

February 16, 2026

## World-class data drives Ekka Wagyu Challenge success

Australian Wagyu producers can gain access to some of the most comprehensive genetic benchmarking and carcass performance data in the world, with entries opening today for the Royal Queensland Show's (Ekka) 2027 Paddock to Palate Wagyu Challenge presented by JBS Australia.

The competition, which sees cattle fed for 380 days, offers more than \$14,000 in prizemoney across two classes – Fullblood and Purebred (minimum 93% Wagyu genetics) and Crossbred (92% or lower).

The Wagyu Challenge provides producers with an unrivalled opportunity to benchmark their cattle and collect valuable performance and carcass data to validate breeding decisions.

RNA Beef Committee Chair Gary Noller said the competition provided the most comprehensive data of its kind in the world.

"The depth of data we collect is incredibly beneficial for Wagyu breeders," Mr Noller said.

"In the third phase of the competition - carcass value - we use a Meat Image Japan (MIJ-30) digital carcass camera to measure yield, quality, colour and fatness, adding another layer of accuracy and integrity to the data collected.

"The information gathered through the competition also validates existing data tools such as BREEDPLAN and Estimated Breeding Values, giving producers additional insights to strengthen their decision making."

For the second time, cattle in the Wagyu Challenge will be fed at the JBS Beef City Feedlot west of Toowoomba, where the 2026 competition cattle are currently on feed.

Mr Noller said the 2026 cattle were performing strongly.

"The season for lotfeeding has been almost perfect, so the cattle are performing exceptionally well in the feedlot," he said.

Entries for the 2026 competition increased by almost 30 per cent compared to the year prior and further growth is expected for 2027 as producers continue to recognise the value of the data generated.

The competition consists of four phases - weight gain, carcass competition, carcass value, and a beef taste-off. The exhibitor with the highest total score across all phases will receive the overall prize at the Paddock to Palate Awards and Beef Industry Dinner during Ekka Beef Week in August 2027.

Entries for the Wagyu Challenge close on Friday 20 March. To enter go to <https://www.ekka.com.au/animal-experiences/beef-cattle/paddock-to-palate#wanttoenter>

Proud sponsors of the Paddock to Palate Wagyu Challenge include JBS Australia, 3D Genetics, Australian Wagyu Association, Coopers Animal Health, Thompson Longhorn, Queensland Country Life, Zoetis, and Datamars Livestock.

The competition prize pool and key dates are listed below.

Class 39 Wagyu Fullblood & Purebred - prize pool:

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

Class 41 Wagyu Crossbred - prize pool:

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

Class 41D Beef Taste-Off Competition	1st	\$500
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Classes 39 and 41 - key dates:

- Entries close: Friday 20 March 2026
- Delivery of animals: Monday 25 May 2026
- Competition start day: Wednesday 27 May 2026
- Final weighing day: Friday 11 June 2027
- Field Day: Tuesday 15 June 2027
- Processing of cattle: Friday 18 June 2027
- Presentation of Awards: Ekka Beef Week – Thursday 5 August 2027

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