

Entrepreneur Raises Belgian Blue For Lean Beef Market

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with raising lean beef at lower costs, Brubaker believes that Belgian Blue cattle gives an edge. "They grow faster and have more meat on the carcass than other breeds."

Brubaker brags that his steaks can be cut with a fork.

The secret, he says, is in growing young bulls and butchering them at 10 to 12 months of age.

"I know people don't like the thought of eating bull meat. They think it is tough and has an odd taste," Brubaker said. "But studies show that bulls produce much leaner meat, and if butchered young, the meat is tender. The odd flavor is the result of improper handling and butchering."

Generally steers are finished for the market and killed about 18 months of age. A bull at that age would result in tough meat.

When Brubaker first began experimenting with Belgian Blues, he purchased a Holstein herd, planning to milk the cows and to inseminate them with Belgian Blue stock. But the process toward developing the meat proved too slow.

"You only have a 50 percent chance on getting a bull calf once a year," he said. "So now I collect semen from the bull and sell it to farmers for \$5 with a contract that promises that I will buy back all healthy calves — male and female — for \$200 when born and fed colostrum."

Female calves are sold since they grow more body fat. When bull calves are turned into steers, it not only removes the hormones that cause them to be tamer, but also the growth hormones. For that reason Brubaker doesn't want to turn his bulls into steers.

Brubaker feeds the bulls a vertically-integrated diet of corn and grass.

He keeps precise records. He has a computer program to track markets, feeding, and the fat content results.

In Belgian, calves are taken by caesarian section because they have a tendency to get stuck in the birth canal ramp due to the extra musculing of

Belgian Blue cows. By crossbreeding with Holstein cows, birth problems have been eliminated, Brubaker said.

The bull that Brubaker uses for his own stock was born in Belgium and imported from England. It was chosen for producing offspring that are in the 70- to 90-pound weight range and have correct legs.

Brubaker grew up as the son of a doctor who was concerned about the fat content in beef. "Then we only had beef about four times a year, but now, my dad is my biggest fan of what I'm doing and we eat it five times a week," Brubaker said.

"Some care more about health than taste, but I think health and taste are equally important," Brubaker said.

He distributes much of his meat to the medical community. His marketing strategy is to offer samples to grocery stores, institutions, and restaurants.

Brubaker says that most of those who taste his beef believe the taste is equal to a prime rib. A few die-hards who believe fat must be present for flavor and prefer to eat fat are skeptical.

One, a retired butcher, automatically dismissed the idea of lean meat being flavorful by saying, "No waste, no taste. Lean meat is terrible."

But Brubaker shrugs off that criticism as a preconceived out-of-date belief.

"The guy has had two triple bypasses," he said.

Brubaker believes the educated consumer will choose meat with less fat because it is more healthful eating.

"You can eat two of my burgers for lunch and two more for supper, and still have 15 fat calories to eat on other food," he said.

In his search for a meat packer who does a quality job and vacuum packs, Brubaker chose John F. Martin, butcher.

To preserve the flavor and juiciness, the meat is vacuum packed and frozen immediately.

Of some concern to Brubaker is the fact that the meat appears dark



On the right is a Belgian Blue bull used for breeding purposes. The two offspring on the right have been crossed with Holsteins.

red when processed by this method. When meat is exposed to oxygen, it turns a bright red, which seems to be more eye appealing to customers. If the meat is removed from the sealed bag and exposed to the air, it will also turn a bright red. Brubaker's concern is that the average consumer will be less inclined to pick up the meat because of the preconceived idea that it should be bright red.

Because the carcass does not have the normal covering of fat, the beef is shrouded to prevent moisture loss during aging the beef for nine to 10 days. Brubaker said that it costs \$300 for the USDA tests to certify that his beef is 90 percent lean. Now, he needs \$5,000 to design a package and a certified label.

While Brubaker has had potential investors offer money that would enable his marketing of Lancaster Lite Beef to move at a faster pace, Brubaker declined. "I can think better when I'm poor," he said.

He wants to thoroughly examine every aspect of the breeding, raising, butchering, and marketing process.

"Those with more money can



Brent Brubaker demonstrates cutting a steak with a fork. Steaks, he said, are tender and juicy from young beef of Belgian Blue.

afford to make mistakes. I can't. If I do it myself, it forces me to minimize expenses, to think through each step before acting on it.

"Whenever I solve a problem, I

love it," Brubaker said. "But the next step is always terrifying to me."

His goal is to market the beef under the Lancaster Lite label within a year.

Top Pennsylvania DHIA Cows By Breed For March

The top protein producing cows in Pennsylvania DHIA Herds for March are listed by breed as follows:

AYRSHIRE							GUERNSEY							HOLSTEIN								
Farm Name	Barn Name	Age Yr-Mo	Actual Production-----				Farm Name	Barn Name	Age Yr-Mo	Actual Production-----				Farm Name	Barn Name	Age Yr-Mo	Actual Production-----					
			Milk Lbs	Prot %	Prot Lbs	Fat %				Milk Lbs	Prot %	Prot Lbs	Fat %				Milk Lbs	Prot %	Prot Lbs	Fat %		
ARDROSSAN FARMS	PNWZIG	05-11	29763	3.1	934	4.2	TROTACRE FARM		27	05-07	28376	3.2	909	3.9	ROTHOCK GOLDEN HOL	#LEA	05-11	37612	3.3	1243	3.2	
ARDROSSAN FARMS	BIRDYE	05-04	25035	3.6	913	4.4	LISEYER FARM	GAIL	04-11	25001	3.5	887	4.5	KEYSTONE FARM	SHANNON	06-05	38973	3.2	1238	3.4		
C C & HAROLD C RADER	VANNA	05-06	24022	3.7	888	4.0	RUTTER BROS	BECKY	05-09	24451	3.5	849	4.3	CARL A FARMS INC	PEPPER	05-04	40502	3.1	1236	3.2		
ARDROSSAN FARMS	N-POOLM	07-09	24761	3.4	845	3.9	FAVA BROS	BUD	07-04	25261	3.3	843	3.9	ANDREW D STOLTZFUS	SPRINT	03-09	38552	3.2	1227	3.4		
ARDROSSAN FARMS	WROSLIE	03-05	25190	3.3	826	3.5	ROMELLA FARMS	NEWCOM	04-05	27820	3.0	826	2.5	ROB&DONNA VANBLARCOM		66	06-05	39749	3.0	1200	3.1	
PLUM-BOTTOM FARM	DALLAS	04-06	25215	3.2	816	4.1	TROTACRE FARM		287	05-00	23635	3.4	801	3.5	MEYERS BROS DAIRY		729	04-08	36018	3.3	1196	3.5
ARDROSSAN FARMS	CAV FVN	05-04	24977	3.3	815	3.9	RUTTER BROS	LIVELY	06-09	23013	3.3	764	3.9	KEYSTONE FARM	LESA	06-11	38430	3.1	1183	3.9		
ARDROSSAN FARMS	APR-VUE	07-05	25059	3.2	811	3.7	LYLE+LAUREEN WRIGHT	LINDA	06-11	20460	3.7	756	4.5	FREDERICK FARMS		64	04-11	35311	3.3	1181	4.3	
ARDROSSAN FARMS	IVYLOU	05-07	24007	3.4	805	4.3	JOHN MORROW		159	07-07	24132	3.1	754	4.1	FREDERICK FARMS		69	04-03	35791	3.3	1172	4.1
ARDROSSAN FARMS	L-NOMAD	07-06	24492	3.3	800	4.3	JOHN MORROW		199	06-09	22212	3.4	749	4.4	KEYSTONE FARM	BARBIE	04-05	33792	3.4	1157	3.8	
PLUM-BOTTOM FARM	CANORE	06-09	23669	3.4	796	3.6	JOHN MORROW		276	04-02	23100	3.2	745	3.4	TIMOTHY R PEACHEY	EMBER	04-04	33501	3.4	1153	3.7	
CHARLES-DON GABLE	NOMACA	05-05	23666	3.3	787	4.0	TROTACRE FARM	DOLLY	04-02	21812	3.4	739	4.3	KARL MILLER		266	05-04	33506	3.4	1153	1.8	
PLUM-BOTTOM FARM	PHO	03-03	20440	3.8	776	3.9	TROTACRE FARM	DAILY	02-03	23481	3.1	736	3.5	FREDERICK FARMS		53	05-03	40581	2.8	1151	2.8	
ARDROSSAN FARMS	NON LOV	04-10	23196	3.3	773	3.4	AXEL LINDE+M WIDMANN	BEATRI	04-01	21680	3.4	733	4.3	TITUS & DAVID RISSER		50	07-04	36747	3.1	1150	4.0	
ARDROSSAN FARMS	BR TREE	03-02	22754	3.4	767	3.9	AXEL LINDE+M WIDMANN	SNOOPY	02-10	20800	3.5	733	4.1	GLENN B GOCKLEY		87	08-03	38025	3.0	1150	2.0	
PLUM-BOTTOM FARM	TINSLE	05-08	21994	3.5	762	3.7	AXEL LINDE+M WIDMANN	KLAUDI	03-03	20720	3.5	726	4.7	JAMES D DUNN	LILLIAN	04-09	47793	2.4	1149	4.1		
CHARLES+DEBRA YOUNG	GENBROS	05-08	19426	3.9	761	4.3	XANADU GUERNSEYS	SARALEE	03-05	21011	3.4	717	4.5	Meadow Spring Holstn		1	05-02	39609	2.9	1137	2.9	
PLUM-BOTTOM FARM	NOMO	07-05	23539	3.2	760	3.6	TROTACRE FARM	SAPPHIR	03-11	19840	3.6	716	4.2	VINCENT A WAGNER		138	07-01	37976	3.0	1136	3.2	
ARDROSSAN FARMS	H FAITH	04-10	25475	3.0	758	3.5	CEDAR FRINGED FARM	OIRENE	04-03	20660	3.5	714	4.4	NOAH B SHARP JR	FLO	05-09	33588	3.4	1136	3.3		
ARDROSSAN FARMS	B PEARL	03-05	24353	3.1	758	3.9	AIRY VIEW FARMS		823	05-04	19741	3.6	712	4.8	JAMES D DUNN	PEARL	02-11	33239	3.4	1136	3.4	
ARDROSSAN FARMS	W-ROSE	07-04	23487	3.2	757	4.3	TROTACRE FARM	THELMA	04-10	19787	3.6	709	4.4	JAMES RODICHOK	COREY	05-03	36991	3.1	1134	2.6		
ARDROSSAN FARMS	LOV VUE	03-04	24053	3.1	755	4.1	KATHLEEN S KERBER	CLOVER	04-11	21156	3.3	707	3.9	HELWOOD FARM	DELIGHT	03-00	33304	3.4	1132	3.9		
ARDROSSAN FARMS	BETTING	03-03	22770	3.3	747	4.1	TROTACRE FARM	LOUVILLE	06-00	21476	3.3	705	4.6	NORTH VIEW FARM	EMERALD	04-05	35069	3.2	1130	2.9		
ARDROSSAN FARMS	T-ROSE	07-03	22229	3.3	744	4.2	XANADU GUERNSEYS	SONG	03-03	20406	3.5	705	3.9	EXCELSIOR FARM-FLECK	BARBARA	05-11	33809	3.3	1128	3.1		
ARDROSSAN FARMS	TRYKATE	07-08	23936	3.1	742	3.9	LYLE+LAUREEN WRIGHT	BRANDY	04-10	20777	3.4	703	4.5	Meadow Spring Holstn		13	04-04	36962	3.0	1127	2.9	

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