

The aim of a Performance Test Station is to rear groups of bull calves in exactly the same conditions, eliminating the environmental impact, so that from the differences in performance their genetic potential emerges.



Every month the 15 bull calves coming from the quarantine are divided into 3 boxes containing 5 calves each. During the 7 months of testing the subjects are checked on their monthly weight increase. At the end of the test, at the age of about 12 months, they are evaluated on their meat potential and morphology.

Feeding

The ration is composed of two types of food: feed-stuff and hay. In order to maintain the homogeneity of the environmental conditions all the calves must get the same feeding. Therefore the feed-stuff is rationed and this allows to single out the calves which grow better thanks to their genetic potential, even if they received the same quantity of feed-stuff as the others. The quantities are controlled by an automatic feeder which recognises each bull calf by its magnetic collar.

The quantity of feed-stuff increases progressively with the age, from about 3 kg daily at the entry of the Genetic Station at 4.5 months of age, to about 6 kg daily at the end of the Test at 12 months of age. The feed-stuff used is not excessively energetic (starch content 37.7%) as the aim is to produce future breeding stock and not calves for fattening. Apart from the feed-stuff there is hay available ad lib.

Check-weighing

The calves are weighed once every 4 weeks with a total of 8 weighings in 7 months. In the phase of maximum increase the calves reach peaks of more than 2 kg a day. The bulls who finished the Performance Test in the year 2000 (164 calves) showed an average weight increase of 1.45 kg per day during 7 months, corresponding to a weight of 475 kg at the age of 12 months.

The single weighings, including the ones carried out during the quarantine phase, are used to calculate the Growth Index.

