



# Buffalo News

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Official newsletter of the Australian Buffalo Industry Council

## The world wants our buffalo meat but we can't get it processed

Ongoing opportunities to sell Australian buffalo meat into overseas markets are going begging because producers don't have ready access to suitable export abattoirs.

At this stage, Australia's only fully fledged export meat works which occasionally processes buffalo is the Peterborough facility in South Australia.

Victorian buffalo producers have regularly spoken of difficulties in getting their buffalo meat processed because of a lack of appropriate and conveniently located abattoirs in that state. VicBIC president Athel Smith reiterated the industry's concerns at this year's ABIC annual conference in Melbourne.

"The lack of abattoirs is a continuing problem," Athel said.

"Many abattoirs are not able to process buffalo and those that can are too great a travelling distance from the buffalo properties.

"We get lots of requests from countries like New Zealand, but we can't do anything because of the abattoir situation. There's a lot of potential but we can't work on potential.

"Everyone is in the same predicament as far as the domestic demand is concerned. In Victoria, we have to transport our buffalo 200 km to get to an abattoir.

"If we could get our buffalo killed, we would be flying. But we're all small operators. We'd be looking at \$800,000 to set up a local killing facility and we don't have that sort of money."

Northern Territory buffalo producers share Victoria's frustration in light of a steady stream of overseas inquiries, especially from Europe, about accessing buffalo meat.

"There has always been a demand for buffalo meat from European and other countries but the main challenge at the moment is getting the meat processed," NT-based ABIC vice-president Michael Swart says.

"Processing the meat is difficult with no EU accredited abattoirs available in the Territory, but we are continuing to look at ways to overcome this."

Michael says one idea to overcome the problem might be to export buffalo live to a Halal approved facility in Malaysia, where the animals could be processed then the meat packed in cartons and transhipped on to Europe.

### Eugene takes a plane trip



Athel Smith's robust bull Eugene (pictured) is one of five Victorian riverine-cross buffalo flown out to New Zealand this month to help build up the herd of South Island dairy farmers Lucy and Chris Keijzer. The shipment also included four heifers from the Richmond's property. These latest buffalo to make their way across the Tasman spent time in quarantine before being flown out on 25 May.

Athel said Eugene was broken to lead and had a good temperament, and the other animals had been well handled, which made the export process hassle free.

Queensland producers have also had buffalo on the move recently with Mitch Humphries sending a consignment of F1 heifers from his Millaa Millaa property to quarantine in NSW enroute to a property near Auckland, and Maleny's Marg and Mal Thompson adding a bull to a shipment destined for a new buyer in the North Island.

New Zealanders have received more than 60 buffalo from various parts of Australia in the past 18 months and another shipment of 20 is now being put together for a buyer near Auckland.

ABIC Website - [www.buffaloaustralia.org](http://www.buffaloaustralia.org)

# NT buffalo industry farewells a quiet achiever and long-time stalwart

*Adelaide River buffalo producer and ABIC representative Bill Lane passed away in April. The tribute below is taken from the eulogy given by Barry Lemcke at his funeral*

Bill Lane bought the Adelaide River Farm in the mid 1990s and was involved in the NT Buffalo Industry Council for many years. He attended meetings without fail and without saying much, and not nominating for positions when the membership was larger than it is now. I think that early on he thought that the running should be left in the hands of the bigger industry players.

In more recent years, Bill became much more involved and vocal, taking on committee positions, then ABIC rep when Neil Ross resigned, and then the Vice Presidency. He wanted to make sure the industry was heading in the right direction, while forever endeavouring to 'keep the bastards honest'.

Bill worked tirelessly at promoting the Riverine Buffalo, believing it to be the future of the farmed industry. He believed the farmed buffalo group needed to pull together,



*Bill Lane (centre) and his wife Maria (second from right) with interstate delegates Marg and Mal Thompson (left) and Mitch Humphries - enjoying a Beatrice Hill Farm field day as part of the ABIC 2007 Annual Conference program in Darwin.*

and get organised or it would fade away. He was always looking to the future, trying to think of ways to succeed, especially when we lost the local abattoir in 2007.

Bill had the foresight to see other opportunities to sell his stock and he single-handedly pulled off the lucrative New Zealand trade which has so far seen 57 head sent across the ditch. In their first couple of months of milking, the partners have taken out championship awards at the New Zealand Cheese Show.

These partners are interested in more buffalo, and there is also another Kiwi business man currently getting a dairy mob together from Queensland because we in the Territory had no more to supply at present.

Bill got the market by advertising his animals on the internet and he picked the right people to foster from the many enquiries that he got from his former homeland. He immediately realized that it was going to be bigger than he could handle, so he came to DPIFM to make up the difference.

Bill was the second private sector person to get heavily into the Riverine buffalo and "put his money where his mouth was" while others watched from the sidelines, doubting his acumen. He was a keen gatherer of information so much so that he borrowed my buffalo bible written by another 'Bill' Ross Cockrill and spent the next few months reading it from cover to cover as well as scanning the internet. He was a great boon for Telstra, in that he could be on

the phone for long periods, maintaining links with the other dairy people in Qld and NZ. Other overseas enquiries for buffalo have now come from Argentina, Chile, South Africa, Japan and Thailand, and China is another possible market.

I sincerely hope that Bill's faith in buffalo is vindicated over the next few years with increasing orders and sales for the dairy market. I am sure he is up there now looking down at us with a hearty smile and relieved of his pains, a beer in one hand and a huge chunk of buffalo mozzarella in the other.

Bill Lane was a genuine and committed supporter, believer and go-getter for the Northern Territory buffalo industry. He genuinely tried to get others on the same path, spending lots of time with them and helping them along the way.

I will personally miss the "olde bastard" and his constant support and send our sympathies and best wishes to Bill's wife Maria in her bereavement.

## **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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# More major national awards for buffalo milk cheeses

Sumptuous cheeses made from the milk of Australian-bred buffalo are continuing to take out the top awards in national competitions in Australia and now in New Zealand.

Queensland's Vannella Cheese Company won three gold and silver medals at the Sydney Royal Dairy Show in April.

The successful Cairns-based company also took home the coveted annual Cheeseboard Perpetual Trophy for a tiny traditional Italian style mozzarella-like cheese made with buffalo milk.

Vannella specialties include bufalina and buffalo fetta cheeses which are made from the Cairns region's rich buffalo milk.

Italian-born cheesemaker Vito Minoia and his family set up the Vannella venture three years ago and quickly forged a winning business partnership with Mitch Humphries whose Millaa Millaa dairy provides the fresh

buffalo milk used in the cheese production. Vannella now has premium Italian style cheeses selling in major cities including Sydney, and is also exporting its products to Japan.

The company's buffalo cheese won gold at the international cheese awards in Brisbane in 2006, beating established Australian and imported Italian cheeses.

Across the Tasman, a mouth-watering Ricotta created by cheesemaker Richard Dorresteyn using the milk of Northern Territory buffalo, has also won two prestigious awards at the New Zealand Cheese Awards.

Richard specially imported 60 Top End buffalo to his dairy at Clevedon near Auckland last year, so he could use their milk to make mozzarella and ricotta cheese.

Richard's ricotta won both the Champion Fresh Unripened Cheese Award and the Champion New Cheese Award.

## SOME ASIAN BUFFALO FACTS & FIGURES

- Asia's human population growth means buffalo are now used more for milk and meat and less as draught animals
- Asia is home to 166 million of the world's estimated 172 million buffalo
- Buffalo numbers have declined in Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Laos and Malaysia in the past 10 years
- The Philippines still use 75 per cent of their buffalo as draught animals
- India has 11 million dairy farmers and 100,000 village dairy societies
- Crossbreeding swamp with river gives 3 x more milk, 2 x growth rate and double the income.

*From 2008 World Buffalo Congress*

## How Italians turn buff milk into magnificent mozzarella

**Australian delegates to the recent World Buffalo Congress hailed the session on *Processing of Buffalo Milk into High Quality Products* as 'by far the most important in getting high quality technical information on making mozzarella cheese'. Delegate Barry Lemcke was able to uncover the secrets to success.**

"The basics of the process are to heat the whole buffalo milk to 37°C before adding starter culture then rennet. The mixture is then allowed to acidify down to a narrow range of pH.

"Meanwhile, the curd is cut to allow the whey to separate. When the specific pH is achieved through the breakdown of lactose to lactic acid, the whey is removed with a large colander-type basket.

"The curd is then minced finely and put in a large tub. Hot water is added to heat the curd and it is folded over and over to incorporate 50-65 per cent moisture. Once stretched by folding with a rod or by machine, the 'stretching' water is removed, along with the curd which is moulded into balls in cold water. The process involves two people, with one creating a smooth ball and the other pinching it off into the cold water.

"After cooling in the cold water, the mozzarella/boccincini balls are transferred to a brine solution for preservation and transport. This brine contains from 3-20 per cent salt and can be acidified with citric or lactic acid, and depends on consumer preferences." (*Session presented by F. Addeo, Prof. L. Chianese (Naples)*)

## New executive appointed for NT admin body

The NT Buffalo Industry Council's administrative arm, the NT Cattlemen's Association, has announced its replacement for Executive Director Stuart Kenny who has moved to a new job in Queensland.

The new head, Luke Bowen, starts work with the NTCA in Darwin on 23 June.

Luke originally comes from a farming background in Western Australia and, for the past 10 years has been working for the Indigenous Land Corporation in a range of pastoral-linked roles including bringing Indigenous land back into production.

Announcing the appointment, NTCA president Roy Chisholm said Luke has a good knowledge of the Territory and the local pastoral industry.

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# Buffalo News & Views . . .

*from around the country*

## Western Australia

ABIC's WA state representative Andrew Stewart took the opportunity, while in New Zealand on business recently, to check out the buffalo venture being developed by Christo and Lucy Keijzer on the South Island.

"I spent a very pleasant afternoon with Christo and Lucy at their small property an hour from Christchurch," Andrew reports. "They cur-

rently have 12 breeders (all swamp) with a vasectomised bull on their very lush green 25 acres from which they cut baleage (wrapped silage) sometimes twice a year.

"The animals look very well fed! They have had some considerable disappointments with their breeding so far, largely through poor advice I suspect. They are looking forward to the arrival of a three-quarter riverine bull from Athel Smith and four half riverine heifers

from Robin Richmond. Their aim is to breed milk producing very quiet buffalo, and are also looking at producing meat and possibly opening their own restaurant down the track."

"They have appreciated the advice they have received from some ABIC members.

## Queensland

Queensland has recently made its own contributions to the live export of buffalo.

Local producers Mitch Humphries and Marg and Mal Thompson have provided animals to consignments to be shipped to New Zealand buyers building up their herds (*See Page 1*)

falo meat works well in sausages and continental smallgoods.

The challenge in meeting the European demand is in finding suitable processing facilities.

The Brunei live export trade was slow last year with 306 of last year's total 3905-strong-overseas buffalo shipments out of Darwin going to that country.

Michael says Brunei now wants to take 2000 a year, a figure much closer to the annual 3000 it has taken in the past years.

The vast majority of buffalo shipped out of Darwin each year go into the Indonesia markets. Small numbers go to Sabah and West Malaysia.

## Victoria

Victoria's buffalo group, VicBIC is staunchly committed to building a strong buffalo industry in that state.

Members are continuing to investigate potential new marketing opportunities for buffalo meat in Melbourne and other areas.

VicBIC President Athel Smith has written to the state's Department of Primary Industry, seeking information on Halal killing protocols and equipment that would meet existing legislation.

He says the ability to have buffalo killed locally to meet Halal requirements could provide a significant market boost for local producers.

## Northern Territory

Northern Territory buffalo producers have been buoyed by growing interest from overseas markets keen to buy international interest in buying live wild and farmed buffalo and buffalo meat and buffalo product.

Territory based ABIC vice-president Michael Swart reports that the NT Buffalo Industry Council has had calls from European countries wanting to buy meat, and from Brunei markets seeking both wild and farmed raised live buffalo. Michael says European interest stems from the fact that buf-

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