



Buffalo News

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Official newsletter of the Australian Buffalo Industry Council (ABIC)



Roger Haldane next to the six-wire electric fences in place at the family's Shaw River property as a requirement of the buffalo permits

Extension offered for Vic buffalo permits

Western Victorian water buffalo farmers and cheese manufacturers, the Haldane family from Shaw River Buffalo Cheese, have recently completed the process of renewing their Pest Animal permits for farming water buffalo in Victoria. Shaw River has held a permit since starting their Victorian buffalo farming venture.

Shaw River's Ewan Haldane recently had discussions with the Department of Primary Industries' (DPI) biosecurity officer (Adam Kay, and says, 'Adam has requested that I pass on a reminder through *Buffalo News* to fellow Victorian breeders and people looking to sell animals into the state that in order to own, breed, sell or import water buffalo into Victoria they are legally required to hold a Pest Animal permit. These permits are of significant importance in maintaining specific standards with regards to water buffalo farming in Victoria, and in Australia, and it is expected that established water buffalo studs already hold them.

New entrants into the industry should be aware that permits must be acquired and farm inspections completed before they can start keeping water buffalo on their property or importing animals from other states.

Over the past decade, penalties have been introduced for failure to hold the relevant permits for farming/keeping water buffalo in Victoria, and in turn, for not meeting professional farming standards required under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act*.

The Department of Primary Industries reiterates that it is illegal to keep water buffalo without a valid permit, and that severe criminal penalties apply to Victorian water buffalo farmers without permits.

Permit applications were sent out to all known water buffalo farmers in the middle of this year, and the time for both renewing existing permits and lodging new permits closed in September for 2012. However, as per his recent discussions with Biosecurity Officer Adam Kay, Ewan Haldane is able to advise that DPI will allow a small window for water buffalo farmers to lodge last-minute applications.

He says it is important that ABIC and VICBIC members highlight these requirements within the broader industry and to potential new entrants.

■ **PERMIT application guides & forms can be obtained through Jennifer Nunan (DPI Biosecurity Officer) - jenni.nunan@dpi.vic.gov.au or call on (03) 5761 1580**

Brunei takes latest buffalo shipment

A shipment of 146 buffalo was exported live out of Darwin to Brunei in November and more shipments are reportedly in the pipeline in coming months. The November shipment brings to 628 the total number of buffalo imported by Brunei throughout 2012.

Brunei was the only Asian importer of Australian live buffalo during the year – and increased its orders over the previous year.

A total of 1841 head of live buffalo were exported out of Darwin in 2011, with 470 going to Brunei and 1371 going to Indonesia.

Source: NTG Pastoral Market Update

ABIC Website - www.buffaloaustralia.org

Assistance packages to enhance livestock market animal welfare

Two assistance packages to improve animal welfare outcomes in livestock markets are available as part of Australian Government regulatory reforms for the live export trade.

Improved Animal Welfare Program (IAWP)

Supported by \$10 million in funding over four financial years (2011-12 to 2014-15) from the Official Development Assistance (ODA) contingency reserve to eligible countries to improve animal welfare outcomes and achieve World Organisation for Animal Health (OIH) standards.

- To be eligible for the program countries must be currently importing live-cattle from Australia and also be eligible to receive ODA assistance.
- Countries eligible for assistance under the IAWP are: Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt and Mauritius.
- The provision of assistance is dependent upon agreement from the relevant partner country governments.
- Details on areas of technical assistance and capacity building to improve animal welfare outcomes will be settled in consultation with authorities in ODA eligible countries.
- The IAWP has the capacity to sponsor Indonesian Government veterinarians and officials on study visits to Australia to view Australia's application of international handling and welfare standards during transport and slaughter.

Approved Supply Chain Improvements Program (ASCIP)

Provides \$5 million over two financial years (2011-12 and 2012-13), and is designed to encourage Australian industry investment in approved supply chains in Australian export markets.

- The ASCIP supports the Australian Government decision to implement a new regulatory framework for livestock exports for feeder and slaughter purposes.
- The program will provide reimbursements of up to 25 per cent of Australian exporter investment on eligible activities in approved export supply chains. Eligible activities include stunning; infrastructure upgrades, and training.
- Only Australian livestock export business entities or livestock export industry bodies headquartered in Australia, holding a current Australian Business Number and registered in Australia for tax purposes are eligible to receive funding under ASCIP.
- Expenditure (by eligible entities) on approved supply chains from 21 October 2011 (inclusive) is eligible for program funding.
- Program funds will be provided to Australian exporters on a claim and reimbursement basis on provision of the required documentary evidence demonstrating they have invested in eligible activities in approved supply chains.
- The NT buffalo industry could access funds from the ASCIP program to go towards the expenses incurred in establishing an ESCAS approved supply chain to process Australian buffalo.
- Certain conditions apply to the use of ASCIP funds, as follows: (A) *At least 20 per cent of program funds (\$1 million) are to be used to encourage and promote the use of stunning in the slaughter of Australian livestock exports and (B) Program funding will be capped at \$200,000 per exporter per country related activities, and \$100,000 per supply chain per country.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION - Contact the Program Manager

Email: ASCIP@daff.gov.au - Phone: +61 2 6272 3300 or

Write to: ASCIP, Animal Welfare Branch - Department of Agriculture & Fisheries, GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601

Buffalo cull to halt wetlands damage



Thousands of free-ranging wild buffalo are devastating a valuable wetlands area, a recent *Territory Natural Resource Management Forum* in Darwin was told. The 150 delegates heard that contractors had culled more than 3600 buffalo by helicopter in a four-day operation as part of an ongoing program to protect Arnhem Land's nationally-significant Arafura Swamp.

Indigenous ranger group rep Jacob Bar-Lev spoke of paperbarks dying, water quality declining, saltwater intrusion, major erosion and valuable crocodile nesting sites being destroyed due to buffalo damage. He said further culling was needed to get buffalo numbers under control so the swamp environment could re-generate. He also said buffalo numbers were much higher in the general area than the 5000 indicated in a survey a few years ago. His estimate is 15,000. Jacob, accompanied by the NLC's Edmund Adekpanya, showed dramatic pictures of the area's decline in paperbark trees, escarpment erosion and saltwater intrusion into the wetland and swim channels created by the buffalo.

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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Buffalo live export workshop addresses critical industry issues

Northern Territory buffalo producers and exporters have welcomed a range of positive outcomes from a joint workshop with senior Primary Industry Department (formerly Resources Department) representatives in Darwin in August.

The workshop was convened to work through major issues confronting the local industry. It focused on a live buffalo export crisis in the wake of the 2010 cattle export suspension and the resulting stringent enhanced Australian animal welfare protocols.

A major hurdle in the path of exports has been the reluctance of Indonesian abattoirs to take buffalo because they cannot be stunned effectively with normal equipment.

A key workshop outcome was that urgent R&D was needed to find an effective stunning option that could be applied in both South East Asian and Australian domestic facilities.

The meeting agreed that a two-stage project be undertaken, with the first stage to study various Halal-approved slaughter/stunning techniques within the South East Asian environment.

The second stage would trial preferred options, ideally offshore in a typical facility likely to take buffalo, with input from the NT Buffalo Industry Council and the Primary Industry Department. It was agreed the department might need to establish and lead a small project team to drive this issue and that NTBIC could provide industry support and a nominated project team member.

Workshop participants agreed that the department should consult with industry, peak bodies and the Australian Government to determine if, over time, the scope of individual ESCAS cattle arrangements could be broadened to cover/include buffalo. (Probably dependent on validated R&D

re the efficacy of improved buffalo stunning procedures).

The workshop also resulted in the following recommended actions:

- The department to advise NTBIC and industry of any significant trade issues on an ongoing basis, document previous buffalo R&D studies, consult with NTBIC in relation to potentially doing a generic enterprise budget for a typical producer, provide government business planning assistance details to buffalo producers where requested, and work with NTBIC to develop an appropriate animal handling training manual for stevedores.

- Department of the Chief Minister to evaluate provisions of financial assistance under the NT Trade Support Scheme in the event that NTBIC and/or individual producers wish to market buffalo overseas

- The NT Chief Veterinary Officer to consult the buffalo industry in relation to aligning NLIS arrangements between cattle and buffalo, which may help simplify potential ESCAS arrangements

- NTBIC to determine if existing and potential NT abattoirs will process buffalo on either a service kill basis or purchase animals to process in their own right and explore options for partnerships or collaboration with new Elsey meat works.

- NTBIC to investigate potential interstate markets for live animals, with government assistance where appropriate, and explore opportunities to export buffalo into possible breeder markets, and investigate undertaking a whole-of-industry business plan/marketing plan.

The meeting agreed to circulate the details of two Commonwealth Animal Welfare Assistance Packages.

SEE DETAILS OPPOSITE PAGE

CSIRO researcher to report on stunning options

The Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries has contracted a livestock stunning specialist to prepare a report on the best options for stunning buffalo prior to slaughter.

CSIRO's Dr Alison Small has been asked to focus particularly on preparing buffalo for Halal in Indonesia.

Indonesian abattoirs now working under enhanced animal welfare standards are shying clear of processing buffalo because the animal's skulls are too thick for the stun to work effectively. The flow-on effect is a drop in orders for live buffalo exports out of the Northern Territory.

The Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) implemented in Indonesia and other Australian markets, has discouraged exporters from buying and selling buffalo.

While not compulsory, stunning is now a crucial and dominant part of the slaughter process for cattle in many overseas abattoirs. However, the hard-headed buffalo have left people in the industry scratching their own heads, wondering if there is a way forward.

An ordinary stun-gun is ineffective on the thick skull of a buffalo, and killing without it could leave the abattoirs and exporters exposed to animal welfare scrutiny.

Dr Small's report is expected by early March 2013.

**ABIC
DARWIN
BOUND**

The NTBIC will host ABIC's 2013 AGM in Darwin February. The weekend program will include the annual field trip to observe local buffalo industry operations.

Buffalo News & Views . . .

from around the country

Tasmania

● A herd of 45 buffalo happily grazing on 40 ha at south Preston in Tasmania's north, attracted the local *ABC Country Hour* reporter recently. The herd belongs to State ABIC rep Phil Oates, who introduced a Tasmanian buffalo herd for meat at Oyster Cove south of Hobart more than a decade ago. Phil told the reporter he's milking eight buff regularly and is negotiating to sell his milk to a cheesemaker. Buffalo products are popular in Tassie.

Northern Territory

● Two truck loads of Territory buffalo, including one of 50 animals, have made their way south to Victoria recently. Two decks of buffalo previously owned by Adelaide River producer Bill Lane, were sent down to be shared among local buffalo producers to boost their herds.

● Another truck load from Wongalara Station in Arnhem Land went south after being sold to a Victorian meatworks. Livestock agent,

Territory Rural, arranged the load as a trial run for reported possible future orders from the same meatworks.

● NTBIC is working closely with livestock agent Richard Bond who does buffalo work for local producers. NTBIC members are hoping they can tap into his expertise in Indonesia to ac-

cess new markets for buffalo in that country.

● Local producers are awaiting an update on whether AACo will be set up to process buffalo at its new multi-million dollar Noonamah meatworks south of Darwin. There's also keen interest in a possible Elsey meat processing facility.

Australian Buffalo Industry Council State / Territory Representatives

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RIRDC seeking nominations for Rural Leaders Program

The Rural Industries and Research Corporation (RIRDC) is inviting nominations from industry associations and individuals for its next Rural Leaders program.

What's it about?

This RIRDC initiative is designed to help Australia's new, developing and maturing rural industries grow and prosper by building the leadership skills of the people involved in them. The program focusses on the three key areas of leadership, networking and industry cohesion. Among a long list of benefits, participants develop strong leadership and management skills and greater self-awareness and adaptability of behavior preferences, management style and leadership approach. They get the opportunity to learn from successful leaders in different industries and to foster ongoing relationships both within industry and across sectors and regions to build networks and peer support. They also build cohesion within industry through new networks and leadership skills and develop practical skills to encourage industry-wide participation to build cohesion and encourage collaboration.

Eligibility: Applicants must work within one of Australia's new, developing or maturing industries including those currently within, but not restricted to, the RIRDC portfolio.

How to apply: The application form is an interactive PDF and can be completed electronically or downloaded, printed out and posted back to RIRDC. Alternatively, applicants can contact RIRDC by phone (02 6271 4136) or by email (rural.leaders@rirdc.gov.au) to request a form be posted out.

Applications should be returned via email to:

rural.leaders@rirdc.gov.au

or posted to:

Att: RIRDC Rural Leaders

Rural Industries R&D Corporation

Level 2, 15 National Circuit

Barton ACT 2600

APPLICATIONS CLOSE - Friday 14 Dec 2012.

Successful applicants will be notified mid-January 2013