



Buffalo News

VOL 7 NO 4 - MARCH 2008

Official newsletter of the Australian Buffalo Industry Council

New national buffalo register officially up and running

The new national buffalo register is now ready to be populated! Buffalo farmers are encouraged to register their important animals, with as much progeny history that they have from their records. The register will make it easier for people

to buy and sell animals in the future, especially to overseas customers interested in pedigrees, particularly Riverine.

A \$5.25 per calf charge will apply for each animal registered from 2008 onwards. People with stud

breeding aspirations or dairying/beef enterprises can extend this service to cover "Breedplan" analysis for traits that they want to record, such as milk testing, growth, carcass and reproduction. Extra charges will apply for these services, but are similar for the other beef and dairy breeds.

Producers are encouraged to lodge their details immediately to benefit from free registration of all animals born prior to 2008. These should be submitted to the register coordinator Barry Lemcke by the end of March. Barry can supply the relevant paperwork, by email for those people

with internet access. The electronic version will be preferable for those with bigger numbers, or for those with computer access, and is available as an Excel file to fill in (Instructions included in the attachment).

Paper copies for small numbers can be posted to Barry Lemcke, at DPIFM, PO Box 3000, Darwin NT 0801 or faxed to 08 8999 2043. Also, please email buffalo.register@nt.gov.au to get a copy of the forms or to return completed forms.

Any queries should be directed to Barry Lemcke: barry.lemcke@nt.gov.au or at phone 08 8999 2263.



The Eddy's breeder herd - at Numurkah in Victoria



2008 ABIC committee: L-R: Michael Swart (NT), Mitch Humphries (Qld), Doug Robertson (NSW), Marg Thompson (Pres -Qld), Robin Richmond (Vic), Craig Gould (Guest-Qld), Andrew Stewart (WA), Athel Smith (Sec/Treas-Vic), Heather Smith (Minutes taker-Vic)

Spotlight on Victoria

ABIC state and territory representatives flew into Melbourne in February for their Annual General Meeting, conference and Sunday field trip to Numurkah. For more details and photos, see Page 2.

ABIC Website - www.buffaloaustralia.org

Italy hosts World Buffalo Congress



Young bulls being led around the show ring at Eboli, Salerno



The rowdy back-of-the-busers, including people from the USA, Columbia, New Zealand, Canada and Australia (Mitch centre back)

2008 live exports off to a good start

A total of 700 buffalo were shipped out through the Port of Darwin to Indonesia in January, marking a good start to the year for the local live export industry. By the end of 2007, a total of 3905 buffalo had been export through Darwin. Of those, 2865 went to Indonesia, 582 to West Malaysia, 306 to Brunei and 152 to Sabah.

Buffalo News

We welcome contributions on any issue or activity relating to Australia's buffalo industry. Stories and/or photos can be sent to, or discussed with:

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ABIC representatives Mitch Humphries (Qld) and Barry Lemcke (DPIF-NT) attended the 8th World Buffalo Congress at Caserta in Italy last October.

The 10-day congress program included the main four-day forum, pre and post congress workshops and field trips. Keynote addresses and forum papers were presented concurrently across four rooms and delegates, armed with two volumes of abstracts, moved from room to room depending on what topic they were interested in. Most speakers came from Italy, Asia and South America. Others came from Australia and Japan.

Papers covered genetics, nutrition, feeding and reproduction, biotechnology, diseases, milk and meat production, food safety and technology, rearing and environmental control, economics and clinical science.

Mitch and Barry each attended one of the two pre-congress workshops offered - one on cheese manufacturing technologies and the other on managing buffalo breeding. After the formal congress sessions, delegates visited many of Italy's key breeding farms and 'caseifici' (cheese manufacturing) facilities. Many properties combined buffalo production with milking and cheese making. A post-congress highlight was a trip to

Salerno for the 3rd National Show of the Mediterranean Italian Buffalo in Eboli. "Judging of all the classes proceeded for the whole day with parades of each class in an area with good spectator seating available." Barry reports. "It was also possible to observe all individual stock in stalls outside the arena."

Other highlights included farm and facility visits through two farms in the Caserta, Latina, Frosinone and Lombardia regions. The delegates inspected a very large Caserta buffalo farm with feedlots housing 1000 head of breeders and facilities to milk 700 head twice daily.

In Cremona in Lombardia, delegates attended the 62nd International Dairy Show. This mainly featured Friesian cattle but judging of local buffalo also took place. For lunch delegates were treated to a large range of local cheeses, continental meats, bread and wine. The cheeses were given on a specific order for tasting from mildest to strongest and exotic named varieties like bocconcini, buffalino bianco, quadrello, casatica, caciocavallo di bufala, sovrano, desiderio and blu di bufala.

**FOR A FULL REPORT
Contact Barry Lemcke
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A typical 'caseifici' refrigerated retail display - many varieties of locally sourced cheeses, and often including multi-species cheese varieties and fresh meats and smallgoods

ABIC members check out parts of Victoria's buffalo industry

The Australian Buffalo Industry Council held its Annual General Meeting in Melbourne on 9 February, with representatives flying in from all over Australia.

Key issues discussed included the brucellosis outbreak in Italy which threatens that country's cheese-making industry. Reps were able to see at first hand the drought conditions and other issues affecting some buffalo farmers close to Melbourne.

On top of the drought, two larger Victorian operators have had their irrigation water stopped, resulting in problems with feed and overstocking, and many buffalo have had to be culled. Another farmer at Wodonga on the Murray River is still in caretaker mode from previous years.

"These problems have been compounded by the ongoing abattoir situation," VicBic president and ABIC secretary/treasurer Athel reported to reps during on the visit.

"We cannot find abattoirs in a reasonable location willing to process buffalo. Several markets wishing to try buffalo have had to be forfeited for the time being. If we could get our animals

killed, we would be flying as an industry."

During the Sunday field trip to Neroli and Geoff Eddy's buffalo farm and cafe, the reps caught up with Bulgarin vet George Malinov, who now lives in the Numurkah area. George spoke last year to Victorian producers about the attributes of Murrah Buffalo and they are keen to explore a potential Murrah project.

"With continual inquiries for riverine milking stock and the problems with health issues in Italy and low stock numbers in parts of Asia, we feel that healthy clean stock will be in demand," Athel said. "It will be up to us to



Neroli Eddy out the back of the cafe rewarding her crossbred river heifer-in-training for one of her 'tricks'



Cafe guests can get 'up close and personal' with some well trained buffalo to see how compliant they can become



Typical Victorian irrigated pasture under present drought conditions. These animals are in good condition but surviving on supplied hay

ABIC WEBSITE & TRADING POST

At the Melbourne AGM, it was decided to upgrade our website (www.buffaloaustralia.org) by including links from our site to buffalo farming agnotes. We will also provide more information on the Buffalo Dairy page.

The website will also include details invited people who do not have buffalo, to join ABIC as associate members.

Our Buffalo 'Trading Post' will enable ABIC members to advertise at \$30 for 3 months or \$50 for 12 months, and non-ABIC members to advertise at \$50 for 3 months.

These rates represent excellent value and will be looked at during our 2009 AGM on the Sunshine Coast.

Report on RIRDC research directions

During the Annual ABIC meeting, Doug Robertson provided a summary of how the RIRDC buffalo research money had been spent (details previously circulated). He spoke of the two teleconferences held during the year, one gaining final approval for a project on enhancing productivity, and the other to discuss new research proposals. Doug expressed concern over the direction of research funding requirements being developed under the new government, especially in regard to small industries like the buffalo industry.

Buffalo News & Views . . .

from around the country

Tasmania

Phillip Oates reported that 2007 had bought his family's Oyster Cove buffalo venture a step closer to a goal he had 10 years ago. "We have secured a regular order for a constant monthly supply of buffalo mince and prime cuts. We've had enquiries from as far away as New Zealand, and locally, on products and live animals. Eight calves were born this year - one bull calf and seven heifers - but we've had our share of deaths. We are in the same position as a lot of Australia at the moment, with no feed, and recorded very low rainfall for December and January.

Excerpts from ABIC State and Territory representatives' reports to the 2008 AGM in Melbourne

Western Australia

Andrew Stewart provided the latest details on his state's four known herds. Andrew has 39 animals, including a ¾ riverine bull. John Starr has about 40 animals remaining, and is setting up a game shooting operation. Phil Carter has about 38, but is having problems with hunters. He has 10 young riverine crosses which stay close to the house! He has no information on Tubby Norwood's herd. The Rowlands plan to acquire 8 - 10 riverine cross females

from Andrew for breeding for milking in the southwest.

New South Wales

Doug Robertson advised that 2007 had ended on a positive note with good rainfall in some parts of the state - a welcome turnaround after many years of drought. Buffalo production was limited to two properties with significant numbers (>100 head), and several small herds remained but with no real commercial value. Greg Giblett no longer has buffalo and has advised that he would be happy to step aside for anyone who can utilise his position as an ABIC rep for NSW.

Queensland

Mitch Humphries reported a steady growth in buffalo numbers in Queensland, with industry development continuing. Marg and Mal Thompson have been milking 10 or so cows and supplying a gourmet cheese factory in Maleny, which sees many tourists daily. They plan to increase their herd. Industry newcomers Craig and Jana Gould from the Lakeland district north of Cairns have developed a small herd and are working towards prime meat production. Mitch's Millaa Millaa dairy herd now consists of about 65 producing cows, and is increasing with home reared heifers.

Northern Territory

Michael Swart reported on NTBIC's new Strategic Plan for 2007-2012, and the administrative and executive services now provided to the council through the NT Cattlemen's Association, as per a MOU. Live exports still constitute the NT's main market. There's been a shift away from West Malaysia and a greater emphasis on Indone-

sia. NTBIC again sponsored the TenderBuff award at the 2007 Territory Culinary Challenge and ran its ever-popular buffalo food stall at the Royal Darwin Show. Ownership of the Beatrice Hill riverine herd is being finalised and will possibly result in a split of ownership between NTBIC and the NT Government.

Victoria

Athel Smith reported that Victoria was still severely drought affected. The Richmonds' and the Eddys' situation is most serious because their irrigation supplies have been cut, forcing them to cull back their herds. Lack of abattoirs is still a major problem, with traveling distance too great for the ones that do process buffalo.

In October, Robyn Richmond and Athel attended the *Diversifying Agriculture* Conference at Kyabram, where they spoke on buffalo and were asked plenty of questions.

Another positive in 2007 was a Gippsland farmer joining the industry. He purchased 16 buffalo from the Eddys and borrowed Athel's bull, to start a herd. He is full of enthusiasm despite being informed of our current situation.

Japan bound swampies

At time of the newsletter going to print, Victorian producers Neroli and Geoff Eddy were due to send off their first shipment of three swamp buffalo to Japan. They've been told if the Japanese are happy with these animals more orders will come.

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