

March 21, 2025

Revamped Wagyu competition set for record success

The Royal Queensland Show's (Ekka) prestigious Paddock to Palate Wagyu Challenge presented by JBS Australia has undergone an exciting revamp, with new competition classes and double the prize money expected to attract record entries.

Entries for the 2026 competition opened today, with the Wagyu Challenge regarded as one of the world's most commercially relevant beef competitions, giving producers the chance to benchmark their cattle and gain valuable insights through industry-leading data collection.

The most significant change will see the competition feature two classes instead of one – Fullblood/Purebred (above 93% Wagyu genetics) and Crossbred (92% Wagyu content and below).

RNA Beef Committee Chair Gary Noller said the change was made to ensure a fairer competition between different genetic classifications.

“Crossbred Wagyu will always gain faster and feature in the weight gain phase, while fullblood cattle perform better in carcass judging – so by splitting the Wagyu Challenge into two classes we make it a more even and fair competition,” he said.

“This change also means the overall prize pool has doubled to \$18,000, providing more producers with the opportunity to share in the rewards.”

Another key change will see JBS Australia purchase all competition entries as feeder steers, providing exhibitors with a competitive rate at the point of entry into the feedlot rather than at the close of the competition. This eliminates the risk associated with fluctuations in feed and grid prices, giving producers more financial certainty.

As part of the revamp, steers will also be fed at the JBS Beef City Feedlot west of Toowoomba for the first time, for a shorter period of 380 days, before being processed at the Beef City Plant.

RNA Beef Committee Chair Gary Noller said the changes, including the reduced time on feed, were driven by shifts in the commercial environment and consumer expectations.

“This revamp is about aligning the competition with current industry standards and ensuring it continues to be relevant for producers and consumers,” he said.

“The changes to the competition are all very positive, and as a result we're expecting to see an increase in the number of entries this year.”

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The competition features four phases which are weight gain, a carcass competition, carcass value and a beef taste off. The exhibitor who polls the highest aggregate score across all four phases will be awarded the overall prize at the Paddock to Palate Awards and Beef Industry Dinner during Ekka Beef Week in August 2026.

Entries close Friday 2 May 2025. To enter go to www.ekka.com.au/animal-experiences/beef-cattle/paddock-to-palate

Proud sponsors of the Paddock to Palate Wagyu Challenge include JBS Australia, 3D Genetics, Australian Wagyu Association, Coopers Animal Health, Elanco Animal Health, Thompson Longhorn, Thynne + Macartney, Queensland Country Life, Zoetis, Datamars Livestock and Complete Women's Healthcare.

The competition prize pool and key dates are listed below.

Class 39 Wagyu Fullblood - prize pool:

Sponsor/Section/Class	Placing	Prize
Class 39 - The Australian Wagyu Association RNA Paddock to Palate Wagyu Challenge - Overall Winner	1st	\$1,750 + trophy
	2nd	\$1,000
	3rd	\$750
Class 39A Best Weight Gain for Pen of Six Grain-Fed Wagyu Steers	1st	\$500
	2nd	\$300
	3rd	\$150
Class 39A Highest Individual Weight Gain	1st	\$450
Class 39B The Australian Wagyu Association Pen of Six Carcass Competition	1st	\$500
	2nd	\$300
	3rd	\$150
Class 39B The Australian Wagyu Association Champion Carcass	Champ	\$500
Class 39B The Australian Wagyu Association Reserve Champion Carcass	Res Champ	\$500
Class 39C The Australian Wagyu Association Pen of Six Carcass Value Competition	1st	\$500
	2nd	\$300
	3rd	\$150
Class 39C The Queensland Country Life Highest Scoring Carcass Value Animal	1st	\$450
Class 39D Beef Taste-Off Competition	1st	\$500
	2nd	\$300
	3rd	\$150

Class 39 Wagyu Fullblood - key dates:

- Entries close: Friday 2 May 2025
- Delivery of animals: Monday 26 May 2025

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- Competition start day: Wednesday 28 May 2025
- Final weighing day: Thursday 12 June 2026
- Field Day: Tuesday 16 June 2026
- Processing of cattle: Friday 19 June 2026
- Presentation of Awards: Ekka Beef Week 2026

Class 41 Wagyu Crossbred - prize pool:

Sponsor/Section/Class	Placing	Prize
Class 41 RNA Paddock to Palate Wagyu Challenge - Overall Winner	1st	\$1,750 + trophy
	2nd	\$1,000
	3rd	\$750
Class 41A Best Weight Gain for Pen of Six Grain-Fed Wagyu Steers	1st	\$500
	2nd	\$300
	3rd	\$150
Class 41A Highest Individual Weight Gain	1st	\$450
Class 41B Pen of Six Carcass Competition	1st	\$500
	2nd	\$300
	3rd	\$150
Class 41B Champion Carcass	Champ	\$500
Class 41B Reserve Champion Carcass	Res Champ	\$500
Class 41C Pen of Six Carcass Value Competition	1st	\$500
	2nd	\$300
	3rd	\$150
Class 41C Highest Scoring Carcass Value Animal	1st	\$450
Class 41D Beef Taste-Off Competition	1st	\$500
	2nd	\$300
	3rd	\$150

Class 41 – Wagyu Crossbred key dates:

- Entries close: Friday 2 May 2025
- Delivery of animals: Monday 26 May 2025
- Competition start day: Wednesday 28 May 2025
- Final weighing day: Thursday 12 June 2026
- Field Day: Tuesday 16 June 2026
- Processing of cattle: Friday 19 June 2026
- Presentation of Awards: Ekka Beef Week 2026

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