



## RIRDC considers five-year R&D plan for Australian buff industry

Dr Peter McInnes and Buffalo R&D Committee Chairman Doug Robertson presented the initial *Five-Year Research and Development Plan for the Australian Buffalo Industry* to the Rural Industries and Research Development Corporation (RIRDC) board in Canberra on 2 March.

The Plan was drafted by Dr McInnes using data collected from the survey circulated throughout Australia in the December edition of *Buffalo News*.

The information sought from buffalo industry stakeholders through the survey form was described as vital to the future planning and direction of research

projects that would benefit the Australian buffalo industry.

The draft plan was discussed, modified and approved at the Research and Development Committee meeting held in Perth prior to the Australian Buffalo Industry Council's AGM and Annual Conference in February.

The follow-up Canberra presentation was allocated only a 30 minute time slot, and this included question time.

However, after the formal presentation, the proponents were able to hold a brief discussion with some of the board members during their lunch break.

The RIRDC Board will now consider the recommendations in the plan and report their deliberations back to Dr McInnes.

It is not known at this stage when the board's response will be made available.

Addressing the ABIC Annual General Meeting in Perth in February, President Bob Cook said the research corporation's Five-Year Buffalo R&D Plan would address many priorities for the Australian industry.

VicBIC President Athel Smith also commented in his state report to the meeting, saying the plan holds hope for the Australian buffalo industry if carried out within a firm time frame and with all members doing their allocated tasks.

## Memorandum paves way for new links with Sabah



The Governments of the Northern Territory and Malaysian state of Sabah signed a three-year Memorandum of Cooperation in Darwin on 14 February - and the deal has been sealed with a gift of buffalo. The NT Government presented five prime buffalo to Sabah's Minister for Agriculture and Food Industry, Dr Datuk Haji Abdul Rahim Ismail, and he inspected the animals while leading a ministerial delegation to the NT. The delegation included a livestock trader who is interested in taking shipments out of Darwin in the future. Delegates visited buffalo farms while in Darwin. *PHOTO ABOVE: Dr Datuk Rahim Ismail and NT Primary Industry Minister Kon Vatskalis sign the Memorandum.*

## Healthy trends in live export

Australian live buffalo exports reached record levels last year and things already look promising for 2005 with a shipment of 672 buffalo going to Malaysia in February.

Nearly 4000 buffalo were shipped to Malaysia and Brunei in 2004 and figures are expected to grow this year with some new markets on the horizon.

"We're still working on the protocol for Indonesia and we hope this will come through within the next few months," NTBIC Executive Officer Neil Ross said at the AGM.

"We also hope that the Sabah market, which we have been working on during the past year, will begin to bear fruit soon."

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## Buffalo gift for Sabah



ABOVE: Buffalo Researcher Barry Lemcke (left) shows Sabah's Agriculture and Food Industry Minister, Dr Datuk Haji Abdul Rahim Ismail (centre) and Awang Sahak Salleh (Director of the Department of Veterinary Services and Animal Industries) their buffalo gift at Beatrice Hill Farm.

## Import Protocol Talks

NTBIC Executive Officer Neil Ross met with top ranking Indonesian Government agricultural officials in February as part of ongoing talks on a planned import protocol for buffalo.

Mr Ross met with the Director of Animal Health with the Ministry of Agriculture, Dr Tri Satya Putri Naipospos, and the Director of the Centre for Animal Quarantine, Dr Mughtar Abdullah Baraniah.

During the talks, Mr Ross was able to iron out a number of important issues including concerns about the disease status of Australian buffalo.

NTBIC is also in the process of appointing Dr Petrus Sitepu as its Indonesian representative to help facilitate the import protocol.

Dr Sitepu will coordinate and conduct the preliminary meetings with Indonesian officials and attend to other important requirements in the lead-up to the protocol being presented and signed.

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**ATHEL SMITH (ABIC) - PHONE: 03 5965 2368**



# ABIC delegates report on buffalo industry highs and lows in 2004

**National and State delegates to the Australian Buffalo Industry Council's AGM and Conference in Perth in February reported on another year of mixed blessings for the industry.**

"Seasons in some areas were a little better than in 2003, but some areas of Australia are still feeling the drought and producers are having to hand feed," ABIC President Bob Cook said in his annual report

He also noted that the number of buffalo breeders and farmers in South Australia has decreased, that exports from the NT had improved, that WA producer John Starr had launched a new buff meat venture in Perth, and

that the Genetics and Reproductions Improvements (AI) program had seen only limited success in 2004.

"I hope they will produce good strategies and document performance indicators to monitor progress and measure success," he said.

State by State positives reported for the year included the launch of John Starr's new buff meat selling venture in Perth, steady industry growth in Tasmania, the continuing success of Queensland's dairy buffalo sector and ongoing promotion of the industry and its products at shows and expos in Victoria

and South Australia.

NSW representative Doug Robertson reported the State's industry association currently existed in name only and had no financial members. Poor weather conditions had been a major factor contributing to the industry's decline.

The ABIC office bearers remain unchanged for 2005, with Bob Cook, Michael Swart and Athel Smith continuing as President, Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer respectively. Milton Stevens has resigned as a SA rep.

● *See back page for more State by State report details.*



**WESTERN AUSTRALIA** hosted its first ABIC AGM and conference in February and took the opportunity to promote local buffalo industry developments. Interstate reps visited Jack Simini's Margaret River Cowaramup Abattoir (above) which processes buffalo as well as ostriches, deer and camels. Delegates also checked out John Starr's new retail outlet for buffalo and other meats at the Midland Military Markets. The outlet is exposed to 6000 people over a three-day weekend and lures customers with enticing prime cuts, sausages and pies and pasties.

## AI TESTING CONTINUES

Buffalo researcher Barry Lemcke and his team conducted the latest round of AI testing at Beatrice Hill Research Farm near Darwin in mid-February. The results will be known after ultrasound testing next month. The cows are reported to have performed below par for this round.

ABIC Executive Officer Neil Ross said all conditions, including feed and nutrition, were good. "We'll just have to wait and see what the ultrasound testing shows up," he said.

## 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*

## VICTORIA

Despite temperatures in the 40s keeping crowds down, VicBIC was able to further promote buffalo farming and products during the recent Seymour Alternative Farm Expo. Swamp and riverine buffalo were exhibited and information sheets on milking buffalo were distributed. "We did point out shortfalls in Victoria with abattoirs and marketing," VicBIC President Athel Smith said. "We did not exaggerate the industry's potential, as has been done by others, resulting in new buffalo breeders becoming disillusioned." VicBIC continued a campaign to encourage non-member buffalo herd owners to sign up and support their local industry group.

## TASMANIA

Tasmania representative Phillip Oates reported steady growth in the island state's buffalo herd in 2004 with five robust calves being born to two local farms and a zoo. Meat sales also went well during the year, with interest coming from as far away as the NT and Victoria. Phillip stressed the importance of quality control standards for buffalo meat.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Buoyed by his success with a new buffalo and venison meat outlet in Perth, WA producer John Starr plans to expand his range and employ a professional butcher to help enhance the venture's efficiency and

marketing. "Hopefully, we will develop a reasonable customer base which will focus on promotional information and distribution," John says.

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

NTBIC has submitted an application for funding for a revised buffalo industry development support program and a TenderBuff marketing initiative.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Gulf Buffalo's new farm gate retail shop is luring increasing numbers of customers keen to try multiple tantalising products including marinated buffalo roasts. The Cooks have been trialling 'Farmer Pecks', a new yeast based ration balancer, on their farm, and the results have been good so far. Benefits include faster growth, better meat quality and less need for antibiotics.



*Some of the tantalising buff meat products which are enticing many customers through Gulf Buffalo's farm gate shop door.*

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