



# Buffalo News

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Official newsletter of the Australian Buffalo Industry Council (ABIC)

## Call for participants in new dairy buffalo research project

The Victorian Buffalo Industry Council (VicBIC) has launched its new Dairy Buffalo Upgrading Research Project, in the wake of approved funding support through RIRDC.

VicBIC is now inviting ABIC members and affiliated members to participate in the project, which will see Bulgarian Murrah buffalo semen imported into Australia to upgrade the nation's dairy buffalo herd.

The project's principal investigator, Dr George Malinov, will fly out of Australia in December to access the semen through government dairy farms in Bulgaria.

"We will seek heat detection in buffalo cows using a vasectomised bull instead of drug-induced synchronization," VicBIC president Athel Smith says. "Both methods will be used for comparison.

"The objective of the project is to upgrade the quality of Australian milking buffalo and to provide a pool of genetic material for buffalo dairy farmers.

"This will initiate research of dairy products in milk science."

Project participants will be required to deliver empty buffalo cows to Neroli and Geoff Eddy's Farm at Numurkah in Victoria by no later than the start of February 2010 - to allow the cows time to settle into the regime.

The cows will need to be of milking type with good conformation and temperament and in good condition but not overweight.

The feeding regime will be based on a rising plane of nutrition. Appropriate identification of animals is essential. The first year of the project is expected to wind down in late July 2010.

### Other project conditions:

- Participants will be required to pay for all transport costs. The project will pay for all costs at Eddy's farm, including drugs, semen, project-related vet expenses and agistment. The only costs not included are unforeseen vet costs for sick and injured animals.

- VicBIC will provide appropriate and good care with buffalo being inspected twice daily, but will not accept responsibility for injured or sick animals.

- Participants will be required to move their animals from Eddy's within two weeks of being advised at the end of the first year of the project.

- Those wishing to leave animals in Victoria for the second year of the program may be able to come to an agreement with a VicBIC member. Agistment may be sought for a number of buffalo if there is sufficient interest to warrant it. VicBIC members may agree to leasing arrangements.

Year Two of the project may allow some research to be carried out interstate if there is enough interest and the protocols of the project are followed.

### FOR MORE DETAILS CONTACT:

**Athel Smith (VicBIC Pres)**

Phone: 03 59652368

Email: [narangi8@bigpond.net.au](mailto:narangi8@bigpond.net.au)

**Neroli and Geoff Eddy (Secretary)**

Phone: 03 58655475

Email: [neroli@activ8.net.au](mailto:neroli@activ8.net.au)

**Bruce Murray (Vice President)**

Phone: 0356294270

Email: [murraysbricks@hotmail.net.au](mailto:murraysbricks@hotmail.net.au)

**Robyn Richmond (Treasurer)**

Phone: 035453 3305

Email: [shannkirst@bigpond.com](mailto:shannkirst@bigpond.com)



### BEATRICE HILL BULLS DOING THEIR BIT FOR SCIENCE!

*These handsome beasts are an integral part of the ongoing research effort to enhance buffalo industry production in Australia. They thrive among the growing research herd at the Northern Territory's Beatrice Hill Farm at Adelaide River. Catch up with the latest research results - PAGE 3:*

ABIC Website - [www.buffaloaustralia.org](http://www.buffaloaustralia.org)

# Vic vet George sets a hectic pace for his overseas tour

The new Dairy Buffalo Upgrading Project's chief researcher Dr George Malinov has set a hectic agenda for his impending trip to source Bulgarian Murrah buffalo semen - and the Australian buffalo industry will stand to benefit from the knowledge he brings home. George leaves Victoria in early December to team up with Sydney University veterinary student Aleona Swegen and do the rounds of Bulgaria's buffalo industry research establishments, farms, milking factories and other facilities. They will start with a visit to the AI centre where the bulls are stationed, to make sure collection protocols meet AQIS requirements. They will then visit some of the country's biggest buffalo farms to gather as much vital data as possible on breeding, feeding, calf rearing and general husbandry. The hectic fact-finding mission also includes visits to the National Buffalo Research Centre at Shumen, to a milking factory processing buffalo milk, and to a veterinary university to explore new buff breeding, reproduction and nutrition developments.

## 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:

**KERRY SHARP - EDITOR**

Phone: 08 8981 4999

Mobile: 0419 845 714

Email: sharp@octa4.net.au

Postal: PO Box 2227 Parap NT 0804

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# Cape York buffalo pies up with the best in Australia

It's official! Cape York Buffalo Company's pies have got the thumbs up for being among the best pies in Australia. The company's Jana Kahabka and Craig Gould clinched three bronze awards for at this year's Great Aussie Meat Pie Competition judged in Sydney in September.

"We got the three bronze awards for our plain mince buffalo pie," a delighted Jana said.

Cape York Buffalo Pies clinched bronze in the game meat, red meat and gourmet pie categories of the fiercely contested annual competition.

"The other winners had every meal you could imagine in a pie - spag and meatballs, lasagne, Asian curries, venison, names like Bambi and Coopers.

"We are very happy as we had no idea what to expect. Next time we will triple whammy in the pie type.

"Our pie maker, Baking Australia, has already made the next pie using buf-



Cape York Buffalo's Jana Kahabka - happy with three awards for her pies

falo and Aussie Pepper Kibble grown at Silkwood, just south of Innisfail in FNQ and green peppercorn mash. Haven't tried it yet but apparently it is fantastic.

"We are also planning to trial buffalo and native tomato from Central Australia."

# Churchill Fellowship takes ABIC president on world buffalo study



ABIC President Marg Thompson has been awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study world buffalo genetics, products and markets.

Marg and husband Mal operate a dairy buffalo venture in the Mary Valley at Maleny on Queensland's Sunshine Coast hinterland.

Marg will take the trip next April to coincide with the World Buffalo Congress in Argentina. "The panel had a lot of applications to choose from and I was thrilled that they picked mine," she says. "To me, it indicates that they see value in further developing the buffalo industry." Marg is keen to share her findings with farmers across Australia.

## PUREBRED BULLS FOR SALE

Beatrice Hill is offering for sale a quantity of purebred bulls of Italian and US parentage and ranging from yearling to three-year-olds.

Anyone interested in acquiring one or more of these bulls to upgrade or change genetics, is invited to contact Barry Lemcke - Phone: 08 8999 2263, Mobile: 0429 095 809 or Email: barry.lemcke@nt.gov.au



## New Italian semen achieves 64% buffalo pregnancy rate

After many months of negotiation with a supplier and importer, four buffalo producers in three separate jurisdictions of Australia have successfully imported semen from the Italian company, COFA. The Haldanes from Victoria, Thompsons and Humphries from Queensland and Beatrice Hill Farm in the Northern Territory participated in the shipment. Buffalo researcher Barry Lemcke said a total of 680 straws were added to a shipment of Italian dairy cattle semen brought in for the Australian producers in June this year. On behalf of the group, he acknowledged the valuable assistance received from the importer, 21st Century Genet-

ics in Melbourne, for allowing this to occur. "We had access to nine different sires suitable for Australian importation and semen from all nine were brought in, in varying amounts by the four producers," he said. "This selection now allows for a bigger expansion in the gene pool than was previously available for Australian dairy buffalo production. "We have only had a limited number of bulls available in the past and the price was becoming prohibitive and the quality of the semen was somewhat suspect. "With the new semen in the vat, we carried out a fresh AI round in July, following the first round involving 16 head

in March. "A total of 26 cows were involved in this second round, and a third round this month with 13 cows will be the last for the year. "The results of the first round (old semen) were seven out of 16 pregnant; the second round was 15 out of 26, with the new semen being used on a total of 22 cows (4 bulls used). A count of 14 from 22 of the cows impregnated with the new semen resulted in a foetus seen at six weeks into the pregnancy, using the ultrasound. "This represents a 64% pregnancy rate which is finally the sort of result that we have been seeking over four years of this program, and it is no coincidence that it occurred with the new semen from Italy.



Top: Beatrice Hill bulls. Below: A foetus on ultrasound screen. Bottom: Barry Lemcke and Joanna Robertson record data in July.



## Buffalo industry in the spotlight



The Australian buffalo industry has received plenty of high profile media attention in 2009, with stories run on national and state radio, television and in print. Highlights have included stories televised nationally on Channel Seven's lively cooking show, *Mercurio's Menu*, and on ABC Television's *Landline*. Crews from both programs filmed at facilities including the new buffalo dairy venture being established by the Arthurs at Adelaide River in the NT. The popular *RM Williams OUTBACK* magazine profiles the Australian buffalo industry as its major 'Outback Story' for the October-November edition presently available in newsagencies Australia-wide. The magazine has published a comprehensive 16-page feature on the changing face of the buffalo industry since the earliest days when feral herds were being hunted for skins and pet meat. Many players, ranging from old-timers to today's industry visionaries, were featured in the profile. A number of Australia's most widely-read rural and regional newspapers, including the *North Queensland Register* and WA's *Countryman*, have also run feature stories this year on local buffalo producers, cheese-makers and other industry stakeholders - and ABC Radio's state and territory *Country Hour* programs have maintained their usual keen interest in this year's developments in the Australian buffalo industry.

Emboldened by this success a third round in the off-season was attempted using two protocols on the last 13 cows. "It is too early for results yet but on the AI day some cows were not showing signs of heat, so it is obvious we were pushing the envelope a little in doing it in a hot time of the year and on dry season low nutrition feed. "Horticulture waste in the form of reject rockmelons were the only good source of feed available for this group." An update on pregnancy rates will be reported in the next newsletter.

# Buffalo News & Views . . .

*from around the country*

## New South Wales

■ State ABIC representative Doug Robertson reports that while the recent drought has been particularly devastating, good signs are emerging again and, hopefully with some new blood coming into the industry, the buffalo industry will see things pick up again in the next year or so.

■ NSW presently has about 200 buffalo scattered among a small handful of producers, who are fielding constant requests for buffalo meat that can't be filled at the moment due to limited stock.

■ The Robertsons recently added a new bull from Vic-

toria to their buffalo herd at Tooraweena.

## Victoria

■ VicBIC president Athel Smith reports that Chris and Robyn Richmond are about to launch Victoria's second buffalo dairy venture. They will start milking 20 buffalo on the Murray in November. Roger Haldane runs the state's other buffalo dairy venture at Yambuk on the Great Ocean Rd.

■ As reported on Page 1, the VicBIC-proposed and managed Dairy Buffalo Upgrading Project is proceeding, thanks to RIRDC funding, and ABIC members have been invited to participate by

providing suitable animals for the research. (See story Page 1).

■ Researcher George Malinov will travel to Bulgaria next month to source the required Bulgarian Murrah buffalo semen.

## Northern Territory

■ NTBIC recently received an inquiry about the possibility of sourcing 7000 head of buffalo that needed to be processed at a Halal export abattoir. The Northern Territory does not have such a facility close to the source of stock. The inquiry was passed on to a private local stock agent for follow-up but the industry is unlikely to be able to provide such a large number of animals for one order.

■ Top End buffalo industry players Michael and Jeffrey Swart and Neil Ross visited Rebecca Akers at her Point Stuart property to advise on infrastructure requirements for her planned new buffalo venture. While in the wetlands area, they also came across long-time buffalo producer and operations supervisor, Frank McLeod doing a pre-wet season maintenance burn-off at the Fisher's Swim Creek Station.

■ With news in September of an impending renewed live cattle export trade with Vietnam, NTBIC is keen to investigate the feasibility of 'piggy-backing' on this welcome development by also promoting live buffalo exports to Vietnam.

■ Beatrice Hill Farm's Eric Cox has found a home for reject rockmelons collected from a district farmer. The melons are proving a handy late dry season food source for the burgeoning buffalo numbers at the research facility near Adelaide River.

## Queensland

■ Sunshine coast hinterland dairy buffalo producers Mal and Marg Thompson recently boosted their Maleny milking herd numbers after purchasing another shipment of F1 heifers from Beatrice Hill in the Northern Territory. Seven 2-year-old heifers with five  $\frac{3}{4}$  calves at foot and four yearling F1 heifers made the 3000 km journey to their lush new Maleny home and arrived in good condition, according to Mal.

## Western Australia

■ The major Western Australian rural weekly, *Countryman*, maintains a keen interest in buffalo industry activities in the state. It's recent feature, *Buffalo soldiers*, was a full-page profile on husband and wife chefs, Beck and Daryn who have established a buffalo farm at Mullalyup on the southwest coast and who plan to try their hands at cheese-making. Last year, *Countryman* featured a major story on ABIC state rep Andrew Stewart and his buffalo venture at Vasse near Bussleton in the southwest. It's all good promotion for the industry.

## Australian Buffalo Industry Council State / Territory Representatives

### QUEENSLAND

**Marg Thompson** (ABIC Pres) - Ph: 07 5494 4420 - Fax: 07 5494 4252

**Jana Kahabka** (ABIC Sec/Treas) - Ph: 0428 405 522

Email: jana@capeyorkbuffalo.com

**Mitch Humphries** - Ph: 07 4097 2544 - Fax: 07 4097 2038

Mob: 0407 254 435 - Email: mitch@dairybuffalo.com.au

### VICTORIA

**Athel Smith** (ABIC Sec/Treas) - Ph: 03 5965 2368

Mob: 0428 878 207 - Email: narangipark@bigpond.net.au

**Robyn Richmond** - Ph: 03 5453 3305 - Mobile: 0458 533 305

Email: shannkirst@bigpond.com.au

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**Milton Stevens** - Ph: 08 8688 5032 - Mob: 0429 694 736

### TASMANIA

**Phillip Oates** - Ph/Fax: 03 6267 4402

Mob: 0427 889 487 - Email: oystercovebuffalo@hotmail.com

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**Andrew Stewart** - Ph: 08 9381 5955

Email: andrew@adhstewart.com.au

**Daryn Rowland** - Ph: 08 9764 1951 - Mob: 0409 477 323

Email: onthepass@bigpond.com

### NEW SOUTH WALES

**Doug Robertson** - Ph: 02 6848 5315 - Fax: 02 6848 5359

Email: dougr@bordernet.com.au

**Ian Massingham** - Ph: 1300 360 200 - Fax: 1300 360 800

Mob: 0414 743 118 - Email: ian@ausenviroservices.com

### NORTHERN TERRITORY

**Michael Swart** (ABIC Vice-Pres) - Ph: 08 89471661

Email: michael@wrsc.com.au

**Markus Rathsmann** - Ph: 08 8975 4105 - Mob: 0416 166 918

Email: buffalo.co@bigpond.com

## 2010 CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIPS

The Churchill Trust is now seeking applications for the 2010 fellowships in agriculture. Fellowships include:

- **EC Webb Trust** (Victorian residents only) - for investigation of agricultural issues and/or practices
- **Samuel and Eileen Gluyas** (Queensland residents only) - for a project relating to the tropical pastoral industry
- **Jack Green** - For a project relating to the dairy industry
- **Wildman River Stock Constructors and Dusty Bob Prickett** - For a project to advance and protect the interests of the buffalo industry.

APPLICATIONS OPEN 1 Nov 2009 - 26 Feb 2010

FOR FULL DETAILS: Visit: [www.churchilltrust.com.au](http://www.churchilltrust.com.au)

Or phone: 1800 777 231 or (02) 6247 8333