

## Studying Japanese Bloodlines:

### Reference Sire - Shigeshigenami

#### Introduction

I am often asked which are the most important breeding bulls exported from Japan. Itoshigenami is in the top three. Shigeshigenami is a Tajima bred bull of Kumanami line, which has never been exported from Japan. This bull is famous throughout Japan for increasing the quality of Wagyu cattle in Miaga Prefecture. I have been fortunate to visit Miaga Prefecture to inspect feedlots and breeder farms, and see first hand many progeny of Shigeshigenami.

I found the cattle to be robust, with good deep front ends, tremendous width through the chest, deep and capacious through the heart area, a good spring of rib with deep flank. The cattle could be criticized for being low set. This strength makes them ideal to be used in Australian breeding, especially when crossed with Itozakura bloodlines to maintain marbling and meat quality.

Itoshigenami, the son of Shigeshigenami is available to Australian breeders, and exhibits in his progeny the consistency that the Kumanami line is famous.

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*Following is an extract from the "Nihon Meigyū Hyakusen (Top 100 Cattle in Japan)" written by Mr. Kenichi Ono. This has been edited to include only the history of Shigeshigenami progeny with influences in the available bloodlines in Australia.*

#### Background

The bull most representative of 'meat quality Wagyu', was born in Hyogo prefecture, Hamazaka town on April 15th 1972, at Mr. Fushimi Kusuda's property. His sire was the 15 year old Shigekanenami and his dam Shigemitsu, who was also progeny of Shigekanenami. He was her 6th calf. In October of the same year, as a candidate for stud bull he became the property of Hyogo prefecture where his name was changed from Masaki to Shigeshigenami.

However in September of the following year he was sold by the prefecture in disposal sale to the grower Mr. Hideo Yodomi. He was then exhibited in the June 1974 auction. Shigeshigenami was sold for what was at the time the exceptional price of 450,000 Yen to Miyagi prefecture. Because at the time of the sale he was already in his 3rd year (fully 2 years of age), three weeks after his arrival in Miyagi prefecture production of straws was begun until his death due to old age on January 23rd 1988. In a career spanning more than 13 years, he produced around 150,000 straws.

In 1983 at the National Beef Dressed Carcass Exhibition (Tokyo meat market) held for the first time in 10 years, the progeny of Shigeshigenami achieved the feat of securing both first and second places in the steers category. Furthermore in 1985 the results of data collected by the Performance of Meat Production Survey, conducted by the Livestock Breeding Centre, showed a grading result of 73% and here too, achieved number one nationally. In this way the results of the rapid improvement in stock due to Shigeshigenami meant the development of 'brands' of Miyagi prefecture beef, such as Sendai Beef, Wakayanagi Beef and Kagoshimadai Beef, all of which become established in eastern Japan, particularly in the Kanto region.

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## Characteristics

In March 1982 the first ever indirect progeny tests were held by Miyagi prefecture, Shigeshigenami; DG 0.79, BMS +3.3, REA 46.

**Strong Points:** marbling, strong heritability, prolificacy, longevity, meat colour, lipids, texture, loss of marbling in the round, bone closeness, face, gentle and docile.

**Weak Points:** streaky marbling, late maturing, body line, rump shape, shape in the round, round thickness, milk quality, daily gain etc.

## Genetic Background

Shige-shigenami was an inbred stud bull, the result of crossbreeding between his sire Shigekanenami and Shige-kanenami's daughter, both of the Kumanami line. This was a line which was in decline in Hyogo prefecture at the time. His grandfather was the famous Atsudoi of the Nakadoi line and his great-grandfather was Suzutora, also of the Nakadoi line. His dam Shigemitsu has the record of 14 calves (one calf a year), including Shige-shigenami who was her 6th, and is well known as being a strong, healthy cow which has both fertile and long-lived.

As long as the problem of daily gain can be cleared I believe that quite high hopes can also be held of the Shige-shigenami line cows as breeding stock. Many stud bulls of the Shige-shigenami line have succeeded outside Hyogo prefecture.

## Main Progeny

- Shigeshigezakura (Shimane Prefecture) Born August 28th, 1996  
Sire: Shigeshigenami  
Grandfather: Dai 7 Itozakura  
Great-grandfather: Harumi

At the Yokohama Meat Market exhibition held in May 1998, one Shigeshigezakura fattening progeny was a prize winner and was sold at auction for the high price of 1.8 million yen. (BMS 12, Dam's sire: Itoharunami) In the future high hopes can be held for increased popularity in Shimane prefecture.

## Points to Note in Breeding

- Bulls of the Shige-shigenami line tend to lack shoulder width and thickness in the thigh. Breeding with the Itozakura line or Yasufuku line will work towards improving the depth and shoulder width, while at the same time attempts should continue to stabilize meat quality. Conversely care should be taken when breeding with lines that have a fine rib eye area.
- As both Wagyu and F1 have a strong tendency to late maturing extreme shortening of the fattening period can lead to a drop in results and finding just the right balance is important. For stud stock it is important that the age at first servicing is not too young.

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Itoshigenami females have good depth and width through the body, a great constitution with very good milk and mothering ability. They make wonderful brood cows when crossed with Itozakura bloodlines. However, when crossed with Naki-doi bloodlines, females may be frail.

With many famous carcasses having been sired by Itoshigenami in Australia, we are confident to predict that breeders will find carcasses with high quality marbling (though a little coarse when compared to Naki-line Tajima bulls), extremely large eye muscle, with the correct amount of subcutaneous and intermuscular fat. The carcasses are very consistent.

ARTICLE: DAVID BLACKMORE