



Buffalo News

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Official newsletter of the Australian Buffalo Industry Council

Maleny in the spotlight as host for 2009 ABIC conference

New RIRDC report now available

The final report of the 2004-07 RIRDC study project, titled *Australian Water Buffalo, Genetic and Reproduction Improvements*, has now been published. It is available through RIRDC Publications (Pub. No.08/189) or can be downloaded from www.rirdc.gov.au

The Australian Buffalo Industry Council's annual conference will be held in Queensland on 21-22 February. The host town is Maleny, a prime tourist centre nestled in the state's Sunshine coast hinterland - and home to current ABIC President Marg Thompson

ABIC representatives will come from all around the country to work through a busy agenda that includes updating the council's constitution and annual reports from each states.

Marg Thompson says ABIC is hoping some New

Zealand buffalo breeders will be able to attend.

"As part of the information sharing, we have planned a visit to the Maleny Cheese facility to see how they operate, and a talk from a gentleman, setting up a small local boutique cheesery, about his efforts and plans," she says.

"We are also fortunate to have arranged for world renowned geneticist, the now retired Professor Stuart Barker, to speak to us."

Marg and her husband Mal will take conference visitors on a tour of their

Maleny buffalo farm and expect to have some freshly calved cows in the paddock by the time of the event.

"In particular, an AI heifer by the Italian bull Apullo is due to calve later this year, and a bull calf by Millenio."

Marg encourages visitors to allow some time to explore local attractions, such as Australia Zoo.

Anyone wanting more information about the conference should contact ABIC Secretary Athel Smith, by email on: narangipark@bigpond.com

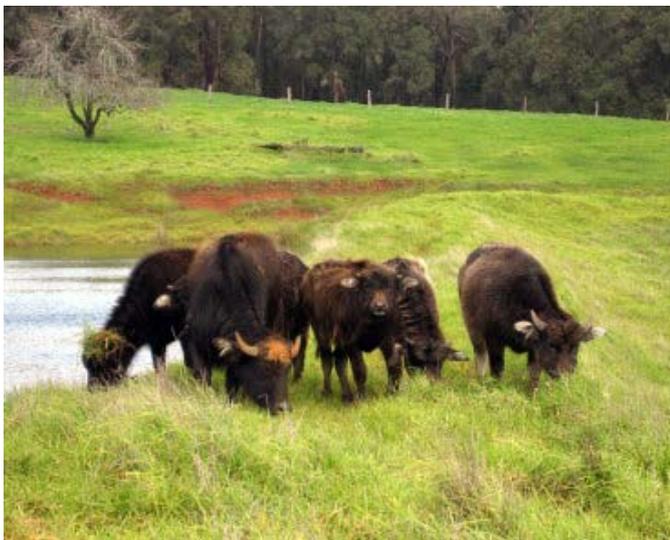
Mullalyup 'girls' find their rainbow connection

Rainbows! Pots of gold! Could this tantalising spectacle be a sign of things to come for the new owners of this happy all-girl herd, bought from WA buffalo producer Andrew Stewart? The animals are grazing on the property owned by industry newcomers, Beck and Daryn Rowland, at Mullalyup, south of Perth in the heart of Western Australia's famous wine and big surf country?

■ **SEE PAGE 2 for Beck and Daryn's story**



ABIC Website - www.buffaloaustralia.org



ABOVE & BOTTOM RIGHT: Some of the buffalo on Rowlands southwest property. BELOW: One buff happy to be handfed.



Travelling chefs' love affair with Nepalese buffalo lures them into their own home venture

Western Australia's globe-trotting Daryn and Beck Rowland fell in love with buffalo the first time they travelled to Nepal. The animals won them over with their gentle and inquisitive nature - and their lovely milk.

"On subsequent visits to both Nepal and India our interest grew and we began to entertain the idea of sourcing some buffalo to milk and produce curd and soft cheese," Beck says.

"Daryn and I are both chefs with a love of fresh local produce that is a little unusual, so the next logical step is to make our own fresh mozzarella. It is only made by a few dairies in Australia or can be sourced from Italy.

"I have made cheese with Neil Willman at the Harvey Cheese factory and have travelled through France looking at various cheesemaking facilities from cottage industry to bulk manufacturing.

"In 2006, we purchased 111 acres of rolling pasture in the heart of old dairy country at Mullalyup, in the south west of WA between Donnybrook and Balingup.

"As luck would have it we stumbled across Andrew Stewart and were able to purchase 8 young swampy X riverine girls from him.

"We are currently looking into sourcing some riverine semen to diversify the WA genepool.

"We are initially aiming for small scale production to sell locally and to our contacts in the restaurant trade.

"We have had a lot of interest from local wineries, food retail outlets and the Wine and Truffle Co in Manjimup.

"As we are located close to the South West Hwy and are easily accessible there is also the possibility of doing a 'cellar door' scenario." (To contact Beck & Daryn, email: onthepass@bigpond.com)

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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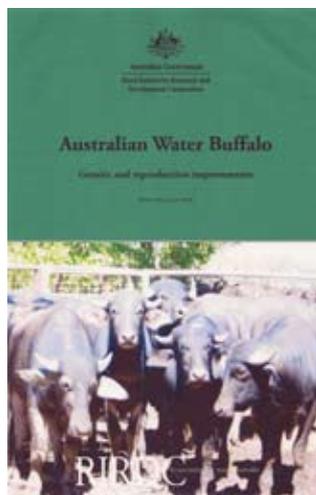
RIRDC research report paves way for new direction in buffalo production

The now published final report of the 2004-07 RIRDC study project, *Australian Water Buffalo, Genetic and Reproduction Improvements*, is the culmination of five years work carried out in three states for the Australian buffalo industry.

The executive summary says the report is targeted mainly at producers and potential producers of water buffalo in Australia.

“It attempts to show that the required background equipment has now been put in place that will allow the industry to become a lot more competitive - the ability now to be able to identify superior animals objectively and make use of them for the good of both the meat and dairy sectors of the industry.”

The report calls on policy makers and others in the Northern Territory to further support the farmed industry to target better markets that reflect the potential value of the farmed product into the future. “There needs to be clear distinction between the farmed and feral product for



overseas meat markets, that reflect the costs of production for both sectors.

The study saw 67 successful inseminations from a total of 248 - an overall 20% success rate. The best single achievement was 41%.

The register is now open for business and the database is ready and capable of calculating estimated breeding values (EBVs) for the industry. Accuracy will improve as entries increase over time.

“The buffalo database also has the potential to make Australia a world

leader in genetic expertise particularly in meat production, if producers run with the now available technology,” the report says.

Key recommendations

- That producers take advantage of the systems now on offer to genetically improve their industry. This Breedplan technology is a powerful tool in helping them improve their herds and make them more marketable around the world. Our position as a very low disease risk exporter is recognised worldwide.

- That potential producers think seriously of the water buffalo as a suitable animal for a livestock industry for many parts of Australia, but particularly in current dairy districts where the infrastructure (dairies and cheese factories) is already present.

- That for dairying in the tropics, the water buffalo has already proved its potential and should be encouraged.

LIVE BUFF EXPORTS UP IN 2008

The final wrap-up on live buffalo exports through the Port of Darwin in 2008 showed an improved annual outcome.

The NT Primary Industry Department-compiled *Pastoral Market Update* for December 2008 showed a total of 4637 head of buffalo were shipped out during the year. This compares with a total of 3905 exported in 2007. Indonesia remained the key market, taking 3815 Australian buffalo in 2008 (2865 in 2007). Other Asian markets buying live buffalo in 2008 were Brunei, which took 306 head (306 in 2007); West Malaysia, which took 280 (582 in 2007) and Sabah, which increased its tally to 236 (152 in 2007).

December 2008 shipments included 280 to West Malaysia and 124 to Indonesia.

Renewed hope for buff meat market as Top End abattoir changes hands

NT buffalo producers are cautiously optimistic that a change in ownership for the Gunbalanya Meat Supply Co will see the facility handling TenderBuff market requirements in the future. The Gunbalanya abattoir, at Oenpelli in northwest Arnhem Land, has been taken over by the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC).

“Hopefully, this means we will be able to re-establish the TenderBuff market in Darwin, at least in the Dry season,” Darwin buffalo research Barry Lemcke says. “As this is the tourist season and busiest time of the year, that will work in well. Vacuum packed and frozen meat will need to be stockpiled for Wet season supplies.”

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Buffalo News & Views . . .

from around the country

National

● Planning is in progress to obtain semen from Italy, hopefully during February. Producers interested in accessing the semen should contact Barry Lemcke (barry.lemcke@nt.gov.au) immediately for a list of what is available. "The more that is ordered the less the freight cost per straw," Barry says. "I have conveyed our requirement for high viability semen as a prerequisite for any new purchases, after less than favourable outcomes with the first batches."

● The next AI rounds will be commencing in February 2009 but large groups will not be able to be done as most of the cows got pregnant last year and need to get the calf out and be around two months of age before cycling occurs again.

Northern Territory

● An NT Government review of buffalo research and Beatrice Hill Farm has been completed. Significant time and energy went into preparing the review, which

was submitted the Minister of Primary Industry and Fisheries in January. Local industry stakeholders are now eagerly awaiting some feedback. Beatrice Hill has been the main focus of Top End buffalo research for many years.

● During December, a large mortality rate occurred in agisted wild-caught swamp buffalo that had resided at Beatrice Hill Farm for many months. Deaths occurred in a total of 46 out of a group of 320 head of mixed steers and heifers (approximately 20%). The animals are reported to have had a great deal of respiratory distress from a toxic lung disorder, that appears to be plant/rumen flora based. The disease was not contagious and only this group on the farm was affected. It appeared to be a combination of events relating to fresh young feed, a move from floodplain to upland pasture and a bout of monsoonal wet weather.

Further details will be reported by the veterinary pathologist, Cathy Shilton, in the next issue of this newsletter.

Queensland

● Cairns buffalo cheese maker, Vannella, continues to receive high-profile media promotion of their products - produced from milk from Mitch Humphries' Millaa Millaa dairy buffalo herd. The latest promo was on Channel Ten's 9am program when celebrity chef Alastair McLeod demonstrated how to create the simple but sumptuous warm Italian Smoked Scamozza Caprese salad. Irishman Alastair, who's also executive chef at Brisbane's Brett's Wharf restaurant, told the viewing audience the two key ingredients were a premium Vannella Scamozza cheese and a creamy buffalo milk yoghurt, both created by the multi award-winning Cairns venture.

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Rocko ready for work at Mabuhay



Meet handsome Rocko, one of 52 head of riverine and riverine cross buffalo owned by Sheree and Mark Jones who now operate Mabuhay Farm, formerly owned by the late Bill Lane and his wife Maria near Adelaide River in the Top End. Sheree and Mark are relative newcomers to livestock farming but have good ideas for Mabuhay's future. See a profile on them in the next issue of Buffalo News