

NOTE FROM TAK SUZUKI

Belltree Australia Pty Ltd



One of our readers asked for some tips on feeding animals and I asked a number of our members for comments and we'll plan on printing different points of view as they are presented. We'll start off with this piece by Takao Suzuki. Many of you met Tak at one of our Reno meetings. He's the guy who has the Japanese 16/16 system down and incidentally he will be glad to conduct an analysis of your possible matings using that method. Tak has been feeding Wagyu cattle for a number of years, coming to Australia from Japan and working in feedlots in both countries eventually being the manager of a substantial feeding operation in Australia and then moving on to his own ranch in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. You can contact Tak at takaos@bluemountainswagyu.com.au

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"Wagyu Feeding program can be varied by targeting market type e.g., High end A4/5 market, Middle range grain fed market (high choice to prime), grass fed Wagyu etc.

Regardless to the market type, beef yield is the factor to make profitable operation. For Wagyu production, marbling is the most important (and wanted) characteristics in the products. BUT, marbling development can be related to maturity of animal so, if you are looking for high marbling, you'll need to keep animal up until at least 27 month old. Anything younger, you'll find lack of marbling in brisket, butt cuts etc...

Wagyu is low milk production animal. So, calf growth is not going to be great if you keep with cow for too long. Wagyu cow milk production decline at around 3month of lactation so you'll need supplement feed to maintain calf growth. Calf growth (up until 9 month old) is very important for muscle development and hence meat yield. If

calf struggle to grow this stage, they tend to carry more intra-muscle fat (in between muscles) rather than marbling at the end and will restrict eye muscle grow so they will be low meat yield. High protein/ high fibre diet is needed.

Grower cattle (9 – 14 month) need to develop rumen condition for high grain consumption in future (if you are going to put cattle in feedlot). Maintaining high roughage diet with grain mixture to develop rumen condition suits to high grain ration for future. Supply vitamins (A and B) and minerals to maintain feed consumption and immune system. Corn Silage or good ryegrass hay with Alfalfa is good source of fibre and vitamin. Feedlot ration can be introduced at this stage but consumption should be limited.

To finish animal (especially for high end market), high feed consumption is the critical factors to make good meat. Depending on the quality target (and budget), you could target to the very high end market with Vitamin A restriction program to feed up to 29~30 month old (it will require individual animal management and feed ration control), or no Vitamin restriction with high feed consumption to finish animal around 27 month old (will suit to large feedlot situation). Your animal can be finished as early as 24 month old but it will be significantly less marbling and low yield than those old cattle. I cannot see any economical point feeding animal older than 32 month old. Feed ration can be as high as 75% grain ration but still require roughage contents to maintain rumen condition.

Key factor of Wagyu feeding is let them grow (not fat) at the young age. You'll find that if cattle do well until 14 month old, you'll have high chance of good marbling/ high yield carcass.

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