

BREED: Charolais and Salers cattle; Limousine sheep

NAME OF THE VISIT: Visit to the Herbipôle, Laqueuille site

DATE OF THE VISIT: Wednesday, October 8, 2025

CONTACT NUMBER: 04.73.22.01.10

DESCRIPTION OF THE HERD AND THE FARMING SYSTEM IN AN EXPERIMENTAL SITE

Farm history

The Herbipôle brings together all the INRAE experimental facilities for ruminants in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, spread over 3 sites: Laqueuille and Theix in Puy-de-Dôme, and Marcenat in Cantal.

At the Herbipôle, there are 70 permanent staff members, including 20 based at the Laqueuille site. Since 2018, the Laqueuille site farm has operated under an Organic Farming (OF) system.

Herd description

At the Laqueuille site:

180 suckler cows: 60 Salers, 60 Charolais, 30 organic (Salers and Charolais crossed with Angus), and 30 off-season cows (Salers, Charolais)
380 Limousine ewes: 200 conventional ewes and 180 organic ewes (crossed with Suffolk)
567 hectares of permanent grassland, including 120 hectares organic, located between 1,000 and 1,500 m in altitude.

Main productions and activities complementary to livestock farming

Meat production from sheep and cattle herds.
For the organic herd, fattening of young cattle exclusively on grazed or harvested grass.

Our missions

Innovate in ruminant farming systems in mountain grassland areas by enhancing the use of pasture to ensure meat quality and improve their positive impact on the environment.

Collection of experimental data

Phenotyping tools: weighing troughs (Biocontrol®), automatic scales to estimate milk production of suckler cows, experimental slaughterhouse, weather stations, devices for measuring soil carbon fluxes, measurement of methanogenesis

Technical data

Sheep:

Prolificacy: 1.8; Productivity: 1.6; Number of lambings in 2024: 389; Average weaning weight: 14 kg; Total mortality rate: 13.7%

Cattle:

Average milk production of suckler cows: Salers 9 kg/day and Charolais 7 kg/day; CI (calving interval): between 365 and 370 days

Grasslands:

Grass height measurements
Meteorological records (rainfall, temperature sums)
Average production of 700 to 800 T of hay
Biodiversity between 30 and 80 plant species in organic plots