

Studying Japanese Bloodlines:

Reference Sire – Dai 7 Itozakura

Introduction

In this article I will start with some observations we have made in our commercial operations.

Frame size is more important than marbling. During November 2002 and May 2003, we slaughtered 230 cattle for export to Japan. They consisted of 66 F1, 125 F2, 23 Purebred and 16 Fullblood (191 steers and 39 heifers). The following statistics were achieved:

Average Live Weight = 714kg

Average Hot Carcass Weight = 427.7kg

Yield = 60.18%

Average Marbling (MS) = 7.04

Average Fat (P8) = 24mm

A carcass @ 370kgs @ MS 7 @ say \$7.00 = \$2,590

A carcass @ 470kgs @ MS 5 @ say \$6.00 = \$2,820

Get it right and a carcass that has a combination of weight and marbling

A carcass @ 470kgs @ MS 7 @ \$7.00 = \$3,290

Our best kill average weight has been 481kgs

The other observation I make when talking to breeders is they get hung up talking about brand names when talking about strains. Wagyu cattle from Shimane or Tottori prefectures are just that; proven in those prefectures. Just like Barossa Valley, Coonawarra or Hunter Valley wines. They are brand names for product from those regions. Certainly those brand names become synonymous with certain traits but not exclusively. Note in the article about Dai 7 Itozakura that he is 50% Okayama breeding, 25% Tajima and 25% Shimane, but because he was proven and marketed in Shimane prefecture he has become known as a Shimane bull. It is very important when selecting bloodlines to identify which traits you wish to improve (size, marbling, milk, structure) and then select sires that can do that job for you regardless of which prefecture he was proven in.

As promised in this article, I wish to introduce Dai 7 Itozakura; known as the “best of the best” bull in Japan. He is so famous that his picture has been printed on a Japanese phone card.

Following is an extract from the “Nihon Meigyu Hyakusen (Top 100 Cattle in Japan)” written by Mr. Kenichi Ono. This has been edited to include only the history of Dai 7 Itozakura progeny with influences in the available bloodlines in Australia.

Background

On the 10th of December 1970, ‘Dai 7 Itozakura’, which proved to be representative of good daily gain amongst Wagyu, was born at Mr Kazuyoshi Saeki’s in Yokota-machi Shimane prefecture. His sire was Dai 14 Shigeru (Okayama-line), and his dam

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was Dai 9 Itozakura (Hyogo-line). Dai 7 Itozakura was her 7th calf. In May 1971 he was procured by Mr Kunio Horio (a bull breeder), and an individual performance test of him was conducted at the prefectural experimental center (DG 1.38kg).

Dai 7 Itozakura became the property of Shimane prefecture and semen collection started from April 1972. In the ten years to August 1982, 10,000 straws were collected from him. He died from a tumor in the rumen on August 24th 1982. He was 11 years, 8 months old and in his prime. He was due to be shown as a model bull the following month at the 4th Zenkyo (show) held in Fukushima, which was to have been his crowning presentation.

Characteristics

His indirect progeny test which was completed in March 1975 became the first page in the history of Wagyu breeding. His result was historic, with DG 1.02kg and a marbling score of +3.4 (by the old method). In those days, there were few black Wagyu bulls whose DG exceeded 1kg in progeny tests. Even famous bulls such as ‘Yasumidoi’ and ‘Kikuterudoi’ (Hyogo prefecture) had DG around 0.75kg.

Around the same time the trend recommending ‘economical fattening’ was just starting to become popular. Just a few years after the progeny test, Dai 7 Itozakura established his undisputed reputation as ‘Japan’s most economically sound Wagyu’. At the 5th Zenkyo (show) held in Shimane 5 years after Dai 7 Itozakura’s death, Shimane Wagyu came top in the fattened cattle division and dominated most other divisions. This saw the coming of age of Shimane Wagyu.

Strong points: daily gain, gentle nature, early maturing, rib eye area, fertility (milk yield, prolificacy) suitable for grazing and group feeding.

Weak points: unbalanced body, thick bones, meat texture, fat quality, slight lack of meat flavour, face, coat, and marbling in round.

Genetic Background

Dai 7 Itozakura’s sire, Dai 14 Shigeru is a grandson of Dai 6 Fujiyoshi (Okayama prefecture). This is why Itozakura is said to be of the Fujiyoshi-line. His dam, Dai 9 Itozakura, is an elite cow, one of the few cows of the Hyogo-line in Shimane prefecture, having Shiromatsu (a grandson of Tajiri, a famous Hyogo bull) as her sire, and the father of Shiromatsu’s dam is the famous Atsudoi, one of the most elite blood lines of all. It is clear that she had a good foundation for producing good meat quality cattle. Dai 9 Itozakura is famous as a prolific cow, calving 13 head (5 female and 8 male progeny). This fact supports the reputation of Dai 7 Itozakura for fertility.

Main Progeny

(Bulls sired by Dai 7 Itozakura)

- Itoharunami (Shimane Prefecture) Born April 2nd 1978
Sire: Dai 7 Itozakura
Grandfather: Fukukanenami
Great-Grandfather: Harumi (old type)
Progeny test: DG 0.81, BMS +3.4, REA 51

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Itoharunami is said to have conspicuously shown Itozakura's weak points, that is the long body (side) and thick bones. However by breeding with dams from the Hyogo lines that had slightly poorer daily gain and finer bones these weaker points almost never appeared and the progeny were transfigured into cattle from which extraordinary daily gain and stable meat quality could be expected. Furthermore with careful control over breeding these cattle produced top results at the national level. Itoharunami died in 1990.

- Itohana (Shimane Prefecture) Born August 3rd 1978

Sire: Dai 7 Itozakura

Grandfather: also Dai 7 Itozakura

Great-grandfather: Harumi (old type)

Progeny test: DG 0.91, BMS +4.3. This was the top score for indirect progeny tests in Japan for 1985.

Itohana was short in height at the withers, with short legs and tended to produce many calves that were black, his value as breeding stock was low, so that despite the figures of his tests he was not widely used. However Itohana is indeed the one bull who most strongly showed his inheritance from Dai 7 Itozakura in the quality of his meat quality. If the recognition of the value of breeding stock had happened 10 years earlier, I am convinced that Itohana's BMS breeding stock value would have been amongst the top in the country. Itohana died in 1994.

- Itofuji (Shimane prefecture, Furushiro AI center, bred by Mr Kenji Mukugi) Born October 21st, 1985

Sire: Dai 7 Itozakura

Grandfather: Harumi

Great-grandfather: Fukukanenami.

Progeny test: DG 0.98, BMS 3.0, REA 46

When we speak of Itofuji, the stud bull of Okayama prefecture is famous. In the collection of stud bull's test values in Shimane prefecture for 1995, Itofuji's BMS came second, his DG was 3rd amongst the group of 31 head tested and the balance between his meat quality and daily gain led the field in the results. It could be said that his appearance is good news for Shimane prefecture.

- Shigeshigezakura (Shimane Prefecture, produced by Kakeai town) Born August 28th, 1990

Sire: Shigeshigenami

Grandfather: Dai 7 Itozakura

Great-Grandfather: Harumi

Progeny test: DG 0.94, BMS 2.4, REA 48

As part of the program by local non-government organizations to improve stock through friendly interchange, Shimane and Miyagi prefectures exchanged the semen of Shigeshigenami and Dai 7 Itozakura, the result being the production of Shigeshigezakura. In order to improve the quality of stud bulls, it is impossible to maintain the balance between daily gain and meat quality, unless administrative barriers are broken down. Shigeshigezakura is currently the most popular stud bull in Shimane Prefecture and it is not unusual for his steers at the calf market to regularly record top prices. His strong points

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include large rib eye area, well-proportioned body, good daily gain and good fine grain in the meat. He has the condensed ability of the good points of both sire and dam.

Points to Note in Breeding

- Bulls from the Itozakura line should be divided into two main groups. Those with good daily gain, such as Mizutani, Itofuji etc. and those which tend to vary in daily gain but have good meat quality, such as Kagefuji, Kitaguni etc. The first group should be crossed with cows that have stable meat quality, while the second group should be crossed with those lines that have a good balance between daily gain and meat quality (Yasufuku etc.). In this way it should be possible to achieve uniformity in the progeny.
- Progeny from the Itozakura line tend to be particularly susceptible to a deficiency of Vitamin A and both breeders and fatteners should seek advice from experts in order to avoid accidents. In breeding stock it can lead to infertility and progeny with weak conditions, while for fattening stock it can cause respiratory problems and dropsy.
- As bulls in the Itozakura line mature particularly early for Wagyu, it should be noted that there are obvious cases of virility declining in later years. In the future it will be important to work on improving late-maturing, using Harumi (Kedaka line) or the Kikumidoi line of the Hyogo line.

SOURCE: “NIHON MEIGYU HYAKUSEN (TOP 100 CATTLE IN JAPAN)” PUBLISHER: NIKUGYN SHINPOSA (LEVEL 3, ACTY ACE AREA, 2-22-8 NISHISUGAMO, TOYOSHIMA-KU, TOKYO POSTCODE 170-0001 FAX: 001 81 3 5974 2963.

A number of bulls have been exported from Japan and that are heavy in Itozakura blood.

Bull	Sire	Grand Sire
Itohana 2	Itohana	Dai 7 Itozakura
Itomichi 1/2	Itomichi	Dai 7 Itozakura
Kikuhana	Itohana	Dai 7 Itozakura
Itoshigefuji	Itofuji	Dai 7 Itozakura
Kenhanafuji	Itohana	Dai 7 Itozakura
Mitsuhikokura	Itohirari	Dai 7 Itozakura
Itomoritaka	Itohirashige	Dai 14 Shigeru
Itozurudoi	Itokitazuru	Dai 7 Itozakura

Bull	Dam's Sire	Grand Sire
Mitsuhikokura	Itomichi	Dai 7 Itozakura
Itohana	Itomichi	Dai 7 Itozakura
Kikuhana	Dai 7 Itozakura	Dai 14 Shigeru
Itoshigefuji	Itomichi	Dai 7 Itozakura
Yasutanizakura	Tanimizu	Dai 7 Itozakura

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You may have wondered why I have included Shigeshigekakuru. I have seen this bull at the Shimane Prefecture bull stud and he is a tremendous individual and shows many traits that would be ideal for Australian conditions. We can learn from successful Japanese breeding and mirror it without having access to their current genetics of top bulls. Some of my favourite females I have bred are sired by Itoshigenami from Itozakura bloodlines, similar breeding as Shigeshigekakuru.

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