



New health protocol opens buffalo markets in Indonesia

Australian buffalo producers are celebrating the decision by Indonesia to ratify a new health protocol allowing buffalo to be imported into that country.

The health protocol, which has been the subject of extensive negotiation and debate over many months, was finalised in October.

The signing, between the Indonesian and Australian Governments,

paved the way for the first shipment of young buffalo bulls to sail to Indonesia from the Port of Darwin on 11 December.

Australian buffalo have not been accepted into Indonesia since 1983.

The milestone December shipment has gone into the AustAsia feedlot at Lampung near Jakarta and will be used in a trial to check feeding costs and the animals' daily weight gain. Hopefully, this will prove that

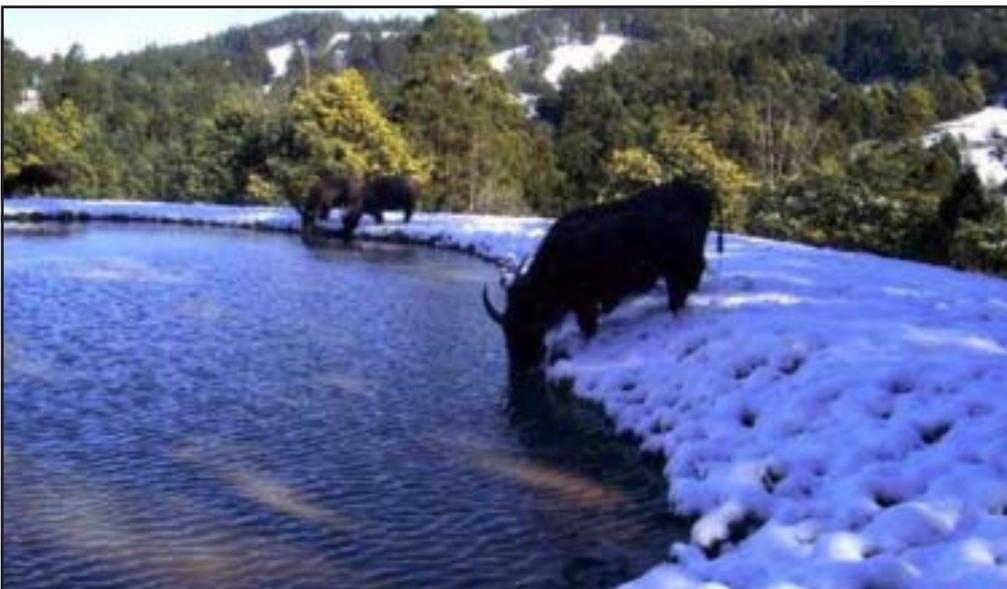
buffalo are cheaper to feed than cattle and will achieve competitive daily weight gain.

NT Buffalo Industry Council Executive Officer Neil Ross has played key role in protocol negotiations with Indonesian primary industry and quarantine officials on behalf of Australian buffalo producers and live exporters.

The Australian industry has been trying to open up new markets to the north.

"We've had a team working tirelessly as part of efforts to get the protocol finalised," Mr Ross said. "We must sincerely thank our NTBIC representative in Asia, Dr Petrus Sitepu, for his invaluable help in getting this important document signed and delivered. The industry is also indebted to Dr Geoff Ryan and Dr Judith Bourne, from BioSecurity Australia in Canberra, for their work in relation to the protocol."

Buffalo brave the snow



Buffalo at Phillip and Denise Oates' Oyster Cove property in southern Tasmania found themselves in a most unfamiliar predicament recently when thick snow covered their grazing grounds. The sudden chilly whiteness under hoof didn't deter this specimen from taking a drink.

Victoria joins AI trials

VicBIC will join the RIRDC buffalo AI program from early next year.

VicBIC President Athel Smith reports that local producer Robyn Richmond will have between 15-20 animals ready for AI in February or March.

"The program will be carried out at Robyn's property and will be offered to other VicBIC members," Athel says.

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First buffalo shipped to Sabah since '97

The NT has shipped out its first consignment of breeding buffalo to Sabah since 1997.

The 309 head included 100 for the Sabahmas Plantation. The rest have gone to government-run farms in Sabah to be used for the country's distribution program.

Also on the boat were five bulls given by the NT Government as a gift to the Sabah Government.

Natalino visits from East Timor



Natalino checks out a buff herd

East Timorese agriculture graduate Natalino Martins came to Australia in September to familiarise himself with aspects of the buffalo industry. Natalino comes from a family of 10 children whose farmer parents produce coffee. His visit was paid for by the Royce Abbey Fund which is administered by Rotary in Victoria.

He spent considerable time at Yambuck in Victoria with the Haldanes whose dairy was a highlight of his visit. He was able to see at first hand the production of buffalo cheese from pasture to plate. He also gained experience in the farm slaughter of livestock - another skill he has been able to take home.

He spent his last two weeks in Darwin, mainly at Beatrice Hill Farm where he was involved in day-to-day jobs on the property. These included the major three-monthly recording of the whole buffalo herd and breaking up the breeder herd into mating groups. The bulls were due to go in on 15 December. Natalino also visited Katherine Research Station where he checked out the cattle feedlot trial and saw the slaughter of the first 10 head to be turned off from this round at the Litchfield Abattoir. He also saw the QA processing of TenderBuff at the same location.

Natalino's visit coincided with another round of AI of 17 head in the RIRDC project. He will remember his Australian visit for a very long time.



BUFFALO STARTER KIT

Neroli and Geoff Eddy are offering a *Buffalo Starter Kit* for people wishing to get into the buffalo industry. The couple has been running a buffalo herd at Numurkah in Victoria for ten years and distributing meat products through Eddy's Gourmet Buffalo.

They have a strong belief in the industry's viability and wish to build it up by introducing more breeders which they can help support through this starter kit. The introduction starter kit will provide positively pregnancy-tested cows in groups of five at \$1250 per cow in calf to a half cross riverine bull, and \$1500 per cow in calf to a pure riverine bull.

As part of kit, the Eddys guarantee to purchase the resulting calf at nine months of age, at \$2.00 per kilogram live weight. It is worth noting that buffalo seldom have calving problems. The breeders will be required to ensure that they have good yards and that the calves have been well handled and are in good condition. The breeders have the option of disposing of the animals by other means, whilst the Eddy's have the option of rejecting animals in poor condition or with severe behaviour problems.

VicBIC's Athel Smith said the initiative will allow new players to enter the buffalo market without having worries about disposal. "When sold, the cows will be in calf to either a full riverine or a half riverine," he says. "The new entrants will eventually be on the look out for a suitable herd bull or may consider the AI program."

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RIRDC AI research update

Update from Project Leader Barry Lemcke



Another round of AI as part of the RIRDC project was carried out at Beatrice Hill Farm near Darwin in late November. This group included 11 well-grown yearling heifers and six lactating cows (A mixture of half, three-quarter and seven-eighth heifers and purebred cows).

The first indications will be possible by ultrasound testing at the end of December. The semen used was from 'Bill' plus some of the three newly acquired imported Italian bull straws.

It would appear at this stage, after quite a number of attempts, that the AI of heifers is not going to be easily achieved. The cervix in heifers is pretty hard to navigate through.

A visit was made to the Agricultural Business Research Institute (ABRI) in Armidale NSW to discuss options for buffalo registration in Australia and the genetic analysis of buffalo toward a future 'Buffalo Breedplan'.

The BHF current crossbred and historical swamp databases were shown to them and have since been updated and forwarded on. We have agreed to use ABRI's services to create the buffalo Breed Register.

Buffalo breeders should now try to get on paper the origins of their breeder stock so that we can in future keep track of all Australian buffalo. You are encouraged to individually identify each animal and keep records of bulls mated with which cows and calves born, approximate birth dates and which cow raised which calf to weaning. This is particularly useful for all potential breeding stock and in particular those contemplating supplying milking buffalo to the dairy industry.

PHOTOS: TOP: Admiring looks for 'Bill' whose semen is being used in the AI project. BOTTOM: Handsome 'Luigi'(son of 'Bestiale') - a bull bred using Italian semen in AI program.

Buff export hopes for plantations

NTBIC Executive Officer Neil Ross visited Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei recently for meetings on potential future buffalo imports into those regions.

The main emphasis was on the potential for those states to use Australian buffalo for grazing to manage grasses in the local oil palm plantations. Neil met with government veterinary department officers and local business people to discuss including buffalo in livestock programs in the plantations.

"They have shown a lot of interest in our buffalo and I am now in regular contact with several people in relation to possible imports in the future," Neil said. "I will be revisiting in March and hopefully will get an order from them at that time. "Both Sabah and Sarawak each have about half a million hectares of palm oil plantations already and the plantings are increasing every year. "There is huge potential in these areas to use livestock to manage grasses, in place of cutting or extensive use of herbicides. Buffalo are ideal for this kind of work."

BUFFALO News

Contributions on any matter of interest to Australia's buffalo industry are most welcome and can be sent to, or discussed with:

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STATE *by* STATE

Buffalo news from around the nation

QUEENSLAND

Queensland members have been buying in more NT buffalo to boost their existing herds.

Mitch Humphries has recently purchased five three-quarter riverine females to add to his Milla Milla venture.

Marg and Mal Thompson have added a further fifteenth-sixteenth riverine bull to their recent order of four pure riverine hieifers from the NT. They will become part of the Thompson's ever expanding Maleny buffalo venture.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Australian Buffalo Industry President Bob Cook and his wife Chris

have recently departed South Australia for a move back to the Northern Territory, where Chris has taken up a key position with Australia Post in Darwin.

The Cooks have also moved their buffalo herd from their Port Lincoln property and presently have the stock agisted on a property at Batchelor. Bob is now actively pursuing opportunities to market his buffalo products in the Top End and beyond.

TASMANIA

Tasmania will host the 2006 ABIC Annual General Meeting and Conference in Hobart on 25 February. The program includes a field trip to Phillip and Denise Oates' buffalo venture at Oyster Cover south of Hobart.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WA buffalo producer Andrew Stewart has been appointed that state's second ABIC representative. He joins long-time committee man and industry stalwart John Starr who has recently returned his focus on his Esperance farm after testing out the retail market for buffalo and other meats at Midlands north of Perth.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

The NT Buffalo Industry Council held its Annual General Meeting and election of new committee on 30 September.

The office bearers for 2006 include Michael Swart as President, Graham Michel as Vice President and David Walker, Alan Fisher and Ernie Schlupe as the executive.

VICS JOIN AI PROGRAM

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"Robyn realises the value of Italian Riverine buffalo. This was highlighted earlier in the year when Elders was searching for up to 30 milking type bulls for export to China. This requirement could not be met in Australia."

The buffalo Robyn will use in the AI program will be either half or three-quarter riverine."

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