



Buffalo News

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Victorian producers probe potential new breeding line

Victorian buffalo producers are investigating the feasibility of importing semen and embryos of the Bulgarian Murrah Buffalo, as part of efforts to enhance and develop their industry.

The breed is a cross between the Indian Murrah and the Mediterranean (Italian Riverine) buffalo. The Mediterranean is a much larger multi-purpose animal and the Murrah is a big producer of milk, with some animals providing up to 33 litres per day.

Victorian based Bulgarian IVF expert Dr George Malinov outlined the details at a recent meeting of VicBic members at Eddy's Family Cafe at Wanghnu. VicBic has enlisted Dr Malinov's advice on the feasibility of introducing the breed into herds.

Dr Malinov told the meeting that Bulgaria was now a member of the European Union, which should make it easier to obtain Bulgarian Murrah genetics.

He said he believed that embryo flushing, while more efficient in cattle, was the best way to increase buffalo numbers on the ground. Semen was another option.

"Dr Malinov advised he had been involved in an experiment in New Zealand using Swamp cows, to prove that frozen embryo transfers could be done on a commercial basis," VicBic reported in its minutes from the meeting. "He has offered to make some phone calls regarding embryos and semen prices and availability."

The minutes reported on a broad range of technical detail provided in rela-

tion to potential transplants, when they should be performed and what type of buffalo would be the best recipients.

"We were also informed that an IVF laboratory is to be built by the end of the year in Wanghnu for dairy cattle," VicBic reported. "George is involved with the owners who will be providing embryos for China, and he is to travel to China for the next two months, to help set up an IVF laboratory. In the future, the Wanghnu laboratory could be available for use for buffalo."

Dr Malinov advised he had all the drug protocols required for doing the transfers and these were 'a lot more sophisticated' than the crude drugs originally used in 1988.

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Buff strip loin a sensation



NTBIC sponsored the 'strip loin and knuckle' category of this year's NT Culinary Challenge and the winning dish was a tantalising creation from Darwin's Wisdom Bar and Cafe. ABOVE: (L-R) Event organiser TY Lee and NTBIC rep Les Reif congratulate Wisdom Bar and Cafe's chef Richard on his culinary prowess with buffalo. **MORE DETAILS - Page 2**

ABIC Website - www.buffaloaustralia.org

Buff a winner in Culinary Challenge

The annual NT Culinary Challenge has wound up, with chefs from 13 top local restaurants tempting diners with new cuisine created from local ingredients - and buffalo was a winner.

The challenge was organised by Charles Darwin University cookery lecturer and Australian Culinary Federation NT Chapter president T.Y. Lee.

Throughout April, the restaurants created dishes in categories using with local ingredients like buffalo, camel, prawns, snapper and tropical fruit and vegetables. Prizes were awarded in each category for preparation, taste and value-for-money, with winners announced at a gala dinner at SkyCity Darwin on 4 June.

The winning dish in Category 3 (strip loin and knuckle round) by chef Richard from Darwin's Wisdom Bar and Cafe was grand not only in taste and creativity but also in description - *Tapenade Crusted Sirloin of Buffalo on Fondant Potato, Parsnip Puree & Trellis Tomato served with Salsa Verdi & Red Wine Jus.*

T.Y. Lee says the Challenge aims to showcase local produce and encourage the creativity of chefs from Darwin's leading restaurants.

"With the hospitality industry's rapid growth throughout the Territory, this latest competition has endeavoured to not only challenge the chefs to create cuisine with uniquely Territorian ingredients, but to raise the profile of the industry," he says.

Abattoir closure marks the end of an era - and a rethink for TenderBuff

On Wednesday March 23, the last buffalo were slaughtered at Litchfield Abattoir near Darwin. Twelve head of mostly TenderBuff were slaughtered and delivered to three local butchers. The abattoir has closed due to the retirement of long-time Darwin Piggery owner Karl Mortensen. Despite being on the market for 12-18 months there were no purchasers to take either the piggery or the abattoir over. So the joining of sows was stopped and eventually the last grower pigs were slaughtered on the same day as the last buffalo.

The abattoir, opened in 1993, was purpose-built to slaughter the piggery output but also with capability for service kills of local livestock. It has processed cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats and deer. As well as cull buffalo for the local buffalo sausage market, the tally for TenderBuff has been pretty impressive.

There have been 262 separate shipments to the works and a total of 1134 head have been processed. This has included seeing the first crossbred F1 Riverine animals in Dec 1996 and the

supply increasing over the years to the eventual majority of TenderBuff supplied. Their superiority was due to their 40% growth rate advantage and their ability to be killed at a much younger age, which increases their tenderness.

They also had a better dressing percentage (2-3% points higher) and a better saleable meat yield from the carcase (74% vs 72%). Overall for the meat trade they are a more desirable product and the greater growth rate is good for the producer.

The future for abattoirs around Australia does not appear too bright with many smaller works closing and only the larger works operating. The future for Darwin would need to be a multi-species works, within a reasonable distance of Darwin, and that could bone the carcasses and deliver to the wholesalers in vacuum packaging. One of the biggest hurdles is the increasing age of the butchers and the lack of young people that are trained for the meat industry, when facing the future.

The immediate future for TenderBuff may be to ship to South East Asia for direct slaughter or for feedlotting at this stage until a new local works operates again. There may be an opportunity for a local producer to build his own small operation or a co-operative unit for 4-10 per week to supply the Darwin market and to offer a service kill to local customers.



Abattoir crew (l-r) Michelle, Doug, Derwent, Mick and Karl raise a toast to the last buffalo processed at the facility



Buff carcasses hang in the Litchfield Abattoir chiller

- Barry Lemcke

Record buff numbers presented for Milla Milla AI round



ABOVE: AI technician Rob Peake and Mitch with 'the girls'



ABOVE: Mitch's buffalo yarded for afternoon milking



Calf factory supervisor Michelle Lovewell feeding 'the babies'

Buffalo researcher Barry Lemcke reports on the recent AI round at Milla Milla

A major AI round was carried out on 1 June at the ABDC dairy on Mitch and Brigitte Humphries' property at Millaa Millaa NQ.

Mitch supplied 36 head for the RIRDC-sponsored AI research – the biggest number attempted so far in one round. He had kept the bull out for two months and followed two different protocols, the Brazilian Ovsynch (26) and the second using CIDR's (10 head). Mitch is using AI technician Rob Peake who is a highly skilled inseminator. Mitch is currently milking twice a day with a 7-a-side herringbone. Each milking takes about 2½ hours and the AI fits in well with morning and evening milking. Kmars were applied at the prostaglandin injection for both protocols and monitored twice daily at milking. Those with Kmars set off were AI'ed and the Kmars removed. Those AI'ed were identified with a paint marker.

The RIRDC project supplied some of the drugs and some of the semen. Mitch is currently milking 60 cows and

the Vanilla cheese truck calls in every 2-3 days to pick up milk from the refrigerated vat. The cows are in magnificent condition.

The calves are individually fed from day one and are offered 18% protein calf pellets and copra meal within a week or two. Calves are fed milk for two to three months.

Pastures are mainly setaria and signal grass, but Mitch has sown 'winter' pastures of ryegrass and white clover which can be irrigated on demand. This was not at all necessary for week or two prior to AI as the rain was more than adequate. The temps on AI day ranged from a pretty pleasant 16.5°-24°C.

Mitch will monitor cows coming on heat in coming weeks, ready for a follow-up AI attempt.

It is hoped the conception rate will be very good as most of the important signs of a synchronous oestrus were present. The only negative was perhaps the rain which appeared on a regular basis. The sun did appear as well at times so we keep our fingers crossed for the 2-3 month pregnancy test and the calves in April 2008.

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 News & Views ... from around the country

South Australia

South Australia will continue its herd upgrade program throughout 2007 and 2008. State rep Milton Stevens reported at the ABIC AGM that the program would be based on temperament, type and teat placement. He said culls would be processed locally for manufacturing and interstate petfood outlets. Milton also reported that state producers had about 90 hybrid steers on hand to be marketed during 2007.

"With the steers out of the way, a heifer settling and handling program will be implemented," he said. Milton maintains a small herd of 'quiet swampies' for supplying product locally for smallgoods, sausages and other lines.

New South Wales

NSW rep Doug Robertson reported at the ABIC AGM that a licensing fee for keeping buffalo in the state (Class 4B-Non-Indigenous Animals Act NSW) had been doubled for 2007 to cover administration costs. The industry lodged an objection

which was noted but dismissed. A request to have buffalo reclassified as other domestic livestock (e.g. cattle and sheep) was also noted and the industry was awaiting a reply.

Northern Territory

NTBIC now comes under the administrative umbrella of the NT Cattlemen's Association. A number of NTBIC-related activities took place in the first half of 2007:

- The NTCA Executive Director worked with buffalo producers to create future directions to improve NTBIC membership
- Work continued with DPIFM to ensure protocols are in place for overseas buffalo markets
- Lobbying targeted existing exporters. The NTCA Executive Director visited Vietnam in March 2007 and met with exporters there. He will also visit Indonesia in the near future
- In light of the Litchfield Abattoir's closure (see Page 2), the NTCA Executive Director is working with the government and private sector to come up with an alternative abattoir service for the buffalo industry
- In the first quarter of 2007, a consultant undertook a full administrative review of the NTBIC
- NTBIC is preparing to again set up its popular promotional buffalo food stall at the Royal Darwin Show in late July.

Tasmania

With the winter chill setting in southern Tasmania, Phillip and Denise Oates have started their second year of rugging up their buffalo to guard against the cold.

"We started with four weaners on 30 May and we intend to rug all our cows this winter," Phillip said. "We have had our first days of below 10 degs and nights of 5 degs."

Victoria talks new breeds

Continued from front page

He said he was happy to pass on these details, and to advise whoever was carrying out the process, if he was not available. "We discussed what the price could be if embryos were available, with the cost for the canister being considerable regardless of the number of embryos or straws," VicBic said. "We were told that the life of the embryos was indefinite, which should be taken into account, and that it was important to get genetic material from proven donors.

"Pooling of our resources was also discussed. It was suggested that if a couple of Robyn Richmond's ¾ riverine heifers were AI'ed with Murrah semen, a very good dairy animal would result. With the shortage of Murrah stock in the western world the price of the progeny could be substantial.

"The meeting decided that Murrah should be our main aim depending on availability and price and we are proceeding with our investigations."

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