery. In order to preserve the countryside of certain districts we have to keep cultivating the grassland. The grassland also is a manifold bio-diversity for animals and plants. The grassland and pastures have been cultivated and conserved for centuries through the continuous cultivation and preservation by humans. These areas, cultivated for centuries often attract tourists and people seeking recreation. Through grazing our cattle and feeding them with grass rather than too much corn and concentrate we can contribute to the preservation of the natural, beautiful landscape and the bio-diversity. Fleckvieh cows are excellent feed converters that can produce a lot of milk and beef from basic pasture feed and thus are ideally suited for grazing or grass based rations. It is important to promote all these advantages of Fleckvieh to the consumer and make them aware of the many positive qualities Fleckvieh has to offer!

Some dairy plants are already changing their mindset and offer the farmer with financial rewards for cheese yield or certain other favorable contents or feeding regimes, with consumers willing to pay the premium for the product. In order to be part of these developments, producers need to think ahead of the times and should reconsider their breeding strategies in the early stages of the programme. When decisions are made to change breeding strategies it can take years to see dividends, as genetic change is a long term process. So it is always better to start early and will not be detrimental to the breeding programme, as they say „nothing ventured, nothing gained“.

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