



Buffalo News

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Official newsletter of the Australian Buffalo Industry Council



Tackling buffalo business on the Sunshine Coast

Glorious Maleny on Queensland's Sunshine Coast hinterland took centre stage on buffalo matters when it hosted this

year's Australian Buffalo Industry Council AGM, General Meeting and field trip in February.

Most ABIC state representatives travelled to Queensland for the event and gave the meeting venue, Maleny's Tranquil Park Resort, a big 'thumbs up' for its hospitality and fabulous views across the Glasshouse Mountains.

The AGM and general meeting saw discussion on wide-ranging issues of importance to the industry, including a proposed revised ABIC constitution put up by WA representative Andrew Stewart.

Local host Marg Thompson was re-elected President for another year, as was the NT's Michael Swart as Vice-President.

Foundation ABIC Secretary/

Treasurer Athel Smith from Victoria bowed out this year and was replaced in that role by Jana Kahabka, who operates Queensland's Cape York Buffalo venture with partner Craig Gould.

Athel Smith was thanked warmly by council representatives for his long and meritorious service to ABIC since its inception. New State representatives elected at the meeting included Daryn Rowland from WA, Markus Rathsmann from the NT and Ian Massingham from NSW. The meeting was presented with state reports from WA, VIC, NSW, NT and Qld. The Tasmanian and South Australian representatives were unable to attend.

● **MORE REPORTS & PHOTOS - Pgs 3 and 4**



TOP: Athel Smith receives a Certificate of Appreciation from President Marg Thompson for his work as Secretary/Treasurer since ABIC's inception. MIDDLE: ABIC reps in Maleny - Top from left: Michael Swart (NT), Athel Smith (Vic), Ian Massingham (NSW), Doug Robertson (NSW), Mitch Humphries (Qld), Andrew Stewart (WA), Craig Gould (Qld). Front from left: Barry Lemcke (NT), Kim Massingham (NSW), Jana Kahabka (Qld), Marg Thompson (Qld) with granddaughter Hannah, and Mal Thompson (Qld). BOTTOM: Some of Marg and Mal's Maleny buffalo.

MALENY PHOTOS: Barry Lemcke

Vics make their move on Bulgarian Murrah import

The Victorian buffalo industry group, VicBIC, has submitted a proposal to RIRDC for research funding that will see imported Bulgarian Murrah semen introduced into local herds, and the use of a vasectomised bull to determine heat in cows. The plan is to use the imported semen for artificial insemination of buffalo at the Numurkah farm operated by Victorian producers, Neroli and Geoff Eddy. VicBIC is presently waiting on RIRDC's response but is optimistic about a positive outcome. VicBIC's Athel Smith says the research project will be open to all ABIC-affiliated buffalo breeders.

ABIC Website - www.buffaloaustralia.org



6th Asian Buffalo Congress

The 6th Asian Buffalo Congress (6ABC) will be held in Lahore, Pakistan from 27-30 October 2009. This major international industry event is being staged jointly by the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore; the Government of Punjab's Livestock and Dairy Development Department, and Asian Buffalo Association. Scientific sessions will focus on breeding, genetics, health, nutrition, reproduction and management, environmental and socio-economic aspects and value-adding with milk and meat products. A national buffalo fair at the Buffalo Research Institute, Pattoki, will coincide with the congress

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NT buffalo industry pioneer honoured

Northern Territory buffalo industry legend Terry Baldwin was formally honoured with an Order of Australia Medal earlier this year for his untiring commitment to the industry and the community. Long-time Territorian Terry and his late wife Kath staked their claim as true Top End pioneers of the buffalo industry, working with wild herds for decades. They are best known as the owners of Annaburroo Station, a turn-of-the-century Mary River buffalo lease they purchased in 1962. The Baldwins also built the iconic Bark Hut Inn, a popular drop-in for fishermen and tourists travelling the Arnhem Highway. The Order of Australia Medal citation specifically highlighted Terry's major youth and community contributions, including the donation of 22 ha of station land so a Police Junior Ranger campground could be established.

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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Marko & Rocko on the job at Mabuhay

Buffalo industry newcomers Sheree Jones and partner Mark have been gradually learning the ropes since buying Mabuhay Farm in the Northern Territory's Adelaide River District in early 2007.

"We had no experience with buffalo farming when we came here but we wanted a better life for our family so here we are and learning fast," Sheree says.

Mabuhay was previously owned by the late Bill Lane and wife Maria who ran it as a buffalo production enterprise for many years. The property now holds 52 head of riverine and riverine cross buffalo, including two of Sheree's special favourites, the robust Marko and Rocko (pictured above and below on this page).

As well as working on building up their herd, Sheree and Mark have had the opportunity to supply animals to Craig Gould and Jana Kahabka's growing Cape York Buffalo venture, which supplies meat for burgeoning buffalo pie orders in northern Queensland.

Sheree and Mark are keen to eventually establish a small on-farm butchery at Mabuhay to boost the local supply of TenderBuff. The availability of this premium buffalo meat is limited due to a lack of suitable killing facilities following closure of the Litchfield Abattoir near Darwin. The only TenderBuff presently being processed goes through the Oenpelli abattoir in Arnhem Land.

"We would also like to set up Bed and Breakfast accommodation on the farm in the next couple of years so I'm hoping that will come to fruition. It will be my baby. I need to sink my teeth into something like this.

Tennant Creek-born Mark is an underground miner who lived and worked in Western Australia before becoming a fisherman in the Territory for six years. He returned to the mining industry for family reasons and now juggles his time between mining and being a part-time farmer.

Sheree was born on a New Zealand sheep farm, came to Australia when she was five and has spent most of her life in the country. She has lived in Darwin for the past 10 years. She spent seven years working as an aged care nurse before also taking to the sea – to work in both the fishing and pearling industries for five years. The couple met while working in the fishing industry. They have five children between them. Mark's father, a retired miner, lives at Mabuhay and helps out with the buffalo work. Sheree hopes her mother will also retire to the farm. "Eventually, we would like to see other semi-retired people who are looking for a better life, spending time here and helping out on the farm."

For more information, contact Sheree Jones
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Future RIRDC research directions: An update

Early in March, Australian Buffalo Industry Council representatives Michael Swart (NT) and Doug Robertson (NSW) were invited to attend a Canberra forum to discuss and review the Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) process as currently overseen by RIRDC.

The meeting included RD&E providers, New and Emerging Industry Research and Development Advisory Committee members and producers. It is part of a national RD&E planning process currently being undertaken by the research and development corporations in conjunction with state and territory governments, CSIRO, universities and private enterprise. RIRDC has been given the task of leading the New and Emerging Industries plan.

RIRDC has outlined that a more coordinated and collaborative approach to RD&E is essential to ensure that new and emerging industries are resilient and sustainable. The aim of the plan is to ensure that RD&E resources are used effectively, efficiently and collaboratively. Duplication and fragmentation of the RD&E system needs

to be overcome. National research capability needs to be strong to enable the success of new and emerging industries.

The development of this plan will be ongoing and it is expected that implementation will occur in September 2010.

One session of the Canberra forum was spent at the ABARE conference where delegates attended the New and Emerging Industries presentation focussing on three current success stories – crocodiles, olives and Australian native foods.

After the forum industry leaders met to set the foundations for an association/alliance called New Rural Industries Australia (NRIA), in which the buffalo industry has been invited to participate. Updates on progress will be provided.

ABIC will watch keenly to see what the latest Federal government budget cuts to RIRDC funding (\$3,000,000) do to the operation of the organisation.

“It seems to be like most rural industry organizations – just do more with less,” Doug Robertson said.

INDUSTRY FOCUS ON MALENY



Maleny dairy farmers Marg and Mal Thompson played the perfect hosts when ABIC reps from around Australia arrived in town for their AGM and annual meeting in February. The Sunday field trip to inspect Marg and Mal's sleek buffalo herd and visit the local cheese factory to taste the delights of Swiss cheese maker, Marcus Bucher, were special highlights of the weekend. That's Mal at right with a young Italian A1 semen bull that he dehorned as a calf.

RIRDC Projects: Highlights

- The first of the RIRDC AI projects has just been completed (See report on RIRDC website) and Project 2 is continuing
- The breeding program for Project 2 has been restructured. Italian AI bulls have been introduced to some cows. The work of the original bulls will wind up soon but semen will be collected and stored for future reference
- Data from Project 1 shows that cross-bred progeny will have 40% higher growth rates than swamp buffalo. However, the market does not differentiate between high quality and feral stock, with no premium paid for better quality stock
- Live export continues for dairy production, with animals being sent to New Zealand. Costs for export animals are very high, with two-thirds taken up in quarantine and transport expenses
- An NT producer is being assisted to set up a buffalo dairy to conduct research on providing high quality feed during the dry season to maintain milk production
- TenderBuff research will continue once the abattoir gets going at Oenpelli
- Overseas feedlot trials should happen this year. The aim is to prove that farmed animals are worth a premium price
- More milk production data is required before best bulls can be identified.

From Barry Lemcke



Buffalo News & Views . . .

from around the country

New South Wales

NSW producers have taken the first steps towards the development of a buffalo dairy industry with the introduction of a foundation herd on the slopes of the Great Divide west of Sydney. Kim and Ian Massingham of Kurradjong have acquired Athel Smith's herd from Victoria and plan to breed up a dairy herd that will eventually be located on the NSW central/north coast. "Other enquiries and interest have been shown lately, particularly with regard to dairy and cheese making, so only time will tell what lies in store locally," State rep Doug Robertson says.

Northern Territory

NT buffalo exports for 2008 totalled 4637, with 3815 going to Indonesia and the rest to Brunei, West Malaysia and Sabah. Top End producers Michael and Jeffrey Swart have brought 10 cross animals from DPI and NT-BIC to add to their herd of 300, agisted at Finnis River. They plan to sell the riverines as dairy animals and use the swamps to breed up riverine numbers.

Western Australia

Andrew Stewart reported on state government figures that show 17 people have buffalo in Western Australia, with numbers mostly ranging from one to 10. Andrew is in the

process of trying to verify the numbers. Lack of access to abattoirs is an ongoing problem for WA producers. New WA rep Daryn Rowland, who has bought buffalo from Andrew's herd, plans to produce cheese in the future.

Queensland

The Queensland buffalo industry continues to receive valuable media promotion and exposure to products. The industry now comprises three commercial herds, two for dairy production and the other for meat production. Several Queensland buffalo have been shipped out to New Zealand to help build herds in that country. Buffalo farming continues to be administered under Queensland Parks and Wildlife. Mitch Humphries was

supported in an AGM motion for ABIC to arrange a meeting with the agency to standardise requirements and classification of commercial buffalo farming.

National

Athel Smith reports that the council's web-based *Trading Post* is achieving good results and encourages all buffalo producers to make full use of this valuable facility to benefit their enterprises. Athel will continue to be the liaison person on website matters.

The completed RIRDC project report, *Genetic and Reproduction Improvements in the Australian Water Buffalo*, is now available on the RIRDC website (www.rirdc.com) or in hard copy from RIRDC publications.

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A case of close scrutiny for one Maleny buffalo!

L-R: Andrew Stewart, Mal Thompson, Jana Kahabka, Mitch Humphries and Anne Lethbridge (who did a superb job as voluntary minute-taker for the meetings).

ABIC President Marg Thompson would like to thank all delegates for their enthusiasm and interest in local industry activities while visiting Maleny for this year's AGM, annual meeting and district field trip.

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