

Value of an Elite Female

Record prices have been recorded for elite Wagyu females in both the USA and Australia over the last three years. What has led to this point can be described as a “perfect storm” due to a variety of different factors. A combination of advances in reproductive technology, increased accuracy of GEBVs, an increased emphasis on key profitability traits, more readily available semen of elite sires, a boom in industry entrants, and an ever expanding global demand for premium marbled beef were all key players in developing the market for elite Wagyu females and genetics. With advances in both conventional embryo transfer (ET) and in vitro fertilization (IVF), it is now routinely possible to produce 20 or more calves from a single donor in a year. When a single donor has the potential to produce more calves in a year, her value increases significantly. This, coupled with an increased emphasis on making genetic progress and selecting only high genetic merit females, has driven female value up. This is especially true for those with high EBVs and GEBVs. GEBVs have increased the reliability of EBVs significantly due to the addition of genomic SNP based testing through the Australian Wagyu Association. The increase in reliability has allowed breeders to more confidently select high potential females to invest time, money, and genetic resources into for producing their next generation of cattle.

A larger emphasis on key profitability traits such as marble score, eye muscle area, and hot carcass weight has been a key factor driving the increased prices for elite animals in the Wagyu breed. After having established a Wagyu herd and program many breeders are now searching for higher genetic merit animals to increase profitability and consistency. The emphasis on key production traits along



Trent Bridge K0034: Sold for \$200,000 in 2019 Aus Elite Wagyu Sale

with the release of new elite and highly proven genetics such as Mayura Station's Mayura Itoshigenami JNR and Macquarie Wagyu's Coates Itoshigenami G113 gives breeders a source of superior genetics to pursue for improving their own Wagyu herds. The increased availability of semen from a variety of sires with superior EBVs to foundation sires gives breeders more reason to invest in premium donors. The key to producing your next great sire is in your females, as many breeders would say. Breeders who invest in premium females are then able to take full advantage of the advanced IVF and ET programs of today using next generation superior sires. This will assist breeders to rapidly increase the genetic merit of their animals.

Making genetic progress in traits such as Marble Score will result in increased profitability and in many cases a single Marble Score can be worth as much as \$400 per carcass. Therefore, a program harvesting 100 carcasses per year could see \$400 more revenue for each of its 100 carcasses and an overall revenue increase of \$40,000. Elite females have the ability to produce sires that can have these dramatic impacts on herd profit and is a major reason elite females are commanding top dollar.

The Wagyu breed and genetics market is driven either directly or indirectly by the ever-increasing global demand for premium marbled beef. High marbling and superior carcass traits are the hallmark of the Wagyu breed and continues to bring new entrants into the Wagyu industry through a shared passion for high quality beef. In a pursuit to develop their own businesses or improve upon existing ones, new breeders are seeking high genetic value females to be the foundation of their programs.



Mayura N1229: Sold for \$280,000 in 2019 Aus Elite Wagyu Sale