

The Myostatin gene: an overview of mechanisms of action and its relevance to livestock animals

Article

Accepted Version

Aiello, D., Patel, K. and Lasagna, E. (2018) The Myostatin gene: an overview of mechanisms of action and its relevance to livestock animals. *Animal Genetics*, 49 (6). pp. 505-519. ISSN 1365-2052 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/age.12696>
Available at <http://centaur.reading.ac.uk/77388/>

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See [Guidance on citing](#).

To link to this article DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/age.12696>

Publisher: Wiley

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the [End User Agreement](#).

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

CentAUR

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

1 **Review: The *Myostatin* gene: an overview of mechanisms of action and its**
2 **relevance to livestock animals**

3 D. Aiello¹, K. Patel² and E. Lasagna¹

4

5 *¹ Dipartimento di Scienze Agrarie, Alimentari e Ambientali, Università degli Studi di*
6 *Perugia, Borgo XX Giugno 74, 06121, Perugia, Italy*

7 *² School of Biological Sciences, University of Reading, Berkshire, RG6 6UB, United*
8 *Kingdom*

9

10 Corresponding author: Emiliano Lasagna. Fax: +39 075 5857122. Tel: +39 075
11 5857102. E-mail address: emiliano.lasagna@unipg.it

12

13

14

15 **Summary**

16 Myostatin, also known as Growth Differentiation Factor 8, a member of the
17 Transforming Growth Factor-beta (TGF- β) super-family is a negative regulator of
18 muscle development. Myostatin acts at key points during pre- and post-natal life of
19 amniotes which ultimately determine the overall muscle mass of an animal. Mutations
20 have already demonstrated the impact of attenuating Myostatin activity on muscle
21 development. A number of large animals including cattle, sheep, dogs and humans
22 display the 'double muscled' phenotype due to mutations in the Myostatin gene. Here
23 we firstly give an overview of the molecular pathways regulated by Myostatin that
24 control muscle development. Then we describe the natural mutations and their
25 associated phenotypes as well as the physiological influence of altering Myostatin
26 expression in livestock animals (cattle, sheep, goat, horse, pig, rabbit and chicken).
27 Knowledge of null alleles and polymorphisms in the *Myostatin* gene are of great
28 interest in the animal breeding field and it could be utilized to improve meat
29 production in livestock animals.

30

31 **Keywords:** double muscling, single nucleotide polymorphisms, muscle hypertrophy,
32 muscle hyperplasia, meat production.

33

34 **Introduction**

35 Myostatin

36 Myostatin (MSTN), also known as Growth and Differentiation Factor 8 (GDF8), is one
37 of the major regulators of skeletal muscle development (Beyer *et al.*, 2013). The
38 MSTN gene (*MSTN*) is highly conserved among mammalian species and it acts in an

39 almost unique manner to reduce muscle size. *MSTN*-deficient animals display an
40 increase in skeletal muscle mass known as double-muscling (DBM). Mutations in
41 *MSTN* have been described in numerous species including dog (Mosher *et al.*,
42 2007), sheep (Kijas *et al.*, 2007), cattle (Grobet *et al.*, 1997), pig (Stinckens *et al.*,
43 2008) as well as in one human (Schuelke *et al.*, 2004).

44

45 Myostatin signalling pathway and its control of skeletal muscle development
46 *MSTN* is expressed in many tissues (including the mammary gland) but most
47 prominently in skeletal muscle (Ji *et al.*, 1998). The *MSTN* has been highly conserved
48 throughout evolution and comprises 3 exons and 2 introns.

49 In all species reported in this review, *MSTN* exons code for a 375 amino acid latent
50 protein which undergoes significant post-translational modification in order to become
51 biologically active (Wolfman *et al.*, 2003). Firstly, the polypeptide undergoes
52 intracellular homodimerization through the formation of disulphide bonds. Thereafter
53 it is cleaved to form the N-terminal propeptide region and the C-terminal mature
54 region. The 12- KDa C-terminal mature fragment of *MSTN* initiates an intracellular
55 signalling cascade through its ability to bind and activate the Activin type II receptor
56 at the cell surface (ActRIIB and to a lesser extent ActRIIA). Subsequent
57 autophosphorylation of the ActRIIB leads to the recruitment and activation of low
58 affinity type I receptor for Activin ALK-4 or ALK-5. Activated type I receptor kinase
59 phosphorylates the transcription factors Smad2 and Smad3, allowing them to interact
60 with Smad4 (co-Smad) and translocate to the nucleus, to activate target gene
61 transcription. Importantly the activation of the *MSTN* receptor also inhibits Akt
62 (protein kinase B) activity, a major determinant in muscle protein synthesis and cell
63 proliferation. Enlargement of muscle fibre size, a process called fibre hypertrophy (or

64 simply hypertrophy) is in large part controlled by Akt activity (Trendelenburg *et al.*,
65 2009). Myogenic differentiation is a highly orchestrated sequential program that
66 ultimately generates mature skeletal muscle. Highly proliferative muscle precursors
67 which arise during embryogenesis differentiate into myoblasts. The commitment of
68 the myogenic lineage is regulated by Muscle Regulatory Factors (MRFs) a collective
69 group of helix-loop-helix transcription factors; namely, MyoD, Myf5, Myogenin and
70 MRF4 (Fig. 1). Additionally, exit from the cell cycle is a vital step during myoblast
71 differentiation (Bryson-Richardson & Currie, 2008).

72 MSTN regulates muscle development at key points during the process of pre-natal
73 muscle development: muscle precursor proliferation, myoblast proliferation and
74 differentiation. Studies by Amthor *et al.* (2002) have shown that ectopic expression (in
75 limb muscle) of *MSTN* down regulates *Pax3*; a key marker of proliferating muscle
76 precursors (Amthor *et al.*, 2002). Additionally, *MSTN* upregulates p21 expression,
77 which ultimately inhibits proliferation of MyoD expressing myoblasts (Thomas *et al.*,
78 2000). Of relevance to this review is the relationship between MyoD activity and the
79 expression of *MSTN*. MyoD is an important regulator of *MSTN* expression during
80 myogenesis. This is demonstrated by a critical role of E-box motifs that were
81 identified in the *MSTN* promoter region; these motifs are known to be the binding
82 sites for basic helix-loop-helix transcription factors (MRFs) (Hu *et al.*, 2013).

83 The interrelationship between MyoD and *MSTN* ensure that promiscuous
84 differentiation mediated by an over-active MyoD induced cascade is checked by the
85 up-regulation of *MSTN*. Therefore *MSTN* serves to limit the size of both the myoblast
86 precursor (*Pax3*⁺/*MyoD*⁺) and myoblast (*Pax3*⁻/*MyoD*⁺) pools. Down-regulating the
87 expression of *MSTN* would lead to an expansion of both populations (Amthor *et al.*,
88 1999).

89 Examination of mouse development shows that muscle mass is determined by the
90 ability of myoblasts to form fibres, a process that occurs in two phases; primary and
91 secondary fibre formation. Matsakas *et al.* (2010) have shown an increase in the
92 myoblast pool, just before the fibre formation process in *Myostatin* null mouse (*Mstn*^{-/-}
93) embryos, which supports the development of extranumerary primary and secondary
94 myofibres. Any programme that promotes an increase in fibre formation is called fibre
95 hyperplasia or simply, hyperplasia (Amthor *et al.*, 2002). Therefore the *Mstn*^{-/-} mouse
96 displays hyperplasia as a consequence of developing an increased number of mono-
97 nucleated muscle cells (Matsakas *et al.*, 2010).

98 Shortly before birth, muscle in *Mstn*^{-/-} mice not only contain extra muscle fibres, but
99 also each fibre has undergone a small, albeit significant, increase in size (18%).

100 However this is not enough to explain why the muscles in this species often weigh 2-
101 3 times more than their normal counterpart (Omairi *et al.*, 2016). The resolution to
102 this issue comes by examining the size of each muscle fibre in adult mice. This
103 reveals that in the mouse, the increased muscle mass has arisen due to a
104 combination of a pre-natal increase in the number of fibres (hyperplasia) and a
105 precocious post-natal increase (43%) in the size of each fibre (hypertrophy)
106 (McPherron & Lee, 1997).

107 These studies are extremely insightful when attempting to determine the cellular
108 mechanism underpinning double muscling in large mammalian species harbouring a
109 *MSTN* mutation (Elashry *et al.*, 2012). They predict that for an animal to develop fibre
110 hyperplasia and a small degree of hypertrophy as a consequence of a *MSTN*
111 mutation, the gene must normally be expressed and properly translated into a mature
112 form during pre-natal development. However, in order to display significant fibre
113 hypertrophy these conditions need to be satisfied during post-natal life. If the mouse

114 is taken as a guide, then changes in fibre number and small changes in fibre
115 diameter (less than 20%) can be explained by pre-natal action of MSTN. In cattle,
116 very low levels of MSTN are detected from day 15 to day 29 embryos, and increased
117 expression is detected from day 31 onwards (Kambadur *et al.*, 1997). The increase
118 of *MSTN* expression in the bovine embryos is thought to occur at a gestational stage
119 when primary myoblasts are starting to fuse and differentiate into myofibres.
120 Therefore the null mutation in the bovine *MSTN* lead to hyperplasia.

121

122 Double muscling phenotypes

123 The term hypertrophy has often been used to describe large mammalian species,
124 which display at the gross anatomical level, the enlargement of muscle.
125 Mechanistically this term has been used loosely, since in many cases enlargement of
126 muscle is solely through pre-natal muscle hyperplasia without any post-natal fibre
127 hypertrophy.

128 DBM in large animals has been reported in several species. Generally, muscle with a
129 large superficial area tends to be the most enlarged, while deeper muscles tend to be
130 reduced in size relative to normal muscle (Ouhayon & Beaumont, 1968). Large
131 commercially important DBM animals, especially cattle, have an excellent
132 conformation and an extremely high carcass yield, coinciding with a reduced internal
133 organ mass (Fiems, 2012).

134 However, these animals are more susceptible to respiratory disease, urolithiasis,
135 lameness, nutritional stress, heat and dystocia resulting in lower robustness (Holmes
136 *et al.*, 1973). Also the reproductive performance can be influenced by hypertrophy:
137 i.e. in the South Devon breed, the gestation period for DBM calves is longer, resulting
138 in offspring with higher birth weights than the normal calves, also evidenced by the

139 higher instances of dystocia with high mortality rates if births are unassisted; the
140 findings highlighted therefore that the segregating alleles at the *MSTN* have
141 significant effects on calving ease in this breed (Wiener *et al.*, 2002).
142 DBM cattle showed signs of fatiguing faster than normal cattle during forced
143 exercise; relating to metabolic acidosis, because of a reduced blood circulation
144 leading to a deficiency in the transport of oxygen and a reduction of aerobic
145 metabolic activity in the muscle (Holmes *et al.*, 1973). DBM cattle have in fact an
146 increase in the proportion of fast twitch glycolytic fibres, resulting in a faster and more
147 glycolytic phenotype (Girgenrath *et al.*, 2005).
148 Mutations in the *MSTN* are responsible for DBM in other large animals including one
149 case in humans. In the latter, Schuelke *et al.* (2004), observed that a G to A transition
150 at nucleotide gIVS1+5 caused extraordinary muscling in a young boy, especially in
151 the thighs and upper arms. No health problems were reported in the patient and the
152 testosterone and IGF-1 levels were normal. In dogs known as "bully" whippets, a 2-
153 bp deletion was discovered in the third exon of the *MSTN* is associated with the DBM
154 phenotype. This deletion removes nucleotides 939 and 940 within exon three and
155 leads to a premature stop codon at amino-acid 313 instead of the normal cysteine,
156 removing 63 amino acids from the predicted 375-aa protein (Mosher *et al.*, 2007). A
157 gene targeting approach using the CRISPR/Cas9 system has been used to create
158 *MSTN* null Beagles; although mutant dogs displayed the DMB phenotype, very little
159 detail is available regarding their cellular phenotype (Zou *et al.*, 2015). Due to the
160 effects of *MSTN* on muscle mass, growth and other traits, the variations in *MSTN*
161 expression levels in skeletal muscles are of great interest in the animal breeding
162 field. Knowledge of null alleles and polymorphisms in the *MSTN* has been utilized to
163 improve the selection of beef cattle and sheep (Georges, 2010). The aim of this

164 section of the review is to describe known double-muscling in livestock animals that
165 harbour *MSTN* mutations.

166

167 Mutations in the Myostatin gene in cattle

168 Monogenic determination of muscular hypertrophy in Belgian Blue cattle was first
169 described in the 1980's (Hanset & Michaux, 1985; Grobet *et al.*, 1997). Double
170 muscling was shown to be inherited as a single major autosomal locus which
171 nevertheless was affected by several modifier loci manifesting in incomplete
172 penetrance. The causal loss of function mutation in Belgian Blue *MSTN*, located on
173 chromosome 2, was first reported by Grobet (1997) followed shortly thereafter by the
174 study of McPherron and Lee who not only substantiated the finding of Grobet but
175 also reported a missense mutation in exon 3 in the Piedmontese breed *MSTN*
176 (McPherron & Lee, 1997). Approximately 20 different types of genetic variants
177 (deletions, insertions and nucleotide substitutions, also known as single nucleotide
178 polymorphisms - SNPs) have been identified in the bovine *MSTN*. Some of these
179 genetic variants give rise to muscular hypertrophy by inactivation of the gene (Grobet
180 *et al.*, 1997). Mutated alleles and inactive *MSTN* have a significant association with
181 growth speed and carcass favourite traits, so these polymorphisms could be used in
182 beef cattle in order to increase the quality and quantity of meat (Mirhoseini & Zare,
183 2012). In the view of quality meat production, this is an outstanding trait, since these
184 animals produce not just more, but leaner and more tender meat (Kobolák & Gócza,
185 2002). The carcass and meat quality traits are superior in these animals because of a
186 reduction in fat (decreased by 50%), muscle mass increase (by 20%) lower
187 proportions of bone and also less connective tissue, which contributes to tenderness
188 (McPherron & Lee, 1997; Vincenti *et al.*, 2007). However, dystocia-related problems

189 are often observed in DBM cattle because hyperplasia occurs before birth, resulting
190 in larger calves (Deveaux *et al.*, 2001). Homozygous DBM animals manifest more
191 problems of dystocia than heterozygous. Therefore in order to generate homozygous
192 animals and at the same time keep costs down as well as reducing calve death
193 probability, it is worth considering mating heterozygous animals (Bellinge *et al.*,
194 2005).

195 A summary of the detected genetic variants in cattle is reported in Table 1.

196

197 Double muscled cattle breeds

198 Belgian Blue

199 The breed in which this muscular hypertrophy and its effects have been analysed
200 most extensively is the Belgian Blue breed, which has been systematically selected
201 for double muscling to the point of fixation in many herds. Research by Grobet *et al.*
202 (1997) revealed an 11-bp deletion (nucleotides 821-831) in the open reading frame of
203 the Belgian Blue *MSTN* allele which results in the loss of 3 amino acids (275, 276,
204 and 277) and a frameshift after amino acid 274. The frameshift leads to a stop codon
205 after amino acid 287. Work by Wegner *et al.* (2000) showed that *Semitendinosus*
206 from Belgian Blue was 1.6 times the weight of normal breeds solely due to an
207 increase in muscle fibre number. Indeed, muscle fibre size from the Belgian Blue was
208 actually smaller than other breeds (Wegner *et al.*, 2000). Furthermore, these animals
209 have less collagen and connective tissue than the normal animals. The carcass fat
210 content in these animals is significantly lower than in normal cattle, especially
211 intramuscular fat (marbling) being influenced by the DBM phenotype with a strong
212 reduction of subcutaneous and internal fat tissues (Mirhoseini & Zare, 2012). The
213 results of many studies in fact have indicated that *MSTN* plays key roles in not only

214 myogenesis but also adipogenesis. *MSTN* deletion and inhibition in animals mainly
215 lead to increased muscle mass and reduced fat mass (Deng *et al.*, 2017).
216 In beef cattle production, crossing with Belgian Blue cattle shows that although the
217 gene is recessive and monofactorial, its effect is apparent even in heterozygous
218 animals due to its partial dominance (Kobolák & Gócza, 2002).
219 The same mutation was also found in the Asturiana de los Valles (AV), a Spanish
220 beef cattle breed. *MSTN* polymorphisms in the AV breed have been described and
221 its diffusion into the breed has been continuous due to economic reasons (Grobet *et*
222 *al.*, 1997).
223
224 Piedmontese
225 In Piedmontese cattle the double-muscling phenotype is an inherited condition
226 associated with a G to A mutation on nucleotide 938 (in exon 3) which translates to
227 C313Y in a highly conserved cysteine-knot structural motif region of the protein. This
228 is in the pre-helix loop, a region known to be important for ALK4/5 receptor
229 interaction (Cash *et al.*, 2012). The mutation alters the function of MSTN, which
230 disrupts a disulphide bridge that is essential for the correct conformation of the
231 protein (Kambadur *et al.*, 1997). This breed has been systematically selected for
232 double muscling to the point of fixation in many herds (> 96% homozygous in the
233 Piedmonte region in Italy), but variability in muscle mass is still present (Miretti *et al.*,
234 2013). Several studies support the notion that the double muscling phenotype, a
235 partially recessive trait, causes the relatively large effects on carcass conformation,
236 without a negative effect on calving, compared with animals with no copies of the
237 mutated allele (Casas *et al.*, 1998).

238

239 Marchigiana

240 The Marchigiana is one of the most important Italian beef cattle breeds and it is
241 renowned for its large body size, high weight daily gains and superior carcass
242 dressing percent. Marchigiana breed have a G to T transversion mutation at
243 nucleotide 874 in exon 3 (g.874G>T), translating to E291X in the MSTN. This point
244 mutation has a remarkable effect on the MSTN as it changes a codon for glutamic
245 acid into a stop codon (Marchitelli *et al.*, 2003). In Marchigiana, as in the other double
246 muscling breeds, the *MSTN* genotypes yield three different and distinct phenotypes.
247 The homozygous G/G displays the normal phenotype whereas the T/T genotype
248 manifests as a double muscled body shape while maintaining its small frame, and is
249 frequently associated with skeletal defects and serious survival problems due to
250 macroglossia and hypoplasia of the heart, lungs and other vital organs. The
251 heterozygous genotype (G/T) produces a well-muscled and large body structure and
252 excellent conformation without any of the above mentioned defects. Therefore, the
253 heterozygous animals are frequently selected as sires (Cappuccio *et al.*, 1998).
254 Moreover heterozygous animals show a better meat quality than animals with a
255 normal genotype (Vincenti *et al.*, 2007). Therefore they could be useful for breeders
256 to plan the matings to obtain a higher number of heterozygous animals. Obviously
257 this is possible only if the genotype at the *MSTN* locus of each animal is available.
258 Additionally two different SNPs have been found in the promoter region: g.-371T>A
259 and g.-805G>C, although Sarti *et al.* (2014) reported that these substitutions may not
260 be useful to be considered in the selection criteria, because there is no correlation
261 with productive traits or due to their homozygous genotype.

262

263 Other cattle breeds

264 An 11 bp deletion (nt821(del11)) resulting in a truncation of the bioactive C-terminal
265 domain of the protein has been found in Blonde d'Aquitaine, Limousine, and
266 Parthenaise and Rubia Gallega breeds (Kambadur *et al.*, 1997; Dunner *et al.*, 2003).
267 A recent study (Bouyer *et al.*, 2014) identified an unexpected mutation in the *MSTN*
268 in Blonde D'Aquitaine cattle. The mutant allele is highly expressed leading to an
269 abnormal transcript consisting of a 41-bp inclusion between the exons 2 and 3, with a
270 premature termination codon predicted to translate into a protein lacking the entire
271 bioactive region.

272 An additional transversion mutation (g.433C>A) in Limousine breed has been
273 described that was shown to be functionally associated with the increased muscle
274 mass and carcass yield without any associated reproductive disadvantages (Sellick
275 *et al.*, 2007; Esmailizadeh *et al.*, 2008; Vankan *et al.*, 2010).

276 As in Piedmontese cattle, a G to A transition at nucleotide position 938 has been
277 reported in Gasconne (Kambadur *et al.*, 1997; Dunner *et al.*, 2003). An
278 insertion/deletion at position 419 replacing 7 bp with an unrelated stretch of 10 bp
279 was reported in Maine-Anjou cattle, resulting in a premature stop codon in the N-
280 terminal latency-associated peptide at amino-acid position 140 (nt419 (del7- ins10))
281 (McPherron & Lee, 1997). Additionally, a transversion (G to T) at nucleotide position
282 676, also causing a premature stop codon in the same N-terminal latency-associated
283 peptide at amino-acid position 226 (E226X) was identified in the same breed (Grobet
284 *et al.*, 1997). Charolaise and Limousine have a C to T transition at nucleotide position
285 610 yielding a premature stop codon in the N-terminal latency associated peptide at
286 amino-acid positions 204 (Q204X) (Cappuccio *et al.*, 1998). In addition to the genetic
287 variants found in *Bos taurus*, 14 polymorphisms (three in exon one, seven in exon
288 two, and four in exon three) have been reported in the coding part of the *MSTN* in

289 Nellore cattle (*Bos indicus*) genome. However, whether these polymorphisms are
290 functional mutations still remains to be elucidated (Grisolia *et al.*, 2009).

291

292 Double muscling in sheep

293 The *MSTN* is located at the end of the long arm (2q32.2 locus) on chromosome 2 in
294 the sheep (*Ovis aries*) (Bellinge *et al.*, 2005). During the past decade a total of 77
295 *MSTN* SNPs have been reported in various sheep breeds such as Texel, Norwegian
296 Spælsau, commercial New Zealand sheep breeds and Latvian Darkhead (Kijas *et al.*,
297 2007, Sjakste *et al.*, 2011; Han *et al.*, 2013), and the majority of these SNPs are
298 located in the non-coding regions of the gene. The exception is a 1-bp deletion
299 identified in nucleotide position 960 in the *MSTN* of Norwegian White Sheep and
300 c.101G/A in New Zealand Romney, c.120insA (Boman *et al.*, 2009). Lastly in 2018,
301 Trukhachev *et al.*, described for the first time eight variations in non-coding regions of
302 *MSTN* in the Stavropol Merino, a breed used for meat production in Russia. A
303 summary of the detected genetic variants in sheep is reported in Table 2.

304

305 Texel

306 Belgian Texel sheep muscle fibres show enlargement and therefore can be
307 considered to have fibre hypertrophy. Texels are utilized extensively as a terminal
308 crossbreed because of their exceptional conformation and potential to produce
309 higher-yielding carcasses with increased lean and decreased fat content (Leymaster
310 & Jenkins, 1993). Analysing the *MSTN* revealed no nucleotide differences in the
311 coding regions between DBM and normally muscled breeds (Kijas *et al.*, 2007). This
312 suggests that genetic variation located outside the coding regions plays a more
313 important role in the regulation of muscle development in contrast to cattle, where

314 *MSTN* loss of function variants have been found within the three coding exons
315 (Grobet *et al.*, 1997). Quantitative trait locus (QTL) analysis in Texel sheep
316 characterized a mutation (g.6723G>A) in the 3' UTR (Untranslated Region) of the
317 *MSTN* on chromosome 2 which has an effect on muscle mass. This creates a target
318 site for *miR1* and *miR206*; microRNAs (miRNAs) that are highly expressed in skeletal
319 muscle (Kijas *et al.*, 2007). Other genetic variants have also been found including
320 c.*1232A, g+391G>T and another 18 SNPs: g.2449C>G; g.2379C>T; g.1405A>T;
321 g.1402G>A; g.1214C>T; g.1129C>T; g.41A>C; g.39T>C; g+474C>T; G+613T>C;
322 g+616G>A; g+619T>C; g+622T>C; g+632G>T; g+696C>T; g+3135C>T;
323 g+4036A>C; g+4044C>T (Kijas *et al.*, 2007).

324

325 Norwegian sheep

326 The DBM phenotype in Norwegian white sheep was described to have extraordinary
327 over-development of the muscles, particularly on the hindquarters. Investigations
328 showed that these animals have not only extremely low levels of subcutaneous fat,
329 but also decreased internal fatty tissues. The DBM animals had lower bone mass
330 compared with the wild type animal. Sequence analysis revealed a 1-bp deletion in
331 the *MSTN* at nucleotide position 960 in DBM individuals. The deletion of a G residue
332 (c.960delG) disrupted the reading frame from amino acid 320 onwards and produced
333 a premature stop codon at amino acid position 359 (compared to position 375 in the
334 wild type animals) (Boman & Vage, 2009).

335 The same *MSTN* 3'-UTR mutation (c.2360G>A) identified in Texel sheep was also
336 found in the Norwegian breed but with a less profound effect (Boman & Vage, 2009).
337 However a similar phenotype of increased muscle mass and fat was found in
338 Norwegian Spælsau sheep. The sequencing of the *MSTN* coding region revealed a

339 1-bp insertion at nucleotide position 120 (c.120insA) in DBM animals. The insertion of
340 an adenine residue disrupts the reading frame from amino acid position 40 onwards,
341 and generates a premature stop codon at amino-acid position 49 (Boman & Vage,
342 2009).

343

344 New Zealand

345 A comprehensive investigation of polymorphisms in *MSTN* in a diverse range of
346 sheep breeds (New Zealand Romney, Coopworth, Corriedale, Dorper, Perendale,
347 Suffolk, Merino, Dorset Down, Poll Dorset, Texel and other NZ cross-bred sheep)
348 was performed using polymerase chain reaction-single strand conformational
349 polymorphism (PCR-SSCP) analysis and DNA sequencing. A total of 28 nucleotide
350 substitutions were identified from nucleotide c.-1199 (in the promoter region) to
351 c.*1813 in the 3'UTR. Of these, three were located in the promoter region, three in
352 the 5'UTR, 11 in intron 1, five in intron 2 and five in the 3' UTR. Ten new substitutions
353 have been reported: c.-959C>T, c.-784A>G, c.373+563A>G, c.373+607A>G, c.374-
354 654G>A, c.374-54T>C, c.748-54T>C, c.*83A>G, c.*455A>G and c.*709C>A (Han *et al.*,
355 2013).

356 The other 18 substitutions had been reported previously. These include c.101G>A
357 which was already found in NZ Romney by Zhou *et al.* (2008) and also in Merino,
358 Corriedale and NZ cross-bred sheep (Clop *et al.*, 2006; Kijas *et al.*, 2007). In NZ
359 Romney a further two SNPs c.-2449G/C and c.-2379T/C were detected (Wang *et al.*,
360 2016). The SNP c.*123A observed in NZ cross-bred sheep was also reported in
361 Texel (Kijas *et al.*, 2007), Charollais sheep from Britain (Hadjipavlou *et al.*, 2008),
362 White Suffolk, Poll Dorset and Lincoln breeds from Australia and showed significant

363 association with DBM phenotype as well as the other substitution c.373+18 T>G,
364 reported in Texel sheep (Clop *et al.*, 2006).

365

366 Other sheep breeds

367 Zel sheep, a meat breed in northern Iran, has a polymorphism in intron 2 as does the
368 Iranian Baluchi sheep (Dehnavi *et al.*, 2012). Three polymorphic sites in Indian sheep
369 have been identified in the 5'UTR, exon 1 and exon 2 regions. Both SNPs in the
370 exonic region were found to be non-synonymous. The genetic variants c.539T>G and
371 c.821T>A were in the exon 1 and exon 2, respectively (Pothuraju *et al.*, 2015). All
372 these genetics variants are not significantly associated with DBM phenotype.

373

374 Myostatin polymorphisms in goat

375 Several studies investigated the allelic variation in the goat *MSTN*. A 5 bp indel (1256
376 TTTTA/-) was identified in 5'UTR region in Boer, Matou, Haimen and Nubi goat
377 breeds, and a substitution (1388 T/A) in exon 1 region was detected only in Boer
378 (Zhang *et al.*, 2012). Two novel single nucleotide polymorphisms were also identified
379 in Boer and Anhui white goat: g.197G>A, a substitution located in the 5'-UTR, and
380 345A>T in the exon 1 (Zhang *et al.*, 2013). A thorough investigation was conducted
381 in 22 different goat breeds (Inner Mongolia Cashmere, Liaoning Cashmere, Taihang
382 Mountain, Chengde Polled, Jining Grey, Tibetan, Chengdu Brown, Jianchang Black,
383 Guizhou White, Guizhou Black, Longlin, Duan goat, Leizhou, Matou, Yichang White,
384 Shannan White, Nanjiang Brown, Angora, Toggenburg, Nubian, Saanen and Boer
385 goat) and a total of eight SNPs were detected (A1980G, G1981C, A1982G, G1984T,
386 A2121G, T2124C, G2174A and A2246G) (Li *et al.*, 2006). Recently Nguluma *et al.*
387 (2018) detected a polymorphic site T298C in the Boer goat population: the authors

388 concluded that the potential association of this polymorphism in *MSTN* with growth
389 performance could not be confirmed and that other genes for growth could be
390 responsible for the observed variation. A summary of the detected genetic variants in
391 goat is reported in Table 3.

392

393 Myostatin polymorphisms in horse

394 Hosoyama *et al.* (2002) isolated and sequenced *MSTN* cDNA from a Thoroughbred
395 horse which was mapped to chromosome 18. Mutations in the equine *MSTN* have
396 been identified and are associated with racing phenotypes influencing racing
397 performance and muscle fibre proportions (Petersen *et al.*, 2013). Dall'Olio *et al.*
398 (2010) sequenced in 16 horse breeds (Rapid Heavy Draft, Noric, Bardigiano,
399 Haflinger, Lipizzan, Murgese, Tolfetano, Uruguayan Creole, Italian Saddle,
400 Maremmano, Quarter Horse, Salernitano, Andalusian, Ventasso, Italian trotter,
401 Thoroughbred horse) revealing seven SNPs: two transitions were located in the
402 promoter region at -646 (GQ183900: g.26T>C) and -156 (GQ183900: g.156T>C) bp
403 upstream from the start codon and are associated with breeds of different
404 morphological types. The g.26T>C SNP was polymorphic in 6/16 breeds with higher
405 observed frequency of the g.26C allele. The g.156T>C polymorphism was detected
406 in 11/16 breeds and was identified in homozygous condition in a few Bardigiano,
407 Haflinger, Noric, Rapid Heavy Draft, and Uruguayan Creole horses (Dall'Olio *et al.*,
408 2010). The other five SNPs were in intronic regions: four were localized in intron 1
409 and one in intron 2. Three of the SNPs of intron 1 (g.1634T>G, g.2115A>G, and
410 g.2327A>C) were also identified in Thoroughbred breeds (Petersen *et al.*, 2013). One
411 polymorphism (g.2115A>G) has been associated with sprinting ability and racing
412 stamina in Thoroughbred horses. The association between *MSTN* and horse racing

413 performances was further evidenced by Binns *et al.* (2010) and Tozaki *et al.* (2010).
414 Subsequently 15 Chinese breeds were studied to select the best Chinese domestic
415 breed to evaluate the potential racing performances (Li *et al.*, 2014). These studies
416 found six different SNPs in *MSTN*: two SNPs (g.26T>C and g.156T>C) in the
417 promoter region, two (g.587A>G and g.598C>T) in the 5'-UTR region, and two
418 (g.1485C>T, g.2115A> G) in intron-1 of the equine *MSTN*, respectively. The SNPs
419 g.587A>G and g.598C>T were novel whereas the others had been previously
420 reported (Petersen *et al.*, 2013).
421 Baron *et al.* (2012) described a genetic variant in exon 2 in some horse breeds. In
422 fact, they identified a substitution g.2279A>C in Arabians horses and a substitution
423 g.2478G>C in the Soraia breed horse.
424 Five polymorphisms (g.66495826T>C, g.66495696T>C, g.66493737T>C,
425 g.66495254C>T and g.66490010T>C) were recently observed (Stefaniuk *et al.*,
426 2016) in four Polish breeds (Arabians, Polish Konik, Hucul and Polish Heavy Draft).
427 The polymorphism g.66495254C>T (also known as g.598C>T), has been described
428 in Chinese horse breeds as well as in Polish Konik and Arabian horse breeds. The
429 g.66493737C>T polymorphism known to predict optimum distance in Thoroughbred
430 horses has been identified in four breeds in Egyptian bloodlines (Bower *et al.*, 2012)
431 which were introduced to Polish bloodstock through Egyptian stallions. The insertion
432 g.66495326_66495327Ins227 has been described for the first time in *MSTN* in
433 Thoroughbred horses. Recently, it has been found in the American Quarter Horse
434 (Petersen *et al.*, 2013), and in the Uruguayan Creole breeds (Dall'Olio *et al.*, 2014).
435 In the Quarter Horse breed, the Ins227 in *MSTN* is connected with changes to
436 *Gluteus medius* muscle fibre proportions. The higher Myosin Heavy Chain 2B fibre
437 type (fast contracting), is in line with pressure selection in Quarter Horse breed for

438 racing performance (Petersen *et al.*, 2013). A summary of the detected genetic
439 variants in horse is reported in Table 4.

440

441 Myostatin polymorphisms in pig

442 Jiang *et al.* (2002) reported three SNPs in porcine *MSTN* T>A, G>A and C>T, in the
443 promoter, intron 1 and exon 3, respectively. Only one mutation (T to A) located in the
444 region 383bp upstream of translation initiation site of porcine *MSTN* was associated
445 with average daily gain in the growing period (from 60 to 100 kg of live weight) in
446 Yorkshire pigs. Furthermore BW in pig with the heterozygous mutation (no AA was
447 found) was increased (Jiang *et al.*, 2002).

448 Stinckens *et al.* (2008) compared the *MSTN* sequence of Belgian Piétrain, which
449 shows a heavily muscled phenotype with five other breeds (Piétrain, Landrace, Large
450 White, Meishan and Wild Boar). Fifteen polymorphic loci were found, three of which
451 were located in the promoter region (g.435G>A, g.447A>G, and g.879T>A), five in
452 intron 1 and seven in intron 2. The SNP g.879T>A only appears in Chinese Meishan
453 pigs whilst the polymorphism located at position 447 of the porcine *MSTN* promoter
454 had a very high allele frequency in the Piétrain pig breed. A g.447A>G mutation
455 which is associated with the expression of the porcine *MSTN* occurs at the putative
456 myocyte enhancer factor 3 (MEF3) binding site on the negative DNA strand. This
457 mutation disrupts a putative MEF3 binding site (Stinckens *et al.*, 2008).

458 However, these results suggest that naturally occurring *MSTN* genetic variants
459 identified thus far in pigs do not have significant association with muscle phenotypes.
460 Nevertheless, a recent work, using an experimental approach has shown the role of
461 *MSTN* in the development of muscle in pigs. Qian *et al.* (2015) generated *MSTN*-
462 deficient Meishan pigs using zinc finger nucleases (ZFN) technology coupled with

463 somatic cell nucleus transfer. The resulting offspring show remarkable DBM
464 phenotype especially pronounced in the hindquarters. Muscle in the *MSTN* null pig
465 increased mass by 50-100%. Incredibly the muscle fibre size in the null pigs was
466 smaller than the wild type. All the increase in mass could be attributed to fibre
467 hyperplasia whereby some muscles from the null had twice the fibre number
468 compared to wild type. The animals displayed good overall health. As the technology
469 employed did not involve the introduction of any genetic material in to the genome
470 (e.g. selection markers), Qian *et al.* (2015) suggest that it is essentially the same as
471 double muscle cattle which are used for human consumption.

472 A summary of the detected genetic variants in pigs is reported in Table 5.

473

474 Myostatin polymorphisms in rabbit

475 Fontanesi *et al.* (2011) investigated the variability of the effects of *MSTN*
476 polymorphisms on rabbit production traits. Four single SNPs have been identified by
477 comparative sequencing of 14 rabbits representing breeds or lines having different
478 conformation and muscle mass: one rare synonymous SNP in exon 1 (c.108C>T),
479 one synonymous SNP in exon 2 (c.713T>A), one SNP in the 3'-untranslated region
480 (c.*194A>G) and another SNP in intron 2 (c.747+34C>T) in Belgian hare, Burgundy
481 fawn, Checkered giant and Giant grey.

482 In commercial hybrids, Qiao *et al.* (2014) detected a SNP (T to C) in the 5' regulatory
483 region, but no mutation sites were detected in the exons. The correlation analysis
484 showed that the mutation was associated with increased liver and carcass weight.
485 These results suggest that the mutations in the upstream regulatory region of the
486 *MSTN* are beneficial to the rabbit soma development, and the mutations can be used
487 as molecular markers for the selection of the meat quality in rabbits. Sternstein *et al.*

488 (2014) found polymorphisms in the *MSTN* in Giant Grey and NZ White breeds.
489 Comparative sequencing of these breeds revealed two SNPs located in the
490 regulatory region of the rabbit *MSTN* (c.-125T>C) and in intron 1 (c.373+234T>C).
491 A summary of the detected genetic variants in rabbit is reported in Table 6.

492

493 Myostatin polymorphisms in poultry

494 In chickens *MSTN* maps to 7p11 (Sazanov *et al.*, 1999), and like that of mammals is
495 composed of three exons (373 bp, 374 bp and 1567 bp, respectively) and two
496 introns. Gu *et al.* (2003) showed poultry *MSTN* not only regulates skeletal muscle
497 development, but also participates in the fat metabolism and disposition. This
498 research team identified seven SNPs: five were in the 5'-regulatory region (G167A,
499 T177C, G304A, A322G, and C334T) and two were in the 3'-regulatory region of
500 different chicken lines. These last two SNPs in the 3'-regulatory region of the *MSTN*
501 are A to T (7263) and A to G (6935). Ye *et al.* (2007) studied the association of *MSTN*
502 polymorphism with mortality rate, growth, feed conversion efficiency, ultrasound
503 breast depth, breast percentage, eviscerated carcass weight, leg defects, blood
504 oxygen level, and hen antibody titer to the infectious bursal disease virus in three
505 commercial broiler chicken lines. The *MSTN* had pleiotropic effects on broiler
506 performance. This conclusion was reached by the discovery of fourteen SNPs: seven
507 genetic variants in exon 1 (G2100A, G2109A, G2244C, A2283G, C2346T, C2373T,
508 A2416G), one in exon 2 (T4842G), three in exon 3 (C7434G, A7435G, C7436A), and
509 three in intron 1 and 2 (A4405C, A4405T and A4954G).

510 As the main function of *MSTN* is the regulation of skeletal muscle growth, Ye *et al.*
511 (2007) deemed that the non-synonymous SNP T4842G is associated with an amino
512 acid change in the *MSTN* and it could be responsible for variability in body weight.

513 The Bian chicken breed raised for dual purposes, is an important Chinese breed and
514 has a 234G>A in exon 1 of the *MSTN* (Zhang *et al.*, 2012). Other Chinese chicken
515 breeds (Jinghai, Youxi, and Arbor Acre) have shown four new mutations (A326G,
516 C334G, C1346T, G1375A) that were located in the 5'-regulatory region (Zhang *et al.*,
517 2012). Further studies on the growth traits show that the SNPs in chicken *MSTN* may
518 affect the abdominal fat weight and percentage, breast muscle weigh and
519 percentage, birth weight, and adult weight (Zhang *et al.* 2012). Zhiliang *et al.* (2004)
520 identified three SNPs in the 5' regulatory region and two SNPs in the 3' regulatory
521 region, and these differed in allele frequencies between breeds. They found that in
522 an F2 generation from a cross of broiler and silky chickens, homozygous genotypes
523 *AA* and *BB* at a locus in the 5' regulatory region have a higher abdominal fat weight
524 and abdominal fat percentage than *AB* genotype (Zhiliang *et al.*, 2004). The
525 upstream promoter region of *MSTN* was analysed in Wenshang Luhua chicken DNA.
526 Thirteen E-boxes were identified upstream of *MSTN* and the polymorphisms of E-
527 boxes were explored for the first time (Hu *et al.*, 2013).
528 Other interesting studies were carried out on ducks to investigate the association of
529 polymorphisms in *MSTN* with slaughter traits, breast muscle weight, breast muscle
530 percentage, leg muscle weight and leg muscle percentage. Analysis of the 5'
531 regulatory region of the *MSTN* showed that polymorphisms (753G>A, 658G>T and
532 235G>C) were associated with the breast muscle percentage and abdominal fat rate
533 (Lu *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore Xu *et al.* (2013) studied polymorphisms in Pekin duck,
534 and identified three significant variations. The first is a transition T to C in the ORF
535 (position 129) and revealed an association with breast muscle thickness. The second
536 SNP was located at 708 bp for the T/C mutation in the ORF and last 952T<C had a
537 significant association with the "Fossilia Ossis Mastodi, or dragon bone" length. In

538 Gaoyou ducks, a transition G>A at 2701bp in exon 3 of the *MSTN* is correlated with
539 the abdominal fat rate (Liu *et al.*, 2012). In Sansui duck, six SNPs were identified in
540 the first and the third exons (g.106G>A, g.120A>G, g.159G>A, g.5368G>A,
541 g.5389A>C and g.5410G>A) with four loci seemingly associated to leg muscle
542 weight, leg muscle percentage and dressing percentage (Zhao *et al.*, 2016).
543 A summary of the detected genetic variants in poultry is reported in Table 7.

544

545 Myostatin and future implications

546 According to some investigators, *MSTN* mutations are the main cause of
547 hypertrophy, with a lesser roles played by other gene mutations (Kobolák & Gócza,
548 2002). Inactivation of *MSTN* has therefore been proposed to be a strategy for
549 improving muscle growth of food animals and treating human diseases associated
550 with muscle weakness and dystrophy (Chen & Lee, 2016).

551 Research, especially on mice, has highlighted the potential of manipulating *MSTN*
552 signalling in order to promote muscle growth. In null mutants of this species, some
553 muscles are approximately three times their normal weight. Impressive as they are,
554 muscle enlargement in large mammals carrying a null mutation in the same gene, to
555 our knowledge, do not approach this level of muscle growth. Therefore it is important
556 to ascertain the molecular basis underpinning these different responses with a view
557 of translating these findings into increased meat production.

558 One picture that emerges through this review is that mutations that compromise
559 *MSTN* function have a consequence during development and give rise to
560 supernumerary muscle fibres (hyperplasia). However, one of the clear differences
561 between mice and large animals (cattle and pigs) is the post-natal phenotype. Mice
562 show considerable fibre hypertrophy whereas in both cattle and pigs display no

563 increase in fibre size. These findings need to be used as a benchmark for future work
564 on doubling muscle in large animals. First and foremost is the need to understand the
565 basis of muscle growth in large mammals. Here it is very important to use the correct
566 terms to describe the phenotype of animals, as often this can lead to
567 misinterpretations regarding mechanism. Often DBM animals are referred to as being
568 'Hypertrophic'. However this could infer fibre enlargement. As we have discussed,
569 especially in the case of cattle and pig, there is no fibre enlargement. We suggest
570 that accurate mechanistic descriptors are used when they have been precisely
571 established and without this proof a more generic term needs to be applied. We
572 suggest the use of the four following terms: 1) Muscle enlargement through
573 hyperplasia; 2) Muscle enlargement through hypertrophy; 3) Muscle enlargement
574 through hyperplasia and hypertrophy; 4) Muscle enlargement through unknown
575 cellular mechanisms.

576 Research is required to understand the mechanisms that underpin the role of MSTN
577 in post-natal muscle development in mammals, to answer the question as to why in
578 the absence of MSTN, fibres from mice undergo enlargement, whereas those from
579 large mammals do not. For a number of years the naturally occurring mutants in
580 cattle were our only reference model for large animals lacking MSTN. The lack of
581 fibre hypertrophy was usually explained by the presence of a secondary (to date
582 unidentified) modifying mutation that interfered with the post-natal effect but spared
583 the pre-natal phenotype. However the work by Qian *et al.* (2015) in the pig which
584 targets only the *MSTN* undermines the modifying gene idea. Therefore loss of
585 function mutation in both small and large animals leads to hyperplasia. However it is
586 only in mice that the mutation has an effect on muscle fibre size where it presents as
587 hypertrophy.

588 Clues to resolving this issue come from recent work in monkeys which shows that
589 MSTN and Activin act synergistically to inhibit fibre hypertrophy during adult life
590 (Latres *et al.*, 2017). Based on these findings we suggest that muscle fibres of both
591 cows and pigs are sensitive to Myostatin/Activin signalling, in a similar manner to
592 monkeys. But the issue that still needs to be resolved is why do fibres in adult cows
593 and pigs fail to enlarge in the absence of MSTN. The most parsimonious explanation
594 is that there is a partial redundancy relationship between MSTN and Activin; in the
595 absence of MSTN, the expression levels of Activin become elevated to such a
596 degree that in cows and pigs the latter can completely cover the loss of the former.
597 Examples of gene expression compensation by related molecules, similar to our
598 proposal are abound in mammalian biology (Barbaric *et al.*, 2007). One of the best
599 examples comes through the investigations of MRFs where genetic inactivation of
600 MyoD results in an up-regulation of the related gene-Myf5 (Rudnicki *et al.*, 1992).
601 The hypothesis outlined above has a number of important implications. Our assertion
602 of why the relationship between MSTN and Activin in cows and pigs is only partial
603 and not complete, come from the fact that loss of MSTN has some phenotypic
604 consequence (hyperplasia). Therefore compensation through an up-regulation of
605 Activin expression cannot have occurred during pre-natal life. The second implication
606 is that if there is a redundancy mechanism in mice, which must be very muted since
607 these animals develop a profound phenotype both during pre-natal and adult life. Our
608 suggestions can be validated by quantifying the levels of MSTN and Activin at
609 different developmental stages in both large and small animals, an avenue now
610 possible following the development of specific ELISA for MSTN and Activin (Latres *et*
611 *al.*, 2017).

612 For the meat industry and for the human health sector who focus on muscle growth,
613 the hypothesis outlined here advocates a strategy of dual MSTN and Activin
614 antagonism to promote the growth of the tissue. This could be achieved through the
615 use of a combination of molecules that specifically antagonise the activity of MSTN
616 and Activin (antibodies or protein specific propeptides) or a single protein which acts
617 at a signalling convergence point (at the receptor level through the deployment of a
618 ligand trap or blocking antibody (Omairi *et al.*, 2016, Lach-Trifilieff *et al.*, 2014).
619 Moreover for beef production it will be very interesting to better understand the role of
620 MSTN in adipogenesis; Deng *et al.* (2017) in fact reported that muscle and adipose
621 tissue develop from the same mesenchymal stem cells, and researchers have found
622 that MSTN is expressed in fat tissues and plays a key role in adipogenesis.
623 Finally *MSTN* is a prime target for transgenic approaches aimed at enhancing meat
624 production in livestock (Georges, 2010). Possible strategies for this outcome include
625 the generation of *MSTN* knock-out animals. Also more elaborate transgenic
626 approaches, such as targeting post-natal or sex specific inhibition of *MSTN* need to
627 be considered. Wang *et al.* (2017), reported the successful application of the
628 CRISPR/Cas9 system to engineer the goat genome through micro-injection of Cas9
629 mRNA and sgRNAs targeting *MSTN* in goat embryos. They demonstrate the utility of
630 this approach by disrupting *MSTN*, resulting in enhanced body weight and larger
631 muscle fiber size in Cas9-mediated gene modified goats. MSTN activity can also be
632 modified using non-genetic approaches using for example blocking antibodies or
633 ligand traps.

634

635 **Conclusions**

636 One picture that emerges through this review is that mutations that compromise

637 MSTN function have a consequence during development and give rise to
638 supernumerary muscle fibres (hyperplasia). However, one of the clear differences
639 between mice and large animals (cattle and pigs) is the post-natal phenotype. First
640 and foremost there is the need to understand the basis of muscle growth in large
641 mammals.

642 This review landscapes the genetics of DBM in mammalian species and chicken and
643 demonstrates the huge number of genetic variants present in animals of commercial
644 interest. It also highlights areas where greater research is required in order for
645 progress to be made concerning the role of MSTN in the regulation of muscle
646 development in economically important animals. Knowledge of null alleles and
647 polymorphisms in *MSTN* are of great interest in the animal breeding field and could
648 be utilized to improve the selection for meat production in livestock animals.

649

650 **Conflict of interest**

651 The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

652

653 **Acknowledgements**

654 The authors want to thank the three anonymous referees for their valuable comments
655 and constructive suggestions.

656

657 **References**

658 Amthor H., Christ B. & Patel K. (1999) Molecular mechanism enabling continuous
659 embryonic muscle growth - a balance between proliferation and differentiation.
660 *Development* **126**, 1041-53.

661 Amthor H., Huang R., McKinnell I., Christ B., Kambadur R., Sharma M. & Patel K.
662 (2002) The regulation & action of myostatin as a negative regulator of muscle
663 development during avian embryogenesis. *Developmental Biology* **251**, 241-57.

664 Barbaric I., Miller G. & Dear T.N. (2007) Appearances can be deceiving: phenotypes
665 of knockout mice. *Briefings in Functional Genomics* **6**, 91-103.

666 Baron E.E., Lopes M.S., Mendonça D. & Da Câmara Machado A. (2012) SNP
667 identification and polymorphism analysis in exon 2 of the horse myostatin gene.
668 *Animal Genetics* **43**, 229-32.

669 Bellinge R.H., Liberles D.A., Iaschi S.P., O'Brien P.A. & Tay G.K. (2005) Myostatin &
670 its implications on animal breeding: a review. *Animal Genetics* **36**, 1-6.

671 Beyer T.A., Narimatsu M., Weiss A., David L. & Wrana J.L. (2013) The TGF β
672 superfamily in stem cell biology and early mammalian embryonic development.
673 *Biochimica et Biophysica Acta* **1830**, 2268-79.

674 Binns M.M., Boehler D.A. & Lambert D.H. (2010) Identification of the myostatin locus
675 (MSTN) as having a major effect on optimum racing distance in the Thoroughbred
676 horse in the USA. *Animal Genetics* **41**, 154-8.

677 Boman I.A., Klemetsdal G., Blichfeldt T., Nafstad O. & Våge D.I. (2009) A frameshift
678 mutation in the coding region of the *myostatin* gene (*MSTN*) affects carcass
679 conformation and fatness in Norwegian White Sheep (*Ovis aries*). *Animal Genetics*,
680 **40**, 418–22.

681 Boman I.A. & Våge D.I. (2009) An insertion in the coding region of the myostatin
682 (*MSTN*) gene affects carcass conformation and fatness in the Norwegian Spaelsau
683 (*Ovis aries*). *BMC Research Notes* **2**, 98.

684 Bouyer C., Forestier L., Renand G. & Oulmouden A. (2014) Deep intronic mutation
685 and pseudo exon activation as a novel muscular hypertrophy modifier in cattle. *Public*
686 *Library of Science One* **9**, 97399.

687 Bower M.A., Mcgivney B.A., Campana M.G., Gu J., Andersson L.S., Barrett E., Davis
688 C.R., Mikko S., Stock F., Voronkova V., Bradley D.G., Fahey A.G., Lindgren G.,
689 Machugh D.E., Sulimova G. & Hill E.W. (2012) The genetic origin and history of
690 speed in the Thoroughbred racehorse. *Nature Communications* **3**, 643.

691 Bryson-Richardson R.J. & Currie P.D. (2008) The genetics of vertebrate myogenesis.
692 *Nature Reviews Genetics* **9**, 632-46.

693 Cappuccio I., Marchitelli C. & Serracchioli A. (1998) A G T transversion induces a
694 stop codon at the mh locus in hypertrophic Marchigiana beef subjects. *Animal*
695 *Genetics* **29**, 51.

696 Casas E., Keele J.W., Shackelford S.D., Koohmaraie M., Sonstegard T.S., Smith
697 T.P., Kappes S.M. & Stone R.T. (1998) Association of the muscle hypertrophy locus
698 with carcass traits in beef cattle. *Journal of Animal Science* **76**, 468–73.

699 Cash J.N., Angerman E.B., Kattamuri C., Nolan K., Zhao H., Sidis Y., Keutmann H.T.
700 & Thompson T.B. (2012) Structure of myostatin·follistatin-like 3: N-terminal domains
701 of follistatin-type molecules exhibit alternate modes of binding. *Journal of Biological*
702 *Chemistry* **287**, 1043-53.

703 Chen P.R. & Lee K. (2016) Invited review: inhibitors of myostatin as methods of
704 enhancing muscle growth and development. *Journal of animal science*, **94**, 3125-34.

705 Clop A., Marcq F., Takeda H., Pirottin D., Tordoir X., Biber B., Bouix J., Caiment F.,
706 Elsen J.M., Eychenne F., Larzul C., Laville E., Meish F., Milenkovic D., Tobin J.,
707 Charlier C. & Georges M. (2006) A mutation creating a potential illegitimate

708 microRNA target site in the myostatin gene affects muscularity in sheep. *Nature*
709 *Genetics* **38**, 813-8.

710 Dall'Olio S., Fontanesi L., Nanni Costa L., Tassinari M., Minieri L. & Falaschini A.
711 (2010) Analysis of horse myostatin gene and identification of single nucleotide
712 polymorphisms in breeds of different morphological types. *Journal of Biomedicine*
713 *and Biotechnology* 542945.

714 Dall'Olio S., Wang Y., Sartori C., Fontanesi L. & Mantovani R. (2014) Association of
715 myostatin (MSTN) gene polymorphisms with morphological traits in the Italian Heavy
716 Draft Horse breed. *Livestock Science* **160**, 29-36.

717 Dehnavi E., Ahani Azari M., Hasani S., Nassiry M.R., Mohajer M., Khan Ahmadi A.,
718 Shahmohamadi L. & Yousefi S. (2012) Polymorphism of Myostatin gene in intron 1
719 and 2 and exon 3, and their associations with yearling weight, using PCR-RFLP and
720 PCR-SSCP Techniques in Zel Sheep. *Biotechnology Research International*,
721 472307.

722 Deng B., Zhang F., Wen J., Ye S., Wang L., Yang Y., Gong P. & Jiang, S. (2017) The
723 function of myostatin in the regulation of fat mass in mammals. *Nutrition &*
724 *metabolism* **14**, 29.

725 Deveaux V., Cassar-Malek I. & Picard B. (2001) Comparison of contractile
726 characteristics of muscle from Holstein and double-muscled Belgian Blue fetuses.
727 *Comparative biochemistry and physiology. Part A, Molecular and integrative*
728 *physiology* **131**, 21-9.

729 Dunner S., Miranda M.E., Amigues Y., Cañón J., Georges M., Hanset R., Williams J.
730 & Ménissier F. (2003) Haplotype diversity of the myostatin gene among beef cattle
731 breeds. *Genetics Selection Evolution* **35**, 103-18.

732 Elashry M.I., Collins-Hooper H., Vaiyapuri S. & Patel K. (2012) Characterisation of
733 connective tissue from the hypertrophic skeletal muscle of myostatin null mice.
734 *Journal of Anatomy* **220**, 603-11.

735 Esmailzadeh A.K., Bottema C.D., Sellick G.S., Verbyla A.P., Morris C.A., Cullen N.G.
736 & Pitchford W.S. (2008) Effects of the myostatin F94L substitution on beef traits.
737 *Journal of Animal Science* **86**, 1038-46.

738 Fiems L.O. (2012) Double Muscling in Cattle: Genes, Husbandry, Carcasses and
739 Meat. *Animals* **2**, 472-506.

740 Fontanesi L., Scotti E., Frabetti A., Fornasini D., Picconi A. & Russo V. (2011)
741 Identification of polymorphisms in the rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) myostatin
742 (MSTN) gene and association analysis with finishing weight in a commercial rabbit
743 population. *Animal Genetics* **42**, 339.

744 Georges M. (2010) When less means more: impact of myostatin in animal breeding.
745 *Immunology, Endocrine & Metabolic Agents in Medicinal Chemistry* **10**, 240-248.

746 Girgenrath S., Song K. & Whittemore L.A. (2005) Loss of myostatin expression alters
747 fiber-type distribution and expression of myosin heavy chain isoforms in slow- and
748 fast-type skeletal muscle. *Muscle Nerve* **31**, 34-40.

749 Grisolia A.B., D'Angelo G.T., Porto Neto L.R., Siqueira F. & Garcia J.F. (2009)
750 Myostatin (GDF8) single nucleotide polymorphisms in Nellore cattle. *Genetics and*
751 *Molecular Research* **8**, 822–30.

752 Grobet L., Martin L.J., Poncelet D., Pirottin D., Brouwers B., Riquet J., Schoeberlein
753 A., Dunner S., Ménéssier F., Massabanda J., Fries R., Hanset R. & Georges M.
754 (1997) A deletion in the bovine myostatin gene causes the double-muscled
755 phenotype in cattle. *Natural Genetics* **17**, 71-4.

756 Gu Z.L., Zhu D.H., Li N., Li H., Deng X.M. & Wu C.X. (2003) Polymorphisms of
757 myostatin gene and its relationship with the development of skeletal muscle and fat in
758 chickens. *Science China Life Sciences* **33**, 273–80.

759 Hadjipavlou G., Matika O., Clop A. & Bishop S.C. (2008) Two single nucleotide
760 polymorphisms in the myostatin (GDF8) gene have significant association with
761 muscle depth of commercial Charollais sheep. *Animal Genetics* **39**, 346–53.

762 Han J., Forrest R.H. & Hickford J.G. (2013) Genetic variations in the myostatin gene
763 (MSTN) in New Zealand sheep breeds. *Molecular Biology Reports* **40**, 6379-84.

764 Hanset R. & Michaux C. (1985) On the genetic determinism of muscular hypertrophy
765 in the Belgian White and Blue cattle breed. I. Experimental data. *Genetics Selection
766 Evolution* **17**, 359-68.

767 Holmes J.H., Ashmore C.R. & Robinson D.W. (1973) Effects of stress on cattle with
768 hereditary muscular hypertrophy. *Journal of Animal Science* **36**, 684-94.

769 Hosoyama T., Kawada S., Oshiumi R., Yoneda S., Soeta C., Yamanouchi K.,
770 Hasegawa T., Ishida N., Mukoyama H., Ishii N. & Tachi C. (2002) Molecular cloning
771 of equine (thoroughbred) myostatin cDNA and detection of myostatin precursor
772 proteins in the serum. *Journal of Reproduction and Development* **48**, 335–42.

773 Hu W., Chen S., Zhang R. & Lin Y (2013) Single nucleotide polymorphisms in the
774 upstream regulatory region alter the expression of myostatin. *In Vitro Cellular and
775 Developmental Biology* **49**, 417-23.

776 Ji S., Losinski R.L., Cornelius S.G., Frank G.R., Willis G.M., Gerrard D.E., Depreux
777 F.F. & Spurlock M.E. (1998) Myostatin expression in porcine tissues: tissue
778 specificity and developmental and postnatal regulation. *American Physiological
779 Society* **275**,1265-73.

780 Jiang Y.L., Li N., Plastow G., Liu Z.L., Hu X.X. & Wu C.X. (2002) Identification of
781 three SNPs in the porcine myostatin gene (MSTN). *Animal Biotechnology* **13**, 173-
782 178.

783 Kambadur R., Sharma M., Smith T.P. & Bass J.J. (1997) Mutations in myostatin
784 (GDF8) in double-muscled Belgian Blue and Piedmontese cattle. *Genome Research*
785 **7**, 910-16.

786 Kijas J.W., McCulloch R., Edwards J.E., Oddy V.H., Lee S.H. & Van Der Werf J.
787 (2007) Evidence for multiple alleles effecting muscling and fatness at the ovine GDF8
788 locus. *BioMedCentral Genetics* **8**, 80.

789 Kobolák J. & Gócza E. (2002) The role of the myostatin protein in meat quality—a
790 review. *Archives Animal Breeding*, **45**, 159-70.

791 Lach-Trifilieff E., Minetti G.C., Sheppard K., Ibebunjo C., Feige J.N., Hartmann S.,
792 Brachat S., Rivet H., Koelbing C., Morvan F., Hatakeyama S. & Glass D.J. (2014) An
793 antibody blocking activin type II receptors induces strong skeletal muscle hypertrophy
794 and protects from atrophy. *Molecular Cell Biology* **34**, 606-18.

795 Langley B., Thomas M., Bishop A., Sharma M., Gilmour S. & Kambadur R. (2002)
796 Myostatin inhibits myoblast differentiation by down-regulating MyoD expression.
797 *Journal of Biological Chemistry* **277**, 49831-40.

798 Latres E., Mastaitis J., Fury W., Miloscio L., Trejos J., Pangilinan J., Okamoto H.,
799 Cavino K., Na E., Papatheodorou A., Willer T., Bai Y., Hae Kim J., Rafique A.,
800 Jaspers S., Stitt T., Murphy A.J., Yancopoulos G.D., Gromada J. (2017) Activin A
801 more prominently regulates muscle mass in primates than does GDF8. *Nature*
802 *Communications* **8**,15153.

803 Leymaster K.A. & Jenkins T.G. (1993) Comparison of Texel- and Suffolk-sired
804 crossbred lambs for survival, growth, and compositional traits. *Journal of Animal*
805 *Science* **71**, 859-69.

806 Li X.L., Wu Zh L., Gong Y.F., Liu Y.Q., Liu Z.Z., Wang X.J., Xin T.R. & Ji Q. (2006)
807 Single-nucleotide polymorphism identification in the caprine myostatin gene. *Journal*
808 *of Animal Breeding and Genetics* **123**,141-4.

809 Li R., Liu D.H., Cao C.N., Wang S.Q., Dang R.H., Lan X.Y., Chen H., Zhang T., Liu
810 W.J. & Lei C.Z. (2014) Single nucleotide polymorphisms of myostatin gene in
811 Chinese domestic horses. *Gene* **538**, 150-4.

812 Liu Q., Chen Y.H., Cai F.X., Zhu W.Q., Wang Z.Y. & Zhang T.J. (2012)
813 Polymorphisms in exon 3 of MSTN gene and its relationship with abdominal fat rate
814 in Gaoyou duck. *China Poultry* **34**, 24-30.

815 Lu J., Hou S., Huang W., Yu J. & Wang W. (2011) Polymorphisms in the myostatin
816 gene and their association with growth and carcass traits in duck. *African Journal of*
817 *Biotechnology* **54**, 11309-12.

818 Marchitelli C., Savarese M.C., Crisà A., Nardone A., Marsan P.A. & Valentini A.
819 (2003) Double muscling in Marchigiana beef breed is caused by a stop codon in the
820 third exon of myostatin gene. *Mammalian Genome* **14**, 392-5.

821 Matsakas A., Otto A., Elashry M.I., Brown S.C. & Patel K. (2010) Altered primary and
822 secondary myogenesis in the myostatin-null mouse. *Rejuvenation Research* **13**, 717-
823 27.

824 McPherron A.C. & Lee S.J. (1997) Double muscling in cattle due to mutations in the
825 myostatin gene. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* **94**, 12457-
826 61.

827 Mirhoseini S.Z. & Zare J. (2012) The role of myostatin on growth and carcass traits
828 and its application in animal breeding. *Life Science Journal*, **9**, 2353-57.

829 Miretti S., Martignani E., Accornero P. & Baratta M. (2013) Functional effect of mir-
830 27b on myostatin expression: a relationship in Piedmontese cattle with double-
831 muscled phenotype. *BioMedCentral Genomics* **14**, 194.

832 Mosher D.S., Quignon P., Bustamante C.D., Sutter N.B., Mellersh C.S., Parker H.G.
833 & Ostrander E.A. (2007) A mutation in the myostatin gene increases muscle mass
834 and enhances racing performance in heterozygote dogs. *Public Library of Science*
835 *Genetics* **3**, 79.

836 Nguluma A.S., Huang Y., Zhao Y., Chen L., Msalya G., Lyimo C., Guangxin E. &
837 Chenyambuga S.W. (2018) Polymorphisms of Myostatin gene and its association
838 with growth in two strains of Small East African and Blended goats of Tanzania.
839 *Livestock Research for Rural Development* **30**, 25.

840 Omairi S., Matsakas A., Degens H., Kretz O., Hansson K.A., Solbrå A.V., Bruusgaard
841 J.C., Joch B., Sartori R., Giallourou N., Mitchell R., Collins-Hooper H., Foster K.,
842 Pasternack A., Ritvos O., Sandri M., Narkar V., Swann J.R., Huber T.B. & Patel K.
843 (2016) Enhanced exercise and regenerative capacity in a mouse model that violates
844 size constraints of oxidative muscle fibres. *Elife* **5**.

845 Ouhayon J. & Beaumont A. (1968) Etude du caractere culard: study of the double-
846 muscled character III microscopical comparison of muscles from normal and double-
847 muscled Charolais steers. *Annales De Zootechnie* **17**, 213–23.

848 Petersen J.L., Mickelson J.R., Rendahl A.K., Valberg S.J., Andersson L.S., Axelsson
849 J., Bailey E., Bannasch D., Binns M.M., Borges A.S., Brama P., Da Câmara
850 Machado A., Capomaccio S., Cappelli K., Cothran E.G., Distl O., Fox-Clipsham L.,
851 Graves K.T., Guérin G., Haase B., Hasegawa T., Hemmann K., Hill E.W., Leeb T.,

852 Lindgren G., Lohi H., Lopes M.S., McGivney B.A., Mikko S., Orr N., Penedo M.C.,
853 Piercy R.J., Raekallio M., Rieder S., Røed K.H., Swinburne J., Tozaki T., Vaudin M.,
854 Wade C.M. & McCue M.E. (2013) Genome-wide analysis reveals selection for
855 important traits in domestic horse breeds. *Public Library of Science Genetic* **9**,
856 e1003211.

857 Pothuraju M., Mishra S.K., Kumar S.N., Mohamed N.F., Kataria R.S., Yadav D.K. &
858 Arora R. (2015) Polymorphism in the coding region sequence of GDF8 gene in Indian
859 sheep. *Genetika* **51**, 1297-300.

860 Qian L., Tang M., Yang J., Wang Q., Cai C., Jiang S., Li H., Jiang K., Gao P., Ma D.,
861 Chen Y., An X., Li K. & Cui W. (2015) Targeted mutations in myostatin by zinc-finger
862 nucleases result in double-muscling phenotype in Meishan pigs. *Scientific Reports* **5**,
863 14435.

864 Qiao X.B., Xu K.Y., Li B., Luan X., Xia T. & Fan X.Z. (2014) Rabbit MSTN gene
865 polymorphisms and genetic effect analysis. *Genetics and Molecular Research* **13**,
866 2590-97.

867 Rudnicki M.A., Braun T., Hinuma S. & Jaenisch R. (1992) Inactivation of MyoD in
868 mice leads to up-regulation of the myogenic HLH gene Myf-5 and results in
869 apparently normal muscle development. *Cell* **71**, 383-90.

870 Sarti F.M., Lasagna E., Ceccobelli S., Di Lorenzo P., Filippini F., Sbarra F., Giontella
871 A., Pieramati C. & Panella F. (2014) Influence of single nucleotide polymorphisms in
872 the myostatin and myogenic factor 5 muscle growth-related genes on the
873 performance traits of Marchigiana beef cattle. *Journal of Animal Science* **92**, 3804-
874 10.

875 Sazanov A., Ewald D., Buitkamp J. & Fries R. (1999) A molecular marker for the
876 chicken myostatin gene (GDF8) maps to 7p11. *Animal Genetics* **30**, 388–9.

877 Schuelke M., Wagner K.R., Stolz L.E., Hübner C., Riebel T., Kömen W., Braun T.,
878 Tobin J.F. & Lee S.J. (2004) Myostatin mutation associated with gross muscle
879 hypertrophy in a child. *New England Journal of Medicine* **350**, 2682-8.

880 Sellick G.S., Pitchford W.S., Morris C.A., Cullen N.G., Crawford A.M., Raadsma H.W.
881 & Bottema C.D. (2007) Effect of myostatin F94L on carcass yield in cattle. *Animal*
882 *Genetics* **38**, 440–6.

883 Sjakste T., Paramonova N., Grislis Z., Trapina I. & Kairisa D. (2011) Analysis of the
884 single-nucleotide polymorphism in the 5, D. I d part of intron 1 of the sheep MSTN
885 gene. *DNA and Cell Biology* **30**, 433.

886 Stefaniuk M., Kaczor U. & Kulisa M. (2014) MSTN gene polymorphism in livestock
887 animals. *Postępy Higieny i Medycyny Doświadczalnej* **68**, 633-9.

888 Stefaniuk M., Ropka-Molik K., Piórkowska K., Kulisa M. & Podstawski Z. (2016)
889 Analysis of polymorphisms in the equine MSTN gene in Polish populations of horse
890 breeds. *Livestock Science* **187**, 151-7.

891 Sternstein I., Reissmann M., Maj D., Bieniek J. & Brockmann G.A. (2014) A new
892 single nucleotide polymorphism in the rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) myostatin
893 (MSTN) gene is associated with carcass composition traits. *Animal Genetics* **45**, 596-
894 9.

895 Stinckens A., Luyten T., Bijttebier J., Van Den Maagdenberg K., Dieltiens D.,
896 Janssens S., De Smet S., Georges M. & Buys N. (2008) Characterization of the
897 complete porcine MSTN gene and expression levels in pig breeds differing in
898 muscularity. *Animal Genetics* **39**, 586-96.

899 Thomas M., Langley B., Berry C., Sharma M., Kirk S., Bass J. & Kambadur R. (2000)
900 Myostatin, a negative regulator of muscle growth, functions by inhibiting myoblast
901 proliferation. *Journal of Biological Chemistry* **275**, 40235-43.

902 Tozaki T., Miyake T., Kakoi H., Gawahara H., Sugita S., Hase-Gawa T., Ishida N.,
903 Hirota K. & Nakano Y. (2010) A genome-wide association study for racing
904 performances in Thoroughbreds clarifies a candidate region near the MSTN gene.
905 *Animal Genetics* **41**, 28-35.

906 Trendelenburg A.U., Meyer A., Rohner D., Boyle J., Hatakeyama S. & Glass D.J.
907 (2009) Myostatin reduces Akt/TORC1/p70S6K signaling, inhibiting myoblast
908 differentiation and myotube size. *American Journal of Physiology-Cell Physiology*
909 **296**, 1258-70.

910 Trukhachev V., Yatsyk O., Telegina E., Krivoruchko A., Zhou H. & Hickford J.G.H.
911 (2018) Comparison of the myostatin (MSTN) gene in Russian Stavropol Merino
912 sheep and New Zealand Merino sheep. *Small Ruminant Research*, **160**, 103-6.

913 Vankan D.M., Waine D.R. & Fortes M.R. (2010) Real-time PCR genotyping and
914 frequency of the myostatin F94L mutation in beef cattle breeds. *Animal* **4**, 530-4.

915 Vincenti F., Failla S., Gigli S., Lasagna E., Landi V., Mangione A., Berti C. & Sarti
916 F.M. (2007) The Hypertrophic Marchigiana: physical and biochemical parameters for
917 meat quality evaluation. *Italian Journal of Animal Science* **6**, 491-3.

918 Wang J., Zhou H., Hu J., Li S., Luo Y. & Hickford J.G.H. (2016) Two single nucleotide
919 polymorphisms in the promoter of the ovine myostatin gene (MSTN) and their effect
920 on growth and carcass muscle traits in New Zealand Romney sheep. *Journal of*
921 *Animal Breeding and Genetics* **133**, 219-26.

922 Wang X., Niu Y., Zhou J., Zhu H., Ma B., Yu H., Yan H., Hua J., Huang X., Qu L. &
923 Chen Y. (2017) CRISPR/Cas9-mediated *MSTN* disruption and heritable mutagenesis
924 in goats causes increased body mass. *Animal Genetics* **49**, 43–51.

925 Wegner J., Albrecht E., Fiedler I., Teuscher F., Papstein H.J. & Ender K. (2000)
926 Growth- and breed-related changes of muscle fiber characteristics in cattle. *Journal*
927 *of Animal Science* **78**, 1485-96.

928 Wiener P., Smith J.A., Lewis A.M., Woolliams J.A. & Williams J.L. (2002) Muscle-
929 related traits in cattle: the role of the myostatin gene in the South Devon breed.
930 *Genetics Selection Evolution* **34**, 221–32.

931 Wolfman N.M., McPherron A.C., Pappano W.N., Davies M.V., Song K., Tomkinson
932 K.N., Wright J.F., Zhao L., Sebald S.M., Greenspan D.S. & Lee S.J. (2003) Activation
933 of latent myostatin by the BMP-1/tolloid family of metalloproteinases. *Proceedings of*
934 *the National Academy of Sciences USA* **100**, 15842-46.

935 Xu T.S., Gu L.H., Zhang X.H., Ye B.G., Liu X.L. & Hou S.S. (2013) Characterization
936 of myostatin gene (MSTN) of Pekin duck and the association of its polymorphism
937 with breast muscle traits. *Genetics and Molecular Research* **12**, 3166-77.

938 Ye X.H., Brown S.R., Nones K., Coutinho L.L., Dekkers J.C.M. & Lamont S.J. (2007)
939 Associations of myostatin gene polymorphisms with performance and mortality traits
940 in broiler chickens. *Genetics Selection Evolution* **39**, 73–89.

941 Zhang C., Liu Y., Xu D., Wen Q., Li X., Zhang W. and Yang L. (2012) Polymorphisms
942 of myostatin gene (MSTN) in four goat breeds and their effects on Boer goat growth
943 performance. *Molecular Biology Reports* **39**, 3081-7.

944 Zhang G., Zhang L., Wei Y., Wang J., Ding F., Dai G. & Xie K. (2012) Polymorphisms
945 of the myostatin gene and its relationship with reproduction traits in the Bian chicken.
946 *Animal Biotechnology* **23**, 184-93.

947 Zhang Z.J., Ling Y.H., Wang L.J., Hang Y.F., Guo X.F., Zhang Y.H., Ding J.P. &
948 Zhang X.R. (2013) Polymorphisms of the myostatin gene (MSTN) and its relationship
949 with growth traits in goat breeds. *Genetics and Molecular Research* **12**, 965-71.

950 Zhao Z., Li H., Yi H. & Peng B. (2016) The correlation between polymorphisms of the
951 MSTN gene and slaughter traits in sansui ducks. *Pakistan Journal of Zoology* **48**,
952 1283-90.

953 Zhiliang G., Dahai Z., Ning L., Hui L., Xuemei D. and Changxin W. (2004) The single
954 nucleotide polymorphisms of the chicken myostatin gene are associated with skeletal
955 muscle and adipose growth. *Science China Life Sciences* **47**, 25-30.

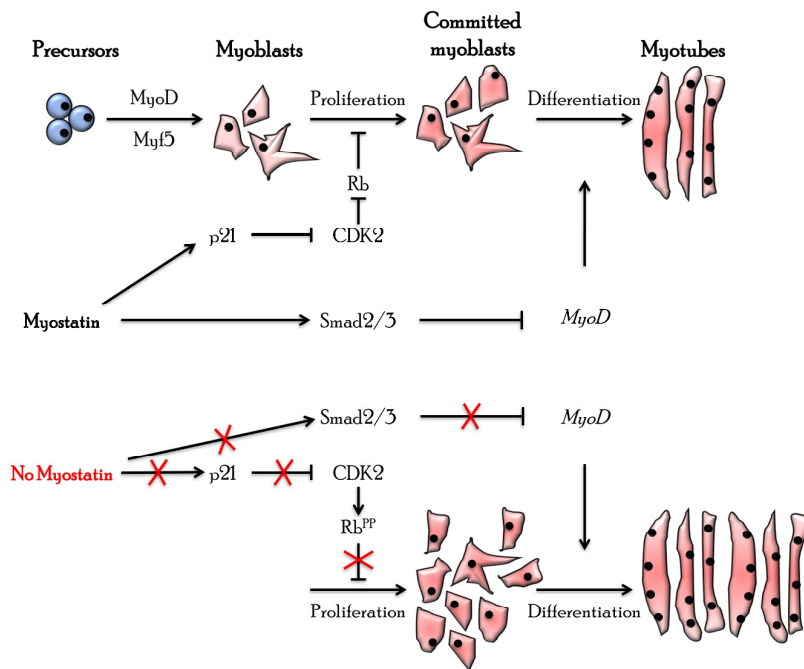
956 Zhou H., Hickford J.G.H. & Fang Q. (2008) Variation in the coding region of the
957 myostatin (GDF8) gene in sheep. *Molecular and Cellular Probes* **22**, 67–8.

958 Zou Q., Wang X., Liu Y., Ouyang Z., Long H., Wei S., Xin J., Zhao B., Lai S., Shen
959 J., Ni Q., Yang H., Zhong H., Li L., Hu M., Zhang Q., Zhou Z., He J., Yan Q., Fan N.,
960 Zhao Y., Liu Z., Guo L., Huang J., Zhang G., Ying J., Lai L. & Gao X. (2015)
961 Generation of gene-target dogs using CRISPR/Cas9 system. *Journal of Molecular*
962 *Cell Biology* **7**, 580-3.

963

964 **LEGENDS TO FIGURES**

965 **Figure 1** Myostatin action during myoblast proliferation and differentiation (modified
 966 from Langley *et al.*, 2002). Retinoblastoma protein (Rb), in a low phosphorylated
 967 state, inhibits cell division. Rb activity is attenuated due to hyper-phosphorylation by
 968 the kinase action of CDK2. However the activity of CDK2 is inhibited by p21 which is
 969 induced by the action of MSTN. MSTN also activates Smad2/3 signalling which
 970 inhibits the expression of *MyoD* which is needed for normal myoblast differentiation.
 971 In the absence of MSTN, the activity of CDK2 is not inhibited which allows it to
 972 inactivate Rb resulting in increased proliferation of myoblasts. At the same time the
 973 expression of *MyoD* is no longer inhibited by Smad2/3 signalling pathways allowing it
 974 to promote differentiation of the extranumerary myoblasts.



975

976

977 **Table 1** Polymorphisms on *Myostatin* gene in cattle.

Breed	Polymorphisms on <i>MSTN</i>		Reference
	position	mutation	
Asturiana de los Valles	nt821	DEL11	Grobet <i>et al.</i> , 1997 ⁹⁸¹
Belgian Blue	nt821	DEL11	McPherron & Lee, 1997 ⁹⁸³
Blonde d'Aquitaine	nt821	DEL11	Kambadur <i>et al.</i> , 1997 ⁹⁸⁵
	nt3811	T>G	Bouyer <i>et al.</i> , 2014 ⁹⁸⁶
Charolaise	nt610	C>T	Kambadur <i>et al.</i> , 1997 ⁹⁸⁷
Gasconne	nt938	G>A	Kambadur <i>et al.</i> , 1997 ⁹⁸⁸
			Dunner <i>et al.</i> , 2003 ⁹⁸⁹
Limousine	nt821	DEL11	Kambadur <i>et al.</i> , 1997 ⁹⁹⁰
	nt610	C>T	Cappuccio <i>et al.</i> , 1998 ⁹⁹¹
	g.433	C>A	Sellick <i>et al.</i> , 2007 ⁹⁹²
Maine-Anjou	nt419	del-7-ins10	McPherron & Lee, 1997 ⁹⁹³
	nt676	G>T	Grobet <i>et al.</i> , 1997 ⁹⁹⁵
Marchigiana	g.874	G>T	Cappuccio <i>et al.</i> , 1998 ⁹⁹⁶
Nellore	nt76	A>T	Grisolia <i>et al.</i> , 2009 ⁹⁹⁷
	nt111	G>T	
	nt267	A>G	
	nt374	DEL16	
	nt414	C>T	
	nt420	T>G	
	nt433	A>T	
	nt445	A>T	
	nt527	T>A	
	nt641	G>A	
	nt694	G>A	
	nt840	A>G	
	nt951	T>G	
nt1083	C>T		
Parthenoise	nt821	DEL11	Kambadur <i>et al.</i> , 1997 ⁹⁹⁸
Piedmontese	nt938	G>A	Kambadur <i>et al.</i> , 1997 ⁹⁹⁹
Rubia Gallega	nt821	DEL11	Kambadur <i>et al.</i> , 1997

Table 2 Polymorphisms on *Myostatin* gene in sheep.

Breed	Polymorphisms on <i>MSTN</i>		Reference
	position	mutation	
Texel	g.6723	G>A	Kijas <i>et al.</i> , 2007
	g+391	G>T	
	g.2449	C>G	
	g.2379	C>T	
	g.1405	A>T	
	g.1402	G>A	
	g.1214	C>T	
	g.1129	C>T	
	g.41	A>C	
	g.39	T>C	
	g+474	C>T	
	G+613	T>C	
	g+616	G>A	
	g+619	T>C	
	g+622	T>C	
	g+632	G>T	
	g+696	C>T	
	g+3135	C>T	
g+4036	A>C		
g+4044	C>T		
Norwegian White Sheep	c.960	DEL1	Wang <i>et al.</i> , 2016
	c.2360	G>A	
New Zealand Romney	c.101	G>A	Wang <i>et al.</i> , 2016 Kijas <i>et al.</i> , 2007
	c.-959	C>T	
	c.-784	A>G	
	c.373+18	A>G	
	c.373+563	A>G	
	c.373+607	G>A	
	c.374-654	T>C	
	c.374-54	T>C	
	c.748-54	A>G	
	c.*83	A>G	
	c.*455	C>A	
	c.*709	INSA	
	c.*123A	T>G	
	c.-2449	G>C	
c.-2379	T>C		
Charollais	c.*123A		Kijas <i>et al.</i> , 2007
White Suffolk	c.*123A		Kijas <i>et al.</i> , 2007
Poll Dorset	c.*123A		Kijas <i>et al.</i> , 2007
Lincoln	c.*123A		Kijas <i>et al.</i> , 2007

Indian sheep	c.539 c.821	T>G T>A	Pothuraju <i>et al.</i> , 2015
Stavropol Merino	c.373+396 c.374-362 c.374-16 c.747+185 c.748-194 c.782_783 c.940 c.*310	T>C A>T DELT C>A C>A INST G>T G>T	Trukhachev <i>et al.</i> , 2018

1001
1002

1003 **Table 3** Polymorphisms on *Myostatin* gene in goat.

Breed	Polymorphisms on <i>MSTN</i>		Reference
	position	mutation	
Anhui white	g.197 nt345	G>A A>T	Zhang <i>et al.</i> , 2013 Nguluma <i>et al.</i> , 2018
Boer	nt1256 g.197 nt1388 nt345 nt298	TTTA/ G>A T>A A>T T>C	
Haimen	nt1256	TTTA/-	
Motou	nt1256	TTTA/-	
Nubi	nt1256	TTTA/-	

1004
1005

Table 4 Polymorphisms on *Myostatin* gene in horse.

Breed	Polymorphisms on <i>MSTN</i>		Reference
	position	mutation	
American Quarter Horse	g.66495326_66495327	INS227	Petersen <i>et al.</i> , 2013
Andalusian	g.26 g.156 g.1634 g.2024 g.2115 g.2327 g.4230	T>C T>C T>G G>A A>G A>C T>A	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Arabians horses	g.2279 g.66495696 g.66495254	A>C T>C C>T	Baron <i>et al.</i> , 2012 Stefaniuk <i>et al.</i> , 2016
Bardigiano	g.156	T>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Haflinger	g.156	T>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Hucul	g.26 g.66495696 g.66493737 g.66490010	T>C T>C T>C T>C	Stefaniuk <i>et al.</i> , 2014 Stefaniuk <i>et al.</i> , 2016
Italian Saddle	g.26 g.156	T>C T>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Italian trotter	g.26	T>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Polish Konik	g.66495254 g.66495696 g.66493737 g.66495254 g.66490010	C>T T>C T>C C>T T>C	Stefaniuk <i>et al.</i> , 2014 Stefaniuk <i>et al.</i> , 2016
Lipizzan	g.26	T>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Maremmano	g.156	T>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Murgese	g.156	T>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Noric	g.26 g.156	T>C T>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Polish Heavy Draft	g.26 g.66495254 g.66495696 g.66493737 g.66490010	T>C C>T T>C T>C T>C	Stefaniuk <i>et al.</i> , 2014 Stefaniuk <i>et al.</i> , 2016
Rapid Heavy Draft	g.26 g.156	T>C T>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Salernitano	g.156	T>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Soraia	g.2478	G>C	Baron <i>et al.</i> , 2012
Thoroughbred horse	g.156 g.1634 g.2115 g.2327	T>C T>G A>G A>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010 Petersen <i>et al.</i> , 2013 Petersen <i>et al.</i> , 2013 Petersen <i>et al.</i> , 2013

Tolfetano	g.156	T>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Uruguayan Creole	g.156	T>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Ventasso	g.26	T>C	Dall'Olio <i>et al.</i> , 2010

1007

1008 **Table 5** Polymorphisms on *Myostatin* gene in pig.

Breed	Polymorphisms on <i>MSTN</i>		Reference
	position	mutation	
Belgian Pietrain	g.435	G>A	Stinckens <i>et al.</i> , 2008
	g.447	A>G	
	g.879	T>A	
Chinese Meishan	g.879	T>A	Qian <i>et al.</i> , 2015
Yorkshire pig	nt383 exon 3 (position no specified)	T>A G>A C>T	Jiang <i>et al.</i> , 2002

1009
1010

1011 **Table 6** Polymorphisms on *Myostatin* gene in rabbit.

Breed	Polymorphisms on <i>MSTN</i>		Reference
	position	mutation	
Belgian hare	c.108 c.713 c.*194 c.747+34	C>T T>A A>G C>T	Fontanesi <i>et al.</i> , 2013
Burgundy fawn	c.108 c.713 c.*194 c.747+34	C>T T>A A>G C>T	Fontanesi <i>et al.</i> , 2013
Checkered giant	c.108 c.713 c.*194 c.747+34	C>T T>A A>G C>T	Fontanesi <i>et al.</i> , 2013
Commercial breeds (not specified)	nt476	T>C	Qiao <i>et al.</i> , 2014
Giant grey	c.108 c.713 c.*194 c.747+34	C>T T>A A>G C>T	Fontanesi <i>et al.</i> , 2013
Giant Grey	c.-125 c.373+234	T>C T>C	Sternstein <i>et al.</i> , 2014
New Zealand White	c.-125 c.373+234	T>C T>C	Sternstein <i>et al.</i> , 2014

1012

1013

1014 **Table 7** Polymorphisms on *Myostatin* gene in poultry.

Breed	Polymorphisms on <i>MSTN</i>		Reference
	position	mutation	
Arbor Acre	nt167	G>A	Gu <i>et al.</i> , 2003 Zhang <i>et al.</i> , 2012
	nt177	T>C	
	nt304	G>A	
	nt322	A>G	
	nt326	A>G	
	nt334	C>T	
	nt334	C>G	
	nt1346	C>T	
	nt1375	G>A	
	nt6935	A>G	
	nt7263	A>T	
Bian chicken	nt234	G>A	Zhang <i>et al.</i> , 2012
Gaoyou ducks	nt2701	G>A	Liu <i>et al.</i> , 2012
Jinghai	nt326	A>G	Zhang <i>et al.</i> , 2012
	nt334	C>G	
	nt1346	C>T	
	nt1375	G>A	
Pekin duck	nt129	T>C	Xu <i>et al.</i> , 2013
	nt708	T>C	
	nt952	T>C	
Sansui duck	g.106	G>A	Zhao <i>et al.</i> , 2016
	g.120	A>G	
	g.159	G>A	
	g.5368	G>A	
	g.5389	A>C	
g.5410	G>A		
Youxi	nt326	A>G	Zhang <i>et al.</i> , 2012
	nt334	C>G	
	nt1346	C>T	
	nt1375	G>A	

1015
1016