

Production development of Icelandic lamb



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Lamb meat is the main product from the Icelandic sheep farming and productivity has changed markedly in the last decades. The main reasons are more knowledgeable farmers and an effective breeding program.

The average growth rate of the Icelandic lambs on good pastures is 250-300 g/day and they should reach 40-45 kg live weight in 4-5 months.

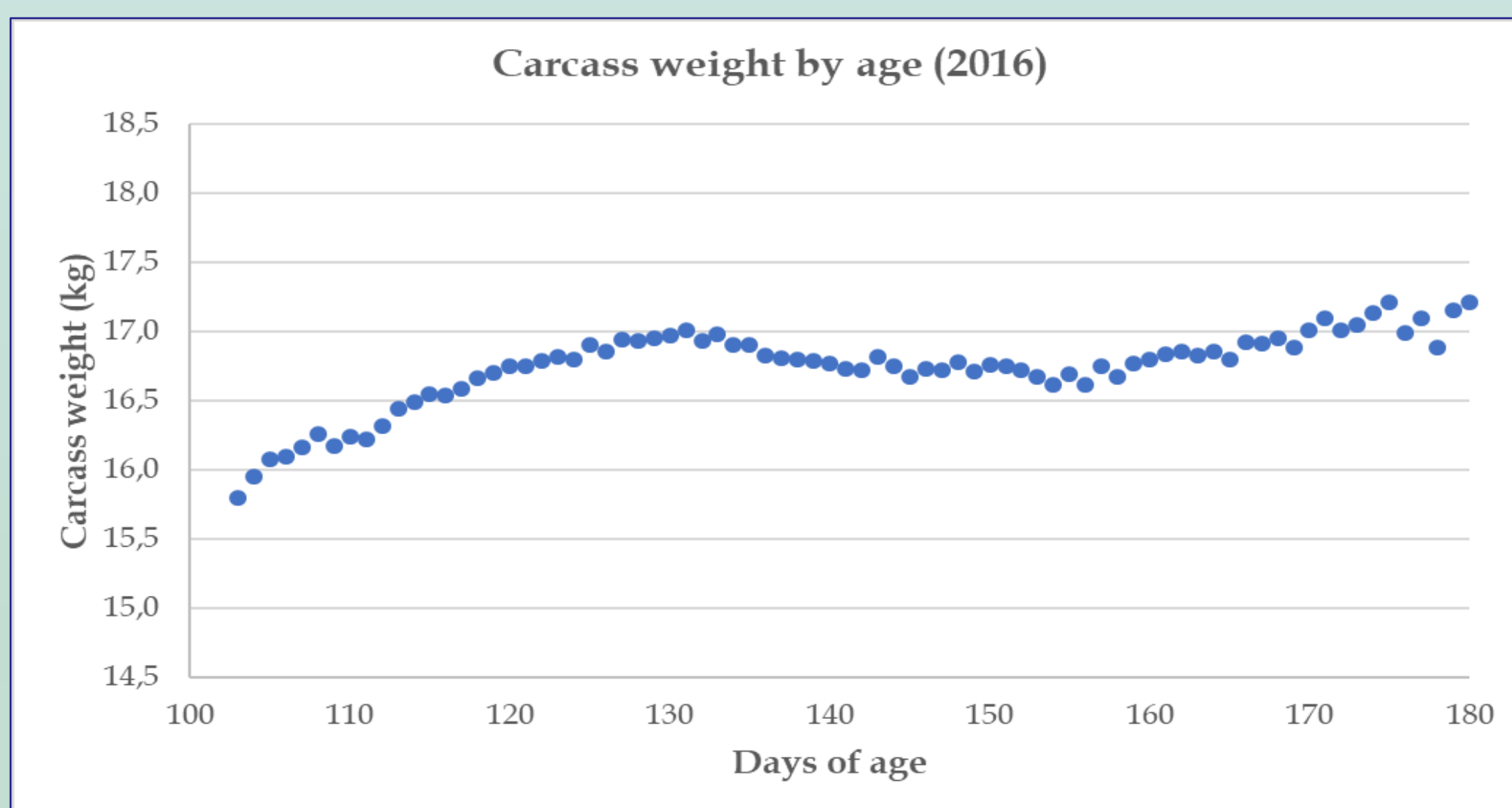


Figure 1. Average carcass weight by slaughter age. Average age is 140 days

Total meat production (based on slaughtered lambs) per winter fed ewe in 1955 was 10,6 kg and had increased to 19,3 kg in 2015.



Figure 2. Left: Two carcasses classified with good and poor conformation in 1981. Right: Carcasses with excellent (E) conformation in 2014

The EUROP classification system was introduced in 1998. The EUROP scores were subsequently used for breeding value estimation for carcass quality.

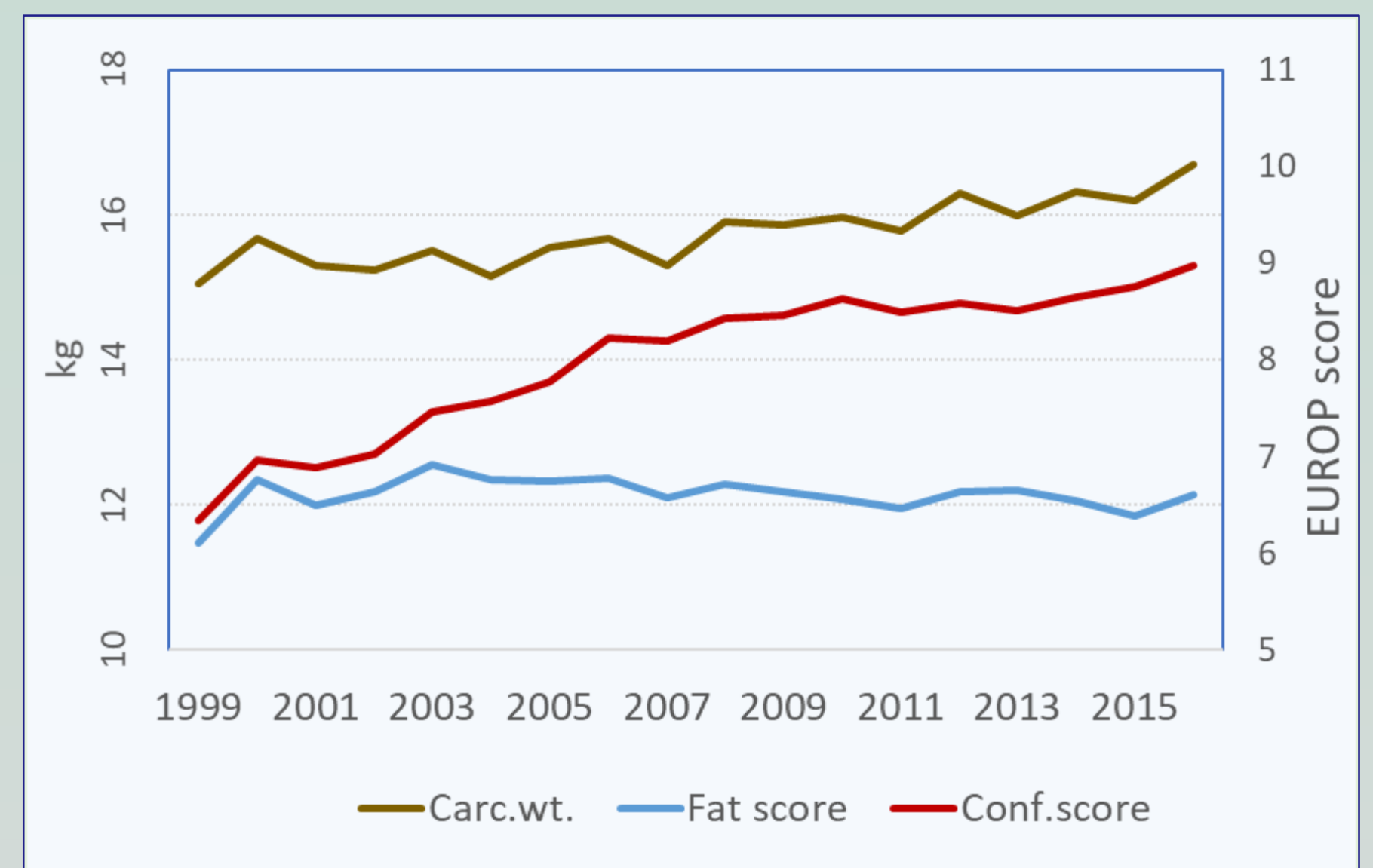


Figure 3. Average carcass weight (left axis) and EUROP scores (scale 1-15) for fat and conformation (right axis) 1999-2016

The current breeding program has changed the conformation and increased the ratio of muscle to fat and bone in lamb carcasses.

