



Buffalo News

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Official newsletter of the Australian Buffalo Industry Council (ABIC)

WANTED: Australian milking heifers to fill major South African order



TOP: buffalo safely loaded in the aircraft nose cone.
BELOW: Loading crates aboard the aircraft



50 Queensland buffalo jet off to Qatar

Queensland buffalo dairy operator Mitch Humphries has recently filled an order for 50 of his milking breeders to be air-freighted to Qatar in the Middle East. The Milla Milla consignment was handled by Queensland livestock export agent Mike Taylor. **MORE DETAILS PAGE 4**

South Africa wants a major shipment of Australian bred buffalo milking heifers and the hunt is now on in earnest to fill the order.

A South African importer has approached the Australian Buffalo Industry Council (ABIC) to access between 100 and 200 riverine-cross buffalo to build up a milking herd in his country.

If the order comes together, it will be the second consignment of Australian milking buffalo to South Africa since 2008.

ABIC President Michael Swart and Top End buffalo specialist Barry Lemcke have taken up the challenge of identifying enough suitable buffalo around the country to fill what they concede is an 'ambitious' but not insurmountable order. They have issued plea for stock.

"What we need is an indication from everyone in the industry of what they might have for sale in pregnant and non-pregnant two-year old and yearling heifers. or what is weaned now and would be available in 12 months time," Barry Lemcke says. "Heifers should be no more than two-years of age. As this order is for dairy stock, and because they will need to endure the quarantine and testing protocols, these heifers will need to

be docile and people-friendly. They should not be your culled stock and should have all the requisites such as four teats and no defects. Information on their origin would also be useful so that the purchaser can safely organise their breeding program in the future."

Barry says the entire shipment would need to be assembled on the one quarantine farm which could be in any state, but with reasonable access to an international airport. Some indication of your asking price as well as numbers of each age group should also be forwarded to Michael or Barry, preferably by email and preferably by mid November. Even if you only have from 1-10 head for sale, please make contact because if the order is large we may need to source from everywhere to make up the numbers. This is a chance to get a return from your investment in the buffalo industry!

A sale list is being drawn up for submission to the prospective purchaser.

If you think that you have or will have buffalo suitable from F1 upwards, please contact Michael Swart (Email: michael@wrsc.com.au) or Barry Lemcke (Email: barry.lemcke@nt.gov.au)

Abattoirs Progress

NT buffalo producers, hampered for years by limited meatworks access, have been buoyed by steady progress on two Top End projects.

The former Menneling meatworks near Batchelor, south of Darwin and not operational since 2003, has undergone major renovations in readiness for its impending re-opening as an export killing facility. The owners, Windy Hills Australian Game Meat, anticipate the Batchelor abattoir will be processing up to 350 animals a day, including cattle, buffalo and camels, when at capacity. Buffalo producers are also eagerly watching progress on AACo's proposed \$50 million Livingstone Valley meatworks, near Noonamah 50 km south of Darwin.

The company has lodged a development application with NT planning authorities and expects construction of its ultra-modern abattoir to start early next year. It will operate year round except for a brief wet season maintenance shutdown. Once fully operational, it will have capacity to process 1000 head a day. NT buffalo farmers lost a valuable local processor when the Litchfield Abattoir closed a few years ago. Their only current reasonably close outlet is the Gunbalanya meatworks in south-west Arnhem Land.

NSW buffalo farmers fight new animal regulations

NSW buffalo farmers are continuing negotiations with the state's Department of Primary Industry to try and resolve their concerns about proposed changes to the Non Indigenous Animals Regulation 2008.

They claim the 'debacle' threatening to ban farmers carrying buffalo in NSW, has been created by 'an overzealous public servant in the process of drawing up new licensing legislation'.

They also say a recent letter on the issue from NSW Primary Industries Minister Katrina Hodgkinson is identical to the letter received a month earlier from the DPI Acting Director-General. The Minister states she is most concerned about the impact on Non Indigenous animal owners by the recent actions of the department and will await further departmental advice after the 12 month period expires next year, before deciding on any future regulation changes.

"From here the best course of action appears to be negotiating with those within the DPI that have some understanding of the industry(ies) involved,"

Buffalo producer Doug Robertson says. "We want to see if we can start the process towards having buffalo reclassified in to class 4 or 5 so that they are akin to other domestic animals.

"We have been informed that to have any chance of doing this we would have to carry out a risk assessment which would have to be done by an independent consultant. DPI has pointed out that we would have to fund such an exercise and that they have no funds for any such process.

The NSW farmers argue that Queensland has already carried out such an assessment and more importantly concluded that buffalo posed a low risk of escaping and forming feral herds, particularly in the southern parts of the state.

"In fact, despite the presence of feral buffalo in the Territory's Top End for many years, buffalo have never established large feral herds in the Gulf and Cape of Queensland as claimed by at least one member of the NSW DPI,"

Doug says.

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RIRDC's June calls it a day

A true stalwart for the buffalo industry, June Murphy has retired from RIRDC after 12 years in the job. Prior to joining RIRDC in October 1999, June worked, amongst other things, as a House of Representatives Committee Co-ordinator in Canberra. Within RIRDC she was the Program Co-ordinator for The New and Emerging Industries portfolio working under the



direction of Dr Peter McInnes. In this role she was of exceptional assistance to not only the efficient operation of that section but she gave invaluable help and guidance to members of the industries that RIRDC were working with, including those in the Buffalo industry who are extremely grateful for her patience and understanding.

June was born in Gundagai (nobody is saying when!) and raised three children - who between them have given her six grandchildren.

Like her boss Peter McInnes she will be missed by the small industries she worked so well with.

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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A recent crop of purebred river weaners from Beatrice Hill Farm - all from Italian semen by AI

Buffalo destined for new Victorian dairy venture



Up-and-coming young Victorian buffalo farmer Jack Blow has recently visited the Northern Territory as part of his nation-wide search for good quality stock to develop his new dairy venture herd.

Jack, aged 21, got a taste for dairy buffalo farming while working with Robyn Richmond in Victoria so has decided to try his own hand in this expanding industry.

He is keen to get his own herd up and running on a farm near Karang and is looking to pick up around 60-100 head, from various operations around Australia.

Jack has selected three robust bulls from the herd at Beatrice Hill Farm (pictured above) and they will be heading down by truck to Victoria soon to take up residence on Jack's Karang farm

Most of the Top End buffalo consignment will come from Beatrice Hill and from Ernie Schlupe's

Beatrice Hill buff project on target for 100 purebreds in two years

*Update from Barry Lemcke
Senior Buffalo Researcher*

The key objective of the buffalo program at Beatrice Hill Farm is to build the purebred riverine herd to 100 head and stabilise at that level.

It is estimated that 100 head of breeders should be achieved within two years at current estimates of population growth (barring accidents or catastrophes of some nature). The consequences of that is that once attained the farm will be in a position to supply purebreds to the dairy industry on a yearly basis that has not occurred in the past due to this build-up. This should equate to around 40 head of heifers or mature breeders becoming available per year once the 100 head has been achieved, depending on the heifer replacement rate into the herd.

Up to now only cross-breeds have been made available from the government herd.

The current herd is made up from two sources - the original US heifers and their direct progeny and also from the back-crossing line from the swamp cows.

This was achieved through five back-crosses from swamp back to purebred river using the original four bulls from the US and Italian semen from three different shipments over a 13 year period.

Fortunately the current semen available from Italy is much better quality than the original lines, so bulls with different genetics are now readily available in increasing numbers.

Also some sexed semen has been imported for testing during this coming December at Beatrice Hill.

BUFFALO EXPORTS

Australian live buffalo exports for 2011 are significantly down on numbers for last year.

The *Pastoral Market Update* shows 1841 buffalo had been shipped out of Australia by the end of October, compared with 2541 for the same time last year. Indonesia remained the strongest buyer, importing 1338 buffalo, with the remaining 503 going to the Malaysian state of Brunei.

Buffalo News & Views . . .

from around the country

Mitch's milkers jet off to the Persian Gulf

Queensland buffalo dairy farmer Mitch Humphries recently filled an order for two bulls and 50 heifers to be exported to Qatar on the Persian Gulf.

Queensland agent Mike Taylor coordinated the consignment, which flew out to the capital of Doha through Brisbane Airport in air-conditioned comfort and have settled in well on the new property.

"They've settled in well," Mike says. "They've gone to a private milking and cheese-making enterprise which is in the process of expanding its herd.

"They went over with 200 head of cattle and handled the trip well. Everything went smoothly."

Mike says that based on the inquiries now coming in, he sees significant prospects for more overseas orders in the future.



AQIS staff with crates ready for loading - Brisbane Airport

NSW Regulations 'debacle'

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"It can only be hoped that when consideration is given to reclassifying buffalo in NSW, reference can be made to the Queensland risk assessment and that reasonable assumptions can be drawn from the same. To have to reinvent the wheel and pay consultants to do so is an unnecessary waste of scarce resources. So far this 'updating' of Non-Indigenous Animals legislation has not only cost the salary of the DPI personnel doing the job but more importantly it has cost hundreds, if not thousands, of unpaid man hours for those individuals involved in the industries effected by the changes AND it's not over yet." He says it is interesting to note that DPI staff involved in this exercise keep referring to the

VPC (vertebrate pest committee), the national body that classifies Non-Indigenous animals as to their 'threat potential', be it to the environment or to humans. These classifications serve as a guideline to the states when they draw up their own legislation—NB- the VPC classification is solely a guideline and is by no means mandatory. The classifications the VPC currently use are Extreme, Serious, Moderate and Low. When last checked there was only one Low – the Giant Panda! and one Moderate – the Babirusa? The remaining hundreds of NIAs are either Serious or Extreme. Buffalo and sheep are listed as Serious whereas cattle are Extreme!!"

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A FETTISH FOR BUFFALO!



YES ... they are buffalo! Award-winning NT abstract artist Nina Battley has long been fascinated by buffalo - and they feature regularly in her exhibitions and all have been snapped up by collectors around the country. This latest offering, 'Buffalo Studies' is for a Darwin Christmas exhibition.