

Introducing Professor Namikawa:

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Introduction

Wagyu (pronounced 'wag-you') is a breed of cattle native and unique in their genetics to Japan. They are considered one of Japan's national treasures. The Japanese word Wagyu can be translated to mean Japanese beef – as "wa" means Japanese and "gyu" means beef.

Wagyu cattle produce the worlds most tender, flavorsome and succulent beef. This comes about through their unique ability to marble. These cattle are jealously guarded by Japanese farmers who have inherited the genetics from their ancestors and see it as their duty to protect this gift for future generations. There are many closely guarded secrets and intellectual property being retained.

Over the years many people outside of Japan have attempted to track down the history of Wagyu cattle and report it (including David Blackmore of Blackmore Wagyu beef). This has led to a Western perspective of the history of Wagyu cattle. When it has been reported in Japan that performance was being sought through genetics gain, it has been widely interpreted as being beef production, when in actual fact it was performance as a draft or pack animal.

In the late 1980's David Blackmore was fortunate to meet with Professor Kiyoshi Namikawa in the United States of America (US) on numerous occasions. Professor Namikawa was previously with the Department of Animal Science at Kyoto University, Japan. Blackmore believed that at the time Professor Namikawa was the Director Secretary General of the Japanese Wagyu Cattle Registry Association.

Professor Namikawa was a very passionate man about Wagyu and visited the US on many occasions. Professor Namikawa conducted research on the importation of four Wagyu bulls (2 black and 2 brown) to the US in 1976 and one black Wagyu bull's semen to Canada in approximately 1969. Professor Namikawa was also researching the size of the US purebred herd, the interest from American cattle producers, and the impact that this may have in the future to Japanese Wagyu producers.

Some of Blackmore's most valued possessions include Professor Namikawa's hand drawn diagrams of how Wagyu bloodlines evolved in Japan, from which region and the significance of each bloodlines traits. Blackmore also has Professor Namikawa's hand written notes of the 'perfect ration', and the significance of the ingredients and their impact on carcass quality.

In the mid 1980's Professor Namikawa embarked on an ambitious plan to document the history of the Japanese Black cattle breed (Wagyu) in Japan. Blackmore first saw a copy in Japanese, but was later presented with an English version translated by Professor Namikawa. Blackmore knows that other presentations were made to the Washington State University and the Texas A&M University. In Blackmore's opinion this document is the definitive history of Japanese Black cattle (Wagyu).

Unfortunately, Professor Namikawa has since deceased, so Blackmore has reproduced this article for your viewing while giving full admiration and recognition to Professor Namikawa's workings.

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