



SIRE PROGENY NET FEED INTAKE PROGRAM

ANALYSING THE VARIABILITY AND HERITABILITY OF NET FEED INTAKE

A quick glance over the fence won't tell you which animal has the most economic feed intake and the greatest carcass potential. Analysis of the amount of feed eaten and the resultant carcass traits will give a far more accurate assessment, but it takes time and data.

Wagyu feeding programs can vary from 350 to 600 days. The benefits of efficient feeders in the feedlot is particularly important for Wagyu in order to achieve high-quality marbling and the desired carcass traits that are characteristic of Wagyu.

Net feed intake (NFI) is essentially an index that shows which animals eat more or less, to gain the same amount of weight over their tenure in the feedlot. An animal with a negative index eats less (more efficient), while a positive number means it eats more (less efficient) for the same weight gain.

Research literature from other breeds suggests that there is up to 10-15% variation in NFI between sires within a breed and that the trait is moderately heritable.

A research project undertaken by the Australian Wagyu Association in conjunction with [Kerwee feedlot](#) – the Sire Progeny Net Feed Intake project – has been running for two years and is assessing the variability and heritability of NFI for Wagyu cattle. It is testing promising sires for feed efficiency and carcass quality, delivering the data directly into Wagyu BREEDPLAN analysis to deliver new NFI EBVs. This project is the most comprehensive way to compare the genetic impact of sires with the rest of the Wagyu industry.

How is the Sire Progeny NFI program undertaken?

The key to maximising the accuracy of results is to control as many variables as possible to eliminate management or environmental variations between animals in the feedlot.

To that end, the project requires a minimum five steers or heifers (not a mix) per sire, with known parentage and Wagyu content, born around the same time and entry weight into the feedlot system of between 300-380kg liveweight.

Once at Kerwee Feedlot, the animals are given a one month settling in period before transitioning into the grain-fed feedlot system.

Two pens have been set aside for the program, for a total capacity of 180 Wagyu cattle where they are fed for up to 450 days. The use of GrowSafe feed bins enables food consumption to be monitored on a daily basis.

At the completion of the 450 days, the animals are weighed and feed consumption finalised. The carcass is then assessed using Aus-Meat grading as well as the MIJ-30 assessment camera that is

designed specifically for Wagyu. The resultant data is then included in the Wagyu BREEDPLAN analysis

The Association stages three Wagyu Sire Test trials per year – usually around January, May and September.

More information

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