



ABIC delegates report back on Manila World Buffalo Congress

ABIC delegates to the 7th World Buffalo Congress in Manila in the Philippines from 20-23 October, have come home with heightened enthusiasm and a list of recommendations for advancing the Australia's buffalo industry.

ABIC President Bob Cook, wife Christine and ABIC Honorary Member Barry Lemcke were among 300 world delegates at the congress, which is staged every three years by the International Buffalo Federation.

Barry Lemcke presented a paper on his work, and was honoured with a plaque for his long-standing involvement with the WBC and buffalo industry in general.

The four-day congress program included official opening and closing ceremonies, plenary sessions, scientific presentations on wide-ranging research and other relevant topics, cultural presentations and a post-congress tour that included buff tastings and buffalo racing at Manila's Carabao Centre.



Above: Buffalo racing at Manila's Carabao Centre. Below: Barry Lemcke and Bob Cook at the congress

The theme was *Buffalo –based Enterprises: Development Prospects under changing Trade Regulations and Consumer Demand*.

Achievements & Findings

The ABIC President reported that significant developments were happening worldwide in the Water Buffalo industry, including improved genetics. There was also increased interest in introducing Riverine breeds, either as pure dairy animals or for crossing with Swamp Buffalo to create animals with improved growth and milk production potential.

"It was encouraging to see that there are increasing trends in demand for meat and milk in developing economies worldwide," Mr Cook said. "The Water Buffalo will make significant contributions in meeting the growing demand for animal products. For me, a determination and passion to breed buffalo and produce prime buffalo meat products have been reinforced by the obvious enthusiasm world-wide that buffalo produce excellent meat and milk. There is also a keen interest in the genetics



of crossing Swamp and Riverine Buffalo for fast growth and milk qualities. These areas have been of a benefit to my small farm enterprise."

He said the congress reinforced that Australia's buffalo production is minimal compared with other countries. This suggested an opening to advance the industry to compete for the demand for buffalo products worldwide. "The benefits to the rural industry to participate in the breeding and milking of buffalo are vast," he said. "Many myths exist and these barriers need to be broken, so that farmers can be aware of the financial benefits in buffalo farming.

Continued - Page 3

**ABIC 2005
AGM AND
CONFERENCE**

**PERTH
Western Australia
Saturday
5 February 2005**

**FOR MORE DETAILS
visit the ABIC website
or call John Starr
Phone: 0400 765 951**

PROFILE - *Telegraph Farm, Esperance WA*



John and Gwen Starr at the entrance to Telegraph Farm



Buffalo doze among the farm's native reeds



John chats to tourists among his proteas

BUFFALO News

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

KERRY SHARP - EDITOR

PHONE: 08 89271724 / FAX: 08 8945 6062

EMAIL: sharp@octa4.net.au

Buffalo News is funded by



Diversity is the undisputed catchword for operations at John and Gwen Starr's Telegraph Farm near Esperance on Western Australia's spectacular south-east coast.

Since moving onto the 630 hectare property 40 years ago, the Starrs have tried their hand at many things - from producing buffalo meat and venison, breeding cattle and growing proteas, to operating a farm-based tourism venture and a restaurant. They started their buffalo venture 13 years ago with 12 animals brought in from Serpentine near Perth and now have a herd of 60.

In recent years, the Starrs have concentrated on lean meat production from their buffalo, deer and, to some extent, ostriches. At the same time, they have developed wide-ranging options to value-add and get the best income possible from their land. Tourism has provided a vital cash flow at low production times.

The family sells deer antlers to markets in Korea and China, where this valued by-product is mainly ground up and used as a highly digestive calcium supplement.

Telegraph Farm is on fragile coastal country which includes extensive dunes and sandy soil, paperbark swamp and large tracts of the WA native Cultivation Reed. Conditions are particularly difficult during the hot, windy summers that are typical of this corner of the country.

"We are growing perennial kikuyu grass as pasture to consolidate the sandhills and hold the soil together and so we have plenty of feed for the stock in summer," John says. "There'd be bugger all here without this supplementary feed."

"The buffalo are not fed on the hay. In fact, the reeds, while a problem from many aspects, contain 11-12% protein, and are proving a nutritious summer food source for the buffalo. The buffalo are also ideally suited to this fragile country because they don't dig their hooves into the soft soil, like cattle do."

Along with their buffalo enterprise, the Starrs run 160 head of breeder cattle, 400 Canadian-Elk cross deer for venison and antlers, a handful of ostriches, four lammas and one alpaca. Some are solely for the tourists' interest.

Some years ago, they imported a start-up stock of attractive Proteas from South Africa and cultivated a significant crop, from which they harvested cut flowers mainly for the Japanese market. Because of intensive labour needs and chemical exposure, the flowers are no longer being exported, but the multi-coloured crop has become another major visitor asset.

Telegraph Farm is widely marketed as a local tourist attraction and hundreds of visitors converge each year to experience John's fascinating bus tour of the family's mixed farming enterprise - and enjoy Gwen's sensational Devonshire morning teas and lunch prepared in the homestead kitchen.

The Starrs recently realised a long-term goal to open a butcher shop from which to sell buffalo and venison. (*See Back Page*).

John explains the philosophy behind his farming successes. "It's about identifying and making good use of the capabilities on our land," he says. "We have found that what we are doing at the moment all comes together quite well -and providing we live long enough, we will eventually make a quid out of it!"

A formula for advancing Australia's buffalo industry

ABIC President Bob Cook, fresh back from the Manila World Buffalo Congress, has put seven recommendations to RIRDC and the industry as a way to develop the Australian buffalo sector in the future. Bob recommends:

(1) Provision of budget to implement a National Buffalo Development Plan.

(2) Education for farmers on the benefits of producing buffalo meat and milk products, and for the public in the benefits of eating buffalo meat because of its healthy qualities, being lower in fat and cholesterol than chicken and fish.

(3) Research into the meat qualities of Riverine/Water Buffalo cross, eg Will the rapid growth in F1 produce fatty animals with higher cholesterol levels? (The last tests on buffalo meat were on Water Buffalo)

(4) Government clamp down in meat substitution especially buffalo meat and illegally imported buffalo meats originating from India. Implementation of higher penalties and fines.

(5) Development of markets for the future through education for farmers and consumers eg: reprint of the Australian Water Buffalo Meat Cuts and Information Book.

(6) Implementation of a National Genetic Improvement Plan to produce animals that are genetically superior in terms of milk production and growth, with these genetics to be made available to buffalo breeders and farmers at minimal cost.

(7) Participation in resolving global disease threats, eg foot and mouth disease.



Chris Cook checks out the Carabao Centre buffalo yards

Top End shipment to Malaysia biggest in 17 years

The Northern Territory buffalo industry recently achieved a 17-year milestone when it shipped off its biggest live buffalo consignment since a 1987 shipment to Cuba.

A total of 860 buffalo were loaded aboard the *Angus Express* at Darwin's Fort Hill Wharf in early October to fill an order boosted by Malaysia's requirements for the Muslim Ramadan festival.

NTBIC Executive Officer Neil Ross, said it had been a while since a live export carrier bound for Malaysia had departed through the Port of Darwin. They usually leave from the WA Kimberley ports of Wyndham or Broome.

The October shipment out of Darwin also included 250 slaughter cattle, 100 dairy cattle and 470 goats, mostly from Western Australia.

The consignment took the Territory's buffalo tally for Malaysia this year to 1600 head, which is a vast improvement on the few hundred head that have been heading that way in recent years.

NTBIC is in the process of negotiating a new buffalo health protocol with Indonesia and this was likely to increase that number of live export ships travelling between Darwin and that country. The increased activity was expected to result in welcome spin-offs for the local buffalo industry.

RIRDC needs your feedback

Can you please fill in the form enclosed

RIRDC is seeking the assistance of all buffalo industry stakeholders in completing the form enclosed in this issue of *Buffalo News*. The information sought is vital in planning the future direction of research and development projects that will benefit Australia's buffalo industry.

Thank you for your help

HONOUR FOR BARRY



NT buffalo researcher and ABIC Honorary Member Barry Lemcke was presented with a plaque at the World Buffalo Congress in Manila, in gratitude for his long-standing commitment to the industry and the WBC.



STATE *by* STATE

Buffalo news from around the nation

Victoria

VicBIC has been in contact with Lucy Coward, the Ag. Business Development Officer at Tatura, seeking assistance to access additional abattoirs, marketing and promotion. Lucy is looking into these matters, as well as seeing

if there is any assistance for someone wishing to start a buffalo dairy in Victoria. VicBIC Board would assist any dairy farmers going into buffalo dairying by supporting a Riverine buffalo breeding program. The Board recommends the use of Riverine buffalo to upgrade current herds, be-

cause of their suitability to Victoria's winter climate and their hybrid vigor.

VicBIC is also asking non members to join the council so as to lend support for our cause whilst lobbying government. Membership for breeders with less than 11 animals is now \$30.00 p/a. Please ring for form to be sent out.

and its a pretty steep learning curve but the signs so far are encouraging," John says.

South Australia

Bob and Christine Cook never miss a chance to line up new customers for the delectable smallgoods they produce through their Gulf Buffalo enterprise.

They took the opportunity, during a Buffalo Cook Feast Dinner at Manila's Carabao Centre as part of the recent World Buffalo Congress, to give delegates a taste of their range of the Australian smallgoods. The products were well received and thoroughly enjoyed by all. Maybe, new export opportunities could be in pipeline for the enterprising Cooks.

The post convention tour took in the Carabao Centre, National Bull farm, Carabao races and the CLSU Buffalo Dairy Farm.

Western Australia

John Starr, not backward at trying out new enterprise options, reckons he's 'gone troppo WA style' by opening up a butcher shop in the Perth suburb of Midland.

It's an outlet for selling buffalo, venison and other speciality lean meat products. "We are slowly developing a customer base



Riverine and Riverine Cross buffalo enjoying a good Spring in the Yarra Valley - VicBic is encouraging producers to opt for Riverine for new dairy enterprises in that region.

AUSTRALIAN BUFFALO INDUSTRY COUNCIL

STATE / TERRITORY REPRESENTATIVES

SA BOB COOK (ABIC President)

Phone: 08 86343043 / Mob: 0419 866 050 / Fax: 08 86343055

MILTON STEVENS

Phone: 08 86885032 / Mob: 0429 694 736

VIC ATHEL SMITH (ABIC Secretary/Treasurer)

Phone: 03 5965 2368 / Fax: 03 5965 2114

IAN PADGET

Phone: 03 95794400 / Fax: 03 95794500

NSW DOUG ROBERTSON

Phone: 02 68485315 / Fax: 02 68485359

GREG GIBLETT

Phone: 0267698316 / Mob: 0428 667 752 / Fax: 02 67698321

WA JOHN STARR

Phone: 0400 765 951

TAS PHILLIP OATES

Phone: 0362674402

QLD JOHN LLOYD

Phone / Fax: 07 49588470 / Mob: 0427 656 971

MITCH HUMPHRIES

Phone: 07 40972544 / Fax: 07 40972038

NT NEIL ROSS (NTBIC Exec Officer)

Phone: 08 89471833 / Fax: 08 89471822

MICHAEL SWART (ABIC Vice-President)

Phone: 08 89471661 / Fax: 08 89471690

ABIC WEBSITE - www.buffaloaustralia.org