



Two experimental systems of herds with 2 breeds are created: 40 cows in a full grazing system with 78 ha of permanent pasture; on the other side, 60 cows in a polyculture system-breeding with 55 ha of grassland and 105 ha of cropping. This last group is complemented with cereals directly produced on farm (barley, triticale, meslin) and some hays with or without alfalfa. During 10 years, animals, economic and environmental data are carefully analysed.

**The most interesting fact is, more than being naturally leading cows within their herd, the Montbeliarde maintains a good level of fecundity despite of restrictive feeding conditions.** Between 2005-2015, 75% of Montbeliarde have been successfully pregnant vs 55% for Holstein. If we look at production, the “red” cows have better resisted in critical times. A serious advantage according to Mr Fiorelli : *“In a 0-concentrate system, we need cows to produce and breed in spring, and on a 3 months period. That’s why we need very solid animals, persistent and able to have enough reserve to face the drought times”*.

### **# DYNAMIC GRAZING COWS**

In this farm located in the Vosges area, at 700 m of altitude, these 2 breeders count 60 Montbeliarde cows. They chose the breed for 2 main goals: value their permanent grasslands of 100 ha surrounding the farm and value the longevity of the breed.

The two associates appreciate the behaviour of the Montbeliarde when grazing **“more dynamic. They don’t get any loss in their body condition when they go for grazing”**. On his farm where pasture land can go from 600 m up to 900 m, the breeder describes how easily the Montbeliarde cows can move and walk and thus value rough lands. They go for long walk to look for grazing in faraway areas from milking premises. *“They often walk 1 km way back and can go up to 1.6km sometimes”*.

These long walks do not seem to tire them. As evidence, 40% of them are in 4<sup>th</sup> lactation and more (national average for all breeds 22%). And another asset of the breed out of longevity is their muscularity *“in good condition, first for the added value for beef but also because we have noticed they recover better after a mastitis for instance”*.

### **# EVEN WITHOUT CONCENTRATE, THEY STILL GO WELL**

In the western part of France, this organic farm of 65 ha counts 70 Montbeliarde cows fed with NO concentrates since 2014. Even if scores are not at their best (Milk and Contents), the herd is in good condition (no cells, very few veterinarian costs) and a gross operating surplus of 100,000 € per year.

After having worked with Holstein and Normand, Raphael has decided to go for Montbeliarde. In 2011, when turning slowly to organic system, he was deeply convinced the breed would accept the change : no more maize and course for an extensive grazing system. And at the end, no more concentrate at all for the dairy cows. **“The dual-purpose of the Montbeliarde cow is a real advantage for my system. I need solid cows with “chest” to ingest and muscle to be able to compensate in case of tough times”**. **“The Montbeliarde cow is able to increase her milk production even though it is not at the standard top level.** When she is sick, she slows down to recover whilst Holstein continues to produce”.

There is very few clinical mastitis (2% of cows, 0% recurrence). Raphaël uses homeopathy and phototherapy to reinforce immunity. [...]

**“Temperament is part of explanation of longevity of my cows”**. *“They are strong enough to always stand up”*. [...] He is now interested for a criterion which could be named as *“ability for grazing”*. This is surely linked to temperament. Some cows are more active than others to go and find their feed.”

### **# PUNCHY AND PRODUCTIVE**

Since 2004, the farm has grown significantly (x 4 for Milk and x 2 for size). [...] in order to make work easier and to increase productivity. *“We need reactive cows, punchy and easy to milk.” “The Montbeliarde is hardy... In 2004, they adapted very well to cubicles, and 3 years ago, we have gathered two herds: 230 heads without any loss “*

In this farm, cows milk hard. They are producing 10,000 kg in average. *“The low production is our first cause of culled cows”*. They produce a lot thanks to their dairy potential but also thanks to a very efficient feeding. The automat can

distribute 8 times per day a 700 kg portion, and same diet for all cows: the ones producing, the freshly calved and the dry ones.

Here animals are in good body condition. Milk, contents (Prot. 43 and Fat 34), no health issues, no mastitis, punch: his Montbeliarde cows are really on top!

### **# STILL ACTIVE EVEN WITH ROBOT**

In his farm counting 55 milking cows at 9,000 kg, in the west part of Vosges region, Gregory has invested in completely new stall. Free stalls, slatted floor and above all milking robot.

*Planet Montbeliarde:* Wonderful weather today and no cows outside?

*Gregory Mallard (GM) :* they get used to go out during the night actually. Moreover, our stalls and equipment are so comfortable they like to stay in. Six months ago, they have started their first milking at robot. They have adapted quicker than us. I did not even have culled cow because of bad adaptation. I had listed 7 cows I expected too nervous for robot. On the contrary, the technician advised me to keep them. He was right: they are still milking today.

*Planet Montbeliarde:* 4.5 passageway for 2.8 milking per day, it is quite exceptional. Is it related to their temperament?

*GM :* If we are considering temperament inside the stall and dynamism, for sure the “soft ” cows are not adequate for robot. They wait and they are more sensitive to clinical mastitis since they remain lay down longer and have more milk in their udder. The best ones are the ones you don't remark, they just go to milking robot by themselves without being pushed. [...]

*Planet Montbeliarde:* This capacity to adapt, can you check it on the performance of the herd?

*GM:* I won 500 kg of milk per cow the first year; no impact on cells and feet and legs getting better and better. Now, I am very aware of feet and legs, a trait related to dynamism and longevity. With good feet and legs, the cow walks more and goes regularly at robot. The soft ones are often the ones with bad feet and legs. In future, I want to take more advantage of grazing by renewing the grasslands around my premises with more palatable mix. And even with milking robot, grazing is not a problem, there is no delay since we go up to 2.6 milking per day.

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