



## ABIC checks out Queensland buffalo dairy developments



Representatives from all states and the Northern Territory gathered in Malanda in far north Queensland in February for the Australian Buffalo Industry Council's 2004 AGM and annual conference.

The proceedings were officially opened by the Mayor of Malanda, Mary Lyle, who discussed the drought, dairy deregulation and the tourist industry in the area, and offered support to ABIC if required.

ABIC Representatives included Bob Cook (SA)

and Milton Stevens (SA), Athel Smith and Ian Padget (Vic), Doug Robertson and Greg Giblett (NSW), Michael Swart, Barry Lemcke and Neil Ross (NT), John Starr (WA), Phillip Oates (Tasmania), Mitch Humphries (Qld) and Peter McInnes (RIRDC).

LEFT: Malanda Mayor Mary Lyle with Bob Cook at the AGM

Issues highlighted as being particularly crucial for the industry's future development and growth included the need to retain Beatrice Hill farm on the Adelaide River for ongoing research, expansion of the buffalo dairy sector, increased promotional and marketing activities, further research and development, and the need for more buffalo meat wholesalers.

Queensland representative Mitch Humphries told delegates he would like to increase the interest in buffalo in Queensland and have new people enter the industry.

He said local pasture and conditions were ideal for buffalo and that export opportunities existed. Mitch aims to develop to a stage where he is milking 30 to 40 buffalo, which, he said, would be a commercially viable level.

### Millaa Millaa buff milk a goer



After tasting success with their early buffalo milking trails, Mitch and Brigitte Humphries are now looking to expand their dairy herd at Millaa Millaa on the Atherton Tableland. Mitch, (pictured above with some of his milking herd) played host to buffalo industry representatives from throughout Australia who got the chance to inspect his operation and other local facilities while attending ABIC's 2004 AGM and annual conference at Malanda in February.

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# 7TH WORLD BUFFALO CONGRESS

## WHERE?

Manila -The Philippines

## WHEN?

20-23 October 2004.

## THEME?

*Buffalo-based Enterprises:  
Challenges and Opportunities  
in a World of Changing  
Trade Regulations and  
Consumer Demands*

## SPONSORS?

International Buffalo  
Federation

**MORE DETAILS WILL  
BE MADE AVAILABLE  
AS THEY COME TO HAND**

## 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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# AGM's focus on expanding Australia's buffalo sector

Discussions at the 2004 AGM and conference focussed mainly on research and development, breeder pricing, marketing and promotion, export opportunities, the diary buffalo industry and NLIS. More specific details are as follows:

● **RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT** - Researcher Barry Lemcke (NT) updated state representatives on the current AI program and said he was yet to determine when he will AI buffalo selected for the trials. He will distribute a report to members soon and a survey put together by Brian McQuirk may also be sent out soon. The semen being used in the research is from three Italian bulls. Discussions are taking place with a view to buffalo from Victoria and Western Australia being involved in the AI program this year and next year respectively. Mitch Humphries (Qld) is in the program this year, but is relying on natural cycles.

The meat analysis research to evaluate the difference between swamp buffalo and the various Riverine cross animals was discussed. Samples have been taken and frozen but no testing has been done yet.

● **EXPORTS** - Neil Ross (NTBIC) discussed export potential in the USA, Chile and Indonesia and said a trade agreement with Thailand was 'a distant hope'. He also said New Zealand was reviewing its live import protocols and had approached the NT Government for advice on various diseases.

● **MARKETING & PROMOTION** - Peter McInnes (RIRDC) undertook to distribute tapes on kangaroo meat promotion as useful information for the buffalo sector. He said marketing money was available but needed to be initiated. A lively discussion occurred between representatives, about promotional activities, the supply of buffalo to new farmers, and the clash between self interests and the industry's long-term growth. Neil Ross called for more brochures and posters, and John Starr (WA) suggested the industry needed more market development and communication with governments.

● **EXPORT & SLAUGHTER LEVIES** - The conference heard that a discrepancy exists between the number of animals known to be slaughtered and the actual levies being paid into the RIRDC account. Secretary Athel Smith will dis-

tribute a form to enable the state representatives to keep track of slaughter and live export numbers. The forms will be returned through Athel to RIRDC.

● **NLIS** - According to the attending ABIC state reps, NLIS will not be required in Victoria, NSW or Queensland, nor in South Australia which has its own property registration scheme. However, it will be required in Tasmania, for imported animals from the mainland, and also in WA and the NT where it will be implemented by 1 July 2005. NT stock moving into other states will have to abide by the importing state's requirements.

● **TENDERBUFF STAMP** - The stamp may be available to producers who want to participate in the Tenderbuff quality assurance scheme. The stamp would be supplied to an abattoir processing Tenderbuff. Participating abattoirs must have a qualified person on hand to inspect and grade the carcass.

● **RIVERINE & RIVERINE CROSS BREEDER PRICES** - The NT expressed concerns about declining sale prices for milking buffalo. Neil Ross circulated a suggested formula for future pricing based on past sales, and said the industry had reached a stage where it now had the scope to develop a 'stud aspect'.

## PLEASE FILL IN THE FORM

An RIRDC research project currently being undertaken by the the NT Government's Primary Industry Group and the NT Buffalo Industry Council entails a survey of the national buffalo herd.

A survey form is included with this newsletter, and you are urged to please fill it in and return it promptly to the NT BIC. If you know of any person with buffalo who has not received a copy of the survey, could you please give them a copy of this form or pass their details to the NT BIC.

Information gathered from this survey will help identify future research projects and also provide the base information required to start up a buffalo 'stud book', which will become essential as crossbreeding and AI work continues.

# Buffalo fetta & yoghurt for lunch

*ABIC Secretary Athel Smith (Victoria) reports on February's post-AGM Atherton Tablelands field trip*

**After a very busy Saturday at the recent AGM and conference, we took off on Sunday morning in our hire bus with tour captain Michael Swart at the wheel.**

We arrived safely - after a little directional confusion - at Mitch and Brigitte Humphries' buffalo dairy at Millaa Millaa.

The Humphries have two dairies with one dedicated to buffalo. When we arrived, Mitch was in the process of milking some of the Riverine cross cows, which became a little nervous with the onslaught of the bus crowd.

Mitch managed to continue his milking duties while answering many questions from his interstate visitors. After finishing with the Riverine he proceeded to milk some swamp buffalo.

We were also able to watch some buffalo calves being fed. One mother had two calves on her. Other calves were bucket fed, with most calves being weaned between two and four months. Mitch aims to milk about 40 cows, a number he considers to be commercially viable.

Mitch later led us on a guided tour of the district's features and nature attractions, including three waterfalls - Millaa Millaa, Ellinja and Zillie - all surrounded by lush rainforest, and at their best following good rains in the area. We also stopped off at a local lookout but couldn't see far because of heavy fog.

Millaa Millaa (Aboriginal name for waterfalls) has an annual rainfall of around 110 inches and most dairy farmers find they don't need to cut hay.

We stopped for lunch at Millaa Millaa's Mungalli Creek Dairy, which has all bio-dynamic produce including cheeses, yoghurt and cream. We enjoyed a lovely lunch of salads and cheeses, including buffalo fetta, and a fruit platter with cream and buffalo yoghurt.

On the way back to Malanda, we visited the Malanda Dairy Centre, a local tourist attraction, where we sampled the home grown coffee and learnt about the area's fascinating dairying history and pioneers. Some of our group also visited the Malanda Hotel, the largest wooden structure in the Southern Hemisphere, and a relic from the days when a timber industry thrived here.

The ABIC committee sincerely thanks Mitch and Brigitte Humphries for their warm hospitality during our memorable stay on the tableland, and for giving us such an interesting insight into what is required to run a buffalo dairy farm. Interest in buffalo milk is growing and we will be able to pass this valuable information on to people in other states wishing to take up similar enterprises.



*TOP: Mungalli Creek's Sally McPhee explains the various lines available. ABOVE: Barry Lemcke (NT) with a friendly buff, watched by Denise Oates (Tas). LEFT: Mitch Humphries washes down prior to milking.*

## RIVERINE BUFFALO FOR SALE

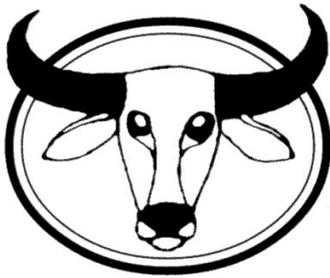
- 4 pure heifers approx 12 months old
- 1 pure bull approx 6 years old
- 9 Riverine cross (7/8) bulls 12-15 months old
- 9 Riverine cross (3/4) bulls 12-15 months old

**FOR MORE DETAILS CONTACT NEIL ROSS  
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## Dairy Buff Outlook Positive

Australia now has two buffalo dairies, one in north Queensland and the other in Victoria. Queensland's Mitch Humphries has had no problems selling his product, and Victorian operator Roger Haldane has retained a premium in the industry.

ABIC is confident that premium prices will be maintained if the quality remains good. Potential buff milk markets are growing. One Adelaide cheese maker has said he can take all the buffalo milk he can get his hands on. That's encouraging news for the industry.



# STATE *by* STATE

*Buffalo news from around the nation*

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

In a potentially significant step for the local industry, meat from five WA buffalo was sent to Japan in February for tastings at the big Tokyo Food Fair. The buffalo were trucked 700 km from John Starr's Esperance property to be processed at Jack Simeni's Margaret River abattoir. The consignment was arranged through the Fremantle based agent, Kaino, on behalf of Interestrest in Japan. John is currently waiting on feedback from the food fair.

Kaino officials have also discussed the potential for WA producers to export grain-fed buffalo top cuts into Japan for the popular raw sashimi. John is in the process of grain feeding a selection of his buffalo and deer so he is ready to fill trial sample orders when and if they come through. He has also spoken with Austrade in Tokyo about other future opportunities for buffalo meat exports.

## TASMANIA

Tasmania's fledgling buffalo industry is gathering momentum. The island state better known for its apples now has three properties with breeders, after local industry pioneers, Phillip and Denise

Oates (Oyster Cove Buffalo) re-located a bull and two heifers late last year. The Oates have also recently purchased a 7/8 Riverine bull calf from Queensland, with the intention of improving their existing herd. The calf arrived at the farm on 7 March after a very long journey south.

In another move this month, Phillip and Denise sold a side of two-year-old buffalo to Tasmania's Peppermint Bay Restaurant.

They also promoted and sold buffalo products at the recent highly successful *Taste of the Huon* festival in Hobart.

## VICTORIA

Victorian producers have raised concerns with ABIC regarding abattoirs in that state. Victoria currently has only one abattoir killing buffalo and the producers fear that if this abattoir withdraws its services, their enterprises would collapse. Other concerns from Victoria, raised at the February AGM, related to travel costs and distance because only small numbers of buffalo were being killed at any one time. As well, concerns were expressed about the lack of protocols in the handling and killing of buffalo. ABIC identified this as a state issue and Victoria's rep at the AGM, Ian Padget, said he could address it.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

Buffalo ventures in New South Wales have been severely hit by the continuing drought conditions for farmers in that state.

NSW's ABIC representative Doug Robertson reported at the council's February AGM that the buffalo industry in his state was in limbo at present and might be forced to disband, because of the severe impact of drought conditions.

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

NT Buffalo Industry Council Executive Officer Neil Ross attended the Brunei International Trade Expo (BITE) in late February. He also took the opportunity to visit neighbouring Sabah for further talks with plantation owners who are showing interest in importing young farm raised buffalo from Australia.

The NT Food Group recently launched its new identifier (logo), and TenderBuff is just one of the many exciting varieties of local produce that, hopefully, will be on the menu at all future NT Government functions.

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