



Indonesian visit starts ball rolling on Aussie buff import protocol



ABOVE: Local buffalo at the Kariyana feedlot. BELOW: (L-R) Mr Petrus Sitepu (Austral Livex), Feedlot Manager Suratno & Asst Manager Rahmad Suryono.

NT Buffalo Industry Council Executive Officer Neil Ross travelled to Jakarta recently to begin talks with authorities on a health protocol for importing Australian buffalo into Indonesia.

There has never been a health protocol between Australia and Indonesia in relation to feedlot buffalo.

He met with Indonesia's newly appointed Director General of Livestock Services, Professor Dr Wasito, and presented a

draft protocol produced by BioSecurity Australia in Canberra.

"It was a very positive meeting and we have since sent further information that will help to have the protocol drawn up," Mr Ross said.

"As well, the Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development has offered to pay for two Indonesian officials to come to Australia to inspect our buffalo industry, as part of the protocol negotiations.

"We hope they will accept this offer and that the conditions for the protocol can be agreed to as soon as possible so that exports can begin."

During the Indonesian trip, Mr Ross also had talks with the operators of West Java's Kariyana feedlot, who are keen to import and evaluate Australian buffalo at the facility. "The owners pioneered Indonesia's feedlotting industry and built the country's first feedlot," Mr Ross said.

"They have been trialling feedlotting of local buffalo and are very keen to evaluate our Aussie buffalo."

Mr Ross said the department cooperative that operates a credit scheme to assist small farmers throughout Indonesia to purchase livestock, was also very interested in the the potential of Australia's younger farmed buffalo.



600 buffalo set sail for Malaysia

Top End producers are hoping that a large consignment of buffalo shipped out of Darwin to Malaysia this month will be the first of many to go to that country. The 600 buffalo were loaded onto the new Becrux livestock carrier with more than 16 500 cattle. The Department of Business Industry and Resource Development said producers and the department had been working for some time to identify and develop new export markets, and hoped that countries like Malaysia would take regular shipments out of Darwin in the future.

PROFILE - Oyster Cove Buffalo - Tasmania

Phillip and Denise Oates pioneered Tasmania's commercial buffalo industry when they imported three swamp buffalo to their Oyster Cove farm, south of Hobart, in January 1997. Later that year, they topped up the herd with a swamp bull and another heifer calf.

"We were looking for something different as we were still farming fallow deer," Phillip said. "After contacting the Victorian buffalo industry secretary, we spent about a week driving around Victoria and NSW inspecting animals available for sale.

"We stayed with a friend who'd had buffalo on his Orbest property for some years, and had lengthy discussions about animals suitable for purchase. We finally found out who to speak with about importing buffalo, went ahead with it and the stock had their tests done."

Phillip and his Dad left Tassie with the 4x4 and trailer and headed towards Albury, where they spent a couple of days getting to know their new buffalo.

When it was time to leave, they had the necessary paperwork signed by an agricultural inspector and headed to the boat with the buffalo. "We were told the animals would lie down all the way but this didn't happen," Phillip said. "They were loaded onto the ship then Dad and I flew to Devonport, where next morning we picked up the vehicle and trailer headed south, with the buffalo still standing up. It wasn't till we were five minutes from home, 30 minutes south of Hobart, that the animals finally laid down - then it took them an hour of so to stand up again and get out of the trailer. They were loaded at about 9am and arrived at 5pm the next day. After a month we had another bull and heifer delivered from NSW to



Part of the Oates' Oyster Cove Buffalo herd

Bridgewater where we collected them from."

After many phonecalls and a lot of time, the Oates finally had three cows, one heifer and a bull - and their first calf was born approximately six months later. Since that first calf, 85% of their buffalo calves have been bulls.

"This makes building a herd of cows difficult," Phillip said. "However, we have had no problems selling our calves. Up until last year we had sold all calves live, but we felt it was time to get into the meat market and, in April 2003, had our first kill of a two-year old animal with dressed carcass weight of 187kg. Our first sale of meat came while we were still cutting the carcass up.

"The meat has sold well and we haven't advertise at this stage because we are waiting for our next calves to be big and old enough to slaughter."

The Oates' meat orders have included one from a local restaurant for a full carcass. While waiting for more of their herd to be ready for slaughter, they will try using their interstate sources if they received another such large order.

They've also had great success with buffalo beer sticks, sausages and a course cabana with a chunkier than normal meat texture.

The Oates say they have had losses like every body else, but were told they wouldn't have any buffalo survive their first winter. "We are still growing with a total of 14 animals at present and waiting for our latest calf to arrive this season. We

are in the process of importing a 7/8th Riverine bull calf from Queensland and hope this will allow our animals to adapt better to our cold winters, and allow greater weight gain in our younger animals. At this stage, this is still a big learning curve."

Last year, the Oates exchanged some buffalo to allow other farmers to have breeding pairs. They exchanged a bull from Wings Farm Park at Gunns Plains, for a heifer, and a cow for a bull at Richmond's Zoo Doo. They are assisting Zoo Doo to obtain a cream cow and a half cream cow, 'Pieball', so as to make other progeny available on the Tasmanian market.

"Tasmania now has three properties with breeders, due to us relocating a bull and two heifers late last year," Phillip said. "We purchased a 7/8th Riverine bull calf from Queensland in March with the aim of improving our current herd.

"On the meat aspect, we've had lots of repeat sales of buffalo cuts since April and had some product sold recently at the Taste of the Huon, which was a huge success. The local Peppermint Bay Restaurant bought a half carcass in March, took the rest around May and have also bought several packs of our sausages. We are now looking at a larger order around December for the Taste of Tasmania, other expos and events in early 2005."



Denise Oates and children much at home with the buffalo

BUFFALO News

Contributions on any matter of interest to Australia's buffalo industry are most welcome and can be sent to, or discussed with:

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Beatrice Hill AI research update

Researcher Barry Lemcke provides an update

Since the report in the previous newsletter, two more AI rounds have been carried out at Beatrice Hill Farm at Adelaide River.

A second round has been done on 25 head that included all the first round heifers that didn't get pregnant in round 1.

It also included some new candidates that had been too small in the previous round.

Another new treatment has been tried in cows that can't be inseminated intra-uterine. The semen is decanted into 1/4 ml ET straws and a further attempt at uterine placement with the thinner ET pipette.

We have also varied the insemination with some cows receiving a single morning insemination only. We have also tried some with Estrumate[®] instead of Juramate[®] to see whether it is more efficient.

A second group done a week later involved all the purebred River cow group which are all lactating and have had no bull in with them since last year. This group of 16 included one 7/8 cow, with some similar treatment variations as the previous group.

By the time you receive this newsletter we hope to have tested them using the real-time ultrasound machine to test for early pregnancy.

The pure River group will be AI'ed a second time to pick up the non pregnant then mated with a bull if no success on the second attempt.

While the Dry Season is not usually regarded as the best time to run an AI program, we are trying to mimic the success of the young bull with the group in the Dry last year. He managed to get **all** cows pregnant, including the lactating cows, in very quick time.



DBIRD's Eric Cox (left) & Gehan Jayawardhana engrossed in AI duties

In fact, the first two calves this year were both from lactating cows that had their next calf two weeks and

four weeks earlier than the previous year. This means getting pregnant within four weeks of giving birth !!

BUFFALO HISTORY CAPTURED ON CAMERA

NT photo-journalist David Hancock has spent decades photographing aspects of the Top End buffalo industry. David presented his works at an exhibition at Darwin's Stokes Hill Wharf recently. His photos depicted the controversial BTEC days, buffalo catchers at work, herds grazing wetlands, and much more.



Hundreds of visitors, including many with past and present links to the buffalo industry, browsed through the display. Interspersed between the photos were props including an old buffalo catcher vehicle with its unique bionic arm.

ABOVE: Some of the stunning images on display. LEFT: An old buffalo catcher vehicle was part of the exhibition.

Buff News now covers the globe

The number of people, both at home and abroad, reading about Australia's buffalo industry through the ABIC newsletter, *Buffalo News*, is rising steadily with each new issue distributed.

The domestic mailing list for hard copies now holds 330 names, while the number of overseas interests receiving an electronic copy has just passed the 100 mark. *Buffalo News* is now read in every continent.



STATE *by* STATE

Buffalo news from around the nation

QUEENSLAND

Dairy farmers Mel and Marg Thompson have bought five buffalo from the NT to add to their enterprise at Maleny in the Gold Coast hinterland. The Thompsons are looking to expand gradually into buffalo production so are trialling the Territory five, which include one pure, one three-quarter and three halves. The imports have been running with a pure bull so it is hoped they will soon be producing young. The Thompsons say they are starting off small so they and the buffalo 'can educate each other' about the industry.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Australian producer and ABIC President, Bob Cook, will attend the Seventh World Buffalo Congress in Manila in the Philippines from 20-23 October.

The congress will focus on the theme: *Buffalo-based Enterprises: Challenges and Opportunities in a World of Changing Trade Regulations and Consumer Demands*. Bob is looking forward to hearing how other countries are handling buffalo industry issues.

VICTORIA

VicBIC held its AGM on Sunday 4 July 2004 at Numurkah in conjunction with an open day at Geoff and Neroli Eddy's place. A vote was taken to reduce membership fees to \$30.00 per annum for people with less than 10 buffaloes. It is hoped this will encourage people with small herds to join VicBIC and for the committee to know where animals are when chasing meat orders.

Abattoirs are still a concern with Garfield the only one in Victoria supporting the buffalo industry. The DPI in Victoria is looking into the matter. Sales and purchases should be directed to Athel Smith on 03 5965 2368.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

NTBIC and supporters continued their good work in promoting buff products at this year's Royal Darwin Show in July. They cooked up hundreds of buff burgers and steaks, creating a magnificent aroma that enticed hungry crowds.

In the primary industry enclosures on the other side of the showground, Darwin River buffalo producer Dallis

Wilschefski took out first prize for his pen of four export quality animals. Fellow Top End producer Ernie Schlupe won second prize in a tight contest.



Dallis' show-winning buffalo



Tucking into the show stall leftovers

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