



Belgian meat breeds tour

- Destination: The province of Liège
- Time: Friday, 30 August 2019, from 8.00 to 18.30 h
- Total distance: 350 km

In Belgium, selection based on the animal's appearance and conformation has been practiced for many years. Breeders have thus developed the Piétrain pig and the Belgian Blue Beef cattle. Both are characterized by a high muscularity. In this tour, you will get to know these impressive animals and their breeding programs from up-close.

After leaving the congress centre, we are heading south to the province of Liège. the first stop is the "**Centre d'Insémination Artificielle Porcine**" (CIAP). This porcine insemination center is a reference in terms of pork production. It is home to boars from the Belgian **Piétrain breeding program**, who stay here temporarily. During their stay, frozen straws of semen are collected and they are used for cross-breeding genetic evaluation. The Piétrain breed originates from a small Belgian village, called Piétrain, in the mid of the 20th century. Since then, it has conquered the market as most important sire line in Belgium, but also in countries like Germany and Spain. The Piétrain is renowned for its very high yield of lean meat, but this is often associated with the presence of the halothane gene for Porcine Stress Syndrome. For this reason the use of purebred Piétrain is relatively rare and it is most commonly found in crossbred and synthetic terminal sire lines.

After lunch, we drive to **Les Waleffes**, home to a castle, but also home to One of the oldest rearing sites of the **Belgian blue cattle breed**. Originally, the Belgian Cattle population was characterized by the presence of dairy and of dual-purpose breeds : the Red of West Flanders, the White-Red of East Flanders, the White-Blue of Central and High Belgium. Since 1960, the economic context (surplus of milk and lack of meat) was favourable to meat production. The bigger obtained pieces of meat were tender and low-fat, which was very profitable to butchers, and considered more healthy for consumers. Moreover, improvement of caesarean technique allowed breeding double muscled calves. The majority of breeders evolved then to the meat purpose.

In this tour, we will give more insights in the history and the breeding strategies of these world-famous animal breeds.



Photo: <http://www.blancbleubelge-leswaleffes.be/fr>



Photo: <http://www.provincedeliege.be/>