



Buffalo News

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Official newsletter of the Australian Buffalo Industry Council (ABIC)

NSW buffalo farmers furious over 'farcical' NIA licence rules

NSW buffalo farmers have reacted angrily to what they say are farcical changes in licence requirements for holding their so-called non-indigenous animals.

Doug Robertson explains that since 1999 all people keeping buffalo in NSW have had to hold a Non-Indigenous Animals (NIA) licence with certain

conditions relating to the animals' security, where they were kept and when they were moved. Licence holders also had to file an annual stock return to their government agricultural agency.

"Three weeks into May, licence renewals were sent out with vastly altered conditions that would make it virtually impossible for an individual in NSW to own and produce buffalo and illegal to advertise that you have such animals – a really positive step if you are trying to make a living out of selling buffalo milk products or meat! The new licence application consists of 16 pages of unbelievable conditions and requirements and

was supposed to be submitted by the end of May."

"After a public backlash, the submission date was extended to the middle of June AND the proposed changes to the licensing laws were listed on the internet, Sydney newspapers and Government Gazette for public comment - with a deadline of the day before the deadline for licence applications!"

Doug says many individuals and groups have approached, or will be approaching, all levels of government - from the instigators of this policy and DPI's Director-General, right up to the Minister responsible.

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Live export ban will hurt buffalo sector

Top End buffalo exporters warn that Australia's live cattle export ban will also hurt the buffalo sector.

"Nearly 95% of our buffalo go to Indonesia at present and if the boats aren't taking cattle, we can't get our buffalo there either," NTBIC Vice-President Michael Swart says. "We are going to be stuck with animals in the paddocks getting bigger. We will have to look for other markets that are willing to take larger animals over 350 kg.

"A potential downside is that with no alternative markets, we could get screwed on domestic processing prices. We won't be giving our buffalo away. People will just let them grow old in the paddocks. *See also Page 2*



Rugged-up Roger ready for work

Three prominent Victorian buffalo producers have taken delivery of Roger, a 3/4 Italian riverine yearling buffalo bull purchased from the Northern Territory to help them enhance the bloodlines and strengthen the buffalo industry in their state. "We are hoping Roger will have a strong influence on the Victorian industry for the next five years," says VicBIC President Athel Smith, who bought the bull jointly with VicBIC Vice-President Bruce Murray and fellow producers Neroli and Geoff Eddy.

The robust beast was transported down from the Top End by a large horse float and arrived to an extremely cold Victorian winter so Bruce has bought him a coat to keep him cosy against the chill. Bruce will rear Roger until he is ready to go to work at the end of the year, and he will then be rotated between the three Victorian properties.

PICTURED: Bruce and Roger get to know each other

ABIC Website - www.buffaloaustralia.org



Baby buff makes up for disappointments

While the rest of Australia has been drenched in record rainfall, the southwest of WA has been experiencing the hottest and driest conditions on record.

That's presented some real challenges for Mallalyup buffalo farmers Daryn Rowland, partner Beck and their family as they prepared for the birth of two new calves.

"We're fortunate we have only our eight buffalo, a few LLamas and some sheep on our 110 acres, because it's been a challenge to keep them fed and watered over the summer and in good shape for the imminent arrival of the calves," Daryn says. "Our first foray into AI and buffalo breeding hasn't resulted in the best start. We inseminated eight girls and two became pregnant then we lost one of the mothers and her calf due to a birth complication called torsion – where the uterus twisted around on itself.

But, as Daryn says, good things happen.

"The other pregnant female had a quick and easy birth and presented us with a lovely little girl - and it was fortunate that all of us - me, Beck and our two daughters – were in the paddock to witness her arrival into the world (Our two-year-old keeps wanting to see the new baby!)

"We almost got caught out. We had to move paddocks with her at the last minute as we were worried she was going to give birth in one of the dams!. With only one calf born, our cheese will be very exclusive indeed!"

PICTURED: *The newborn at just 20 hours old.*

Buff farmers say 'no' to petition for live export ban

When Mitch Humphries from Queensland's Australian Buffalo Dairy Company was invited to: 'Sign the Petition Please - ban live export', he sent off the following response:

"Signing this petition will hurt Australian farmers, especially in the Northern Territory from where nearly 100% of cattle go to live export markets (not just Indonesia). There is no export meatworks in the NT. More effective monitoring is required, but don't contribute to the further 'killing off' of our Australian farmers with an all-out ban. Consider and think carefully about 'emotional knee jerk reactions'.

I hope you can accept another point of view. If we are not careful, one day we might be importing our beef from Indonesia! *Regards - Mitch Humphries'*

Mitch said he wanted to do his bit to steady the emotional hype, and get people to realise the affects on Aussie farmers that an all-out ban would have.

West Australian buffalo producer Andrew Stewart backed up his views:

"More effective monitoring to deal with the particular problem is what is required, not the abolition of the entire industry with its consequences to the farming sector and the wider economy. The issue may not exist if the government was prepared to invest in export abattoirs (or provided appropriate incentives for others to do so) in the Territory and elsewhere."

New licence conditions stink: NSW farmers

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"So far responses have been guarded and contact with the Minister has only been remarkable by its silence. There's a rumour that the old system will be extended for 12 months but it is only that, a rumour," he says.

"The whole process is an absolute farce and stinks from start to finish. To implement a new licensing system before it is circulated for consultation beggars belief. And to prevent someone from advertising their legitimate industry, I believe, is against the law!"

Consultation is continuing with the aim of achieving a sensible outcome.

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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ABIC Conference 2011 Windsor NSW

Australian Buffalo Industry Council (ABIC) representatives from all states and the Northern Territory travelled to rural Windsor west of Sydney in early February for their annual general meeting and host state field trip.

The AGM, held at the property of local buffalo producers Ian and Kim Massingham, addressed a wide range of issues impacting on the national industry.

Among key agenda items up for discussion was the new ABIC Constitution which was all but completed ready for endorsement at a special general meeting. Some 25 interstate reps and local stakeholders attended the traditional Sunday field-trip and networking lunch - and made short work of the locally produced buff food choices on offer.

It was a valuable opportunity for visitors from outside NSW to meet new and existing local industry

players, including Lakesland farmers Elena and Andrei Swegen, and to observe and discuss ongoing developments that are helping to strengthen the buffalo sector in their state.

Cyclone Yasi bearing down on Far North Queensland forced two ABIC committee members to cancel out at the last minute. Vice-President Mitch Humphries and Secretary Jana Kahabka had to abandon plans to travel to NSW, so they could stay home and take care their animals and facilities.



Elena with one of her calves



Some of Ian and Kim's buffalo.



Deep in discussion at the Massinghams



This purebred riverine cow on the Swegen's farm arrived in NSW from the Northern Territory in November 2009

Food lovers getting hooked on Windsor buff offerings

This year's ABIC program hosts, NSW buff farmers Ian and Kim Massingham, have been doing the rounds of local shows and other events, with their meat and milk-based products.

They're marketing an enticing range of meat cuts, sausages, mince, milk, gelato, yoghurt and cheese under the catchy banner, Ausbuff Stuff - and they're fast making an impression



on foodies around the state. "We've had a really good response to our products so far and we're very happy with where we are going," Ian says.

"We've done four shows so far between Newcastle and Port Stephens and people are pretty impressed with what they're tasting."

One happy regular customer is an Italian lady who's been living in Australia for five years.

"She tried out our gelato and told us it was the only decent gelato she'd tasted since she arrived in Australia," Ian says.

"We've been sourcing local ingredients and Italian base flavours for the gelato and we have our own processing facilities."

Murrah project cut

The Victorian research project aimed at upgrading dairy buffalo has been cut by RIRDC.

"The reason is financial and the fact that we are not able to obtain Bulgarian Murrah semen," VicBIC President Athel Smith says. "There is currently an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Bulgaria, with no projections to when the export quarantine will be lifted.

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Buffalo News & Views . . .

from around the country

VICTORIA

Despite the research project being cut, VicBIC remains hopeful that Murrah genetics will be available in Australia in the not-too-distant future. "There is still a big demand for Murrah genetics here," VicBIC's Athel Smith says. "The industry

hopes this may be achieved in the future, when it becomes easier to deal with Bulgaria. Meanwhile, calves from the first AI round using riverine semen from Italy are now being born and there are now five calves on the ground.

BELOW: The first born - at the Eddy's Numurkah farm.



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QUEENSLAND

Milla Milla's Mitch Humphries has clinched a significant marketing coup in getting his buffalo milk products into Woolworths supermarkets. We'll bring you more on this development in the next newsletter.

North Queensland producer Jana Kahabka has recently returned from Italy where she took time out from a holiday to visit buffalo outlets including Paestum's state of the art Vanullo organic buffalo dairy.

"The buffalo farms completely surround the 760BC archaeological site, which is stupendous. When the Roman elite re-discovered Paestum in the 1760s, the buffalo were lounging around the ruins and wallowing in the swamps. Apparently the herdsmen died young from malaria and starvation and, interestingly, whole blocks of quite old eucalyptus trees were planted there to counteract the malaria."

Jana tasted products on each of the three farms visited. "Delicious! The mozzarella at the organic farm was the best in Italy, made in front of your face and sweet - and the gelati di bufali was generally divine.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

New office bearers and committee members were elected during the NT Buffalo Industry Council 's AGM on 29 April. They are: Angus Fleming as President and Public Officer, Michael Swart as Vice-President, Adrian Phillips as Secretary/Treasurer, Michael Swart and Ernie Schlupe as ABIC reps and Neil Ross, Ernie Schlupe and Geoff Arthur as Committee Members.

The NT's old Meneling Abattoir at Batchelor is coming out of mothballs and expected to be operating again by July. It will provide a much-needed Top End processing facility for multiple species including buffalo, camels and cattle. Industry players who have toured the abattoir have said it looks in surprisingly good condition considering it has been closed for many years.

Meanwhile, Michael Swart says he's continuing to field inquiries from people interested in accessing buffalo milk for processing into dairy goods. One inquirer was an Indian woman who wanted the milk to make traditional sweets. All queries have been directed to relevant producers.

Keeping an eye on proceedings!



Here's the lovely 'Nina' welcoming ABIC guests to her Lakesland, NSW farm. She recently produced a female calf to AI (Italian semen). Owners Elena and Andrei Swegen are thrilled with Nina's plentiful, flavoursome milk, which is producing excellent cheeses.