



Buffalo News

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Official newsletter of the Australian Buffalo Industry Council (ABIC)

Animal health authorities query buffalo industry stance on EBL

Australian dairy buffalo producers have been asked to consider whether they see any export marketing benefits in the industry seeking provisional freedom from Enzootic Bovine Leucosis (EBL).

Animal Health Committee Chair and Northern Territory Chief Veterinary Officer, Brian Radunz, has written to the Australian Buffalo Industry Council (ABIC) about the issue after receiving queries from Canberra-based agencies.

In his letter, Mr Radunz says queries had come from Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and Biosecurity Australia officers on the EBL status of milking buffalo in

this country. He stressed at the outset that animal health authorities were not looking for another buffalo disease program.

Mr Radunz says the Australian dairy cattle industry has been declared provisionally free for EBL after many years of milk testing and surveillance, and suggested there could be some marketing benefits if buffalo received similar status.

He says existing old data shows negative results in NT swamp buffalo but there are no details on surveillance in relation to river and riverine-cross milking

animals, or whether the cattle milk test also works for buffalo. He has undertaken to inquire further into import conditions relating to riverine animals.

Australia currently has five buffalo dairies and other producers are breeding up milking animal numbers prior to coming on line in the future.

A number of the dairies, including Queensland's Millaa Millaa and Maleny facilities, are already testing milk for EBL with clear results so far.

ABIC President Michael Swart says the NT presently supplies most

of the buffalo for Australian and overseas markets. "We are keen to maintain this as a viable industry in the future, so EBL monitoring and testing will be a concern for all Australian producers who, while not milking, are supplying animals for the live dairy trade," Michael says.

He has urged all producers to provide feedback on (1) whether they're testing and monitoring for EBL, (2) the current EBL status of their herd, (3) whether they see market drivers that would warrant testing and provisional freedom, and (4) whether the industry as a whole should pursue provisional freedom.



Churchill Fellowship Award winner Marg Thompson inspects a buffalo herd in Bulgaria

Churchill study tour highlights worldwide buffalo trends

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ABIC Website - www.buffaloaustralia.org



Marg and daughter Anne Lethbridge, with baby, posing with gauchoes in Argentina.



Buffalo housed in intensive barn situation in Quebec, Canada. Note the dehorned cows.

FOR SALE: BEATRICE BULLS

Beatrice Hill Farm now has an abundant supply of young purebred bulls for sale by most of the available Italian sires (25-50% Italian genes). This means now is a good time for all people around Australia to turn over that US genetics bull that has been mating for too long over his daughters!! Initial figures from the Millaa Millaa dairy indicates that the Italian X cows are producing 300 kg per lactation over and above the US river.

FOR MORE DETAILS Call
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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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'An exciting time to be part of an expanding world buffalo industry'

Queensland buffalo producer Marg Thompson reports on her recent overseas study tour as a Churchill Fellowship Award winner

The buffalo industry world-wide is poised on the brink of rapid expansion. This is the most powerful message that I've brought home from my recent Churchill Trust-sponsored trip overseas.

It is a very exciting time to be part of this industry - like in a runner with the adrenalin pumping at the start of a race, anything can happen ...

We visited a lot of farms, spoke to a lot of farmers and saw many animals. By and large, Australia is not as far 'behind' in the buffalo industry as what we have come to believe. Many producers in other countries are at the same stage, i.e. herd build up and genetic selection, infrastructure adaptation or building and marketing. The amount of money that some producers have, are spending and will spend in setting up their operations is a good indication of the optimism in the industry and the future potential.

Buffalo can literally be found all over the world and this is what makes it so exciting. We found massive herds in Argentina and were told about large holdings in other South American countries, particularly Brazil. There are farms in Switzerland, Norway and Scotland and we found them without really looking. Of course, it goes without saying that buffalo are commonplace in some parts of Italy and Asia.

In the western world, all producers have the same problem - educating the consumer to think of the animal as both a source of meat and milk. Mozzarella is still king of the buffalo world but I think that the reign might be coming to an end as producers experiment with other products and the public is encouraged to embrace this wonderful resource.

Producers are working on adapting products for buffalo milk with its higher fat and protein content and also a better quality meat animal.

The buffalo ticks a lot of boxes as far as the changing awareness that Western

consumers have for their food. The health benefits for both meat and milk is well known but the buffalo also has a 'reduced carbon footprint', to use the latest catch phrase.

This smaller carbon footprint comes from reduced transport costs for both the raw product to the point of manufacture, as by nature and 'tradition', buffalo products are manufactured either on or close to the farm of origin and also products to market and fodder transport costs. The animals don't require the same high quality fodder as other sources of protein so the energy needed to produce the fodder and transport costs are reduced.

An unexpected result of our trip has been the networking we have been able to do - not in the traditional sense but in terms of the people we have been able to put in touch with each other as we have seen that each could have something to gain from the introduction. We underestimated the impact this would have.

We see ourselves now as a conduit, connecting people who otherwise would not know each other for the benefit of many. The best example of this is promoting a semen collection facility that we visited to producers who are having trouble finding bulls, who have in-breeding problems or who are having trouble finding a reliable supplier of semen.

We don't yet know the end result of our trip. Without a doubt, the contacts and knowledge we have gained will be a huge boost to the Australian buffalo industry. The roll-on effect from around the world is unknown.

There have been invitations to travel to other countries to talk to producers about what was learnt. There is a push for the use of technology e.g. Skype, to allow international experts to present information at meetings where otherwise this information would not be shared.

The year 2016 may see the World Buffalo Congress held in Australia - a wonderful opportunity for our industry to show what we have accomplished in such a short time.

Yes, this is a very exciting time to be part of the buffalo industry.



New BHF manager Grant Hamilton leads out the crossbred breeder group

RIRDC BUFFALO RESEARCH UPDATE

The last round of AI for 2009 was carried out at Beatrice Hill Farm in the NT in October last year and the calves were born in early August 2010.

All five calves born from the 13 cows inseminated were due to the out-of-season Brazilian synchronizing protocol and none of the Ovsynch.

Four out of five were males and all were the latest Italian imports.

A new round was commenced in July this year and involved 29 head, some 13 of which had only recently calved from last year's late June successful round, reported in the last newsletter.

We recently ultrasound-tested this 29 and 16 appear pregnant. The 13 missed ones, plus one extra, are now undergoing another synchronizing (out-of-season) protocol that was successful last October. This is to try and mop up for this year.

The 55% success rate is not quite as good as last year's result (though pleasing just the same) but there were a large number of lactating cows in the group this year. The percentage of late calving cows that got pregnant was 54% (7 out of 13), roughly the same as the total pregnancy rate. Notable among the 'missers' were the older cows and heifers. The results of this next round will be very interesting to see.

Story & Photos - Barry Lemcke

Victorians get on with Italian AI work while awaiting Murrah progress

Victorian buffalo breeders have been frustrated so far in their efforts to import Murrah buffalo genetics from Bulgaria.

"Unfortunately, we have not been successful in acquiring any Murrah semen to date, even with Dr Malinov visiting Bulgaria at his own expense," VicBIC president Athel Smith says. "We are continuing to pursue the Bulgarian Murrah semen but are finding communication and interest within that country difficult.

"There is considerable interest from breeders throughout Australia for the Murrah semen and it will be quite an achievement to acquire it."

Meanwhile, AI work goes on in Victoria. "We have done one round of insemination using Italian riverine semen with the vasectomised bull as the indicator of the cows cycling," Athel says. "The second round was postponed due to the severe weather conditions in Victoria this winter. It is now proposed for October, once again using Italian riverine semen."

Canberra dinner pays tribute to Peter's work

While the long knives were out and being sharpened in the halls of power in Canberra on 23 June 2010, a far more convivial meeting was taking place at the national capital's Brassey Hotel. Here, more than 60 people were gathered for a farewell dinner hosted by RIRDC in honour of its retiring part-time employee Dr Peter McInnes (pictured below right).

Guests included friends going back to Peter's university student days, work colleagues from his different places of employment, current RIRDC staff, and supporters and members from the primary industries he has fostered and assisted during his many years of working with RIRDC. Many paid tribute in speeches on the night.

A special dinner guest and presenter of the major speech of appreciation for Peter's efforts was the Honorable John Kerin AM, a former member of the Hawke/Keating governments and the Minister for Primary Industries from 1983 to 1991.

John Kerin enlightened many of those present on just how much of a pivotal role Peter had played in creating the Ru-

ral Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC). In a nutshell, Minister Kerin instructed Dr Peter McInnes to set about selecting suitable personnel to establish and staff the body now known as RIRDC – which pretty much makes Peter, along with John Kerin, a founding father of the organisation that so many of the smaller (and not so small) Australian primary industries have come to rely on for support, direction and assistance.

It is possibly this exceptionally close understanding that Peter had of the workings of RIRDC that enabled him, as a part-time employee, to make things happen that normally would not be an option.

As per usual, the Brassey's Atlantic Salmon and Fillet of Beef were to be commended!

From Doug Robertson



Buffalo News & Views . . .

from around the country

NORTHERN TERRITORY

● Beatrice Hill Farm's long-term Assistant Manager, Eric Cox moved to Adelaide with his wife Jan in early July following his retirement after 34 years at the NT research facility. Eric's outstanding contribution to, and experience within, the buffalo industry will be sorely missed and we wish both he and Jan all the best for the future.

● Eric's replacement, Grant Hamilton, has now been resident on the farm with his wife Lee and two young boys

for about three months. Grant has been through the main test of a full buffalo recording with no hitches and is enjoying the new challenge.

● A major Top End Aboriginal community is looking at the possibility of setting up a buffalo farming enterprise in the future. Preliminary inquiries have been made with a number of industry players in the region. We hope to bring you more news on this in the next edition.

● With various abattoir projects reported to be in the pipeline, local buffalo producers

hang onto hopes that they'll soon have a solution to their meat processing woes.

Requests for quality buffalo continue to come in, the most recent from the chef of Mt Isa's Irish Club - for 150 top-line buffalo steaks to be served at a black-tie dinner for pastoralists.

TASMANIA

Tasmania's Oyster Cove Buffalo has had a recent name change and the herd has been moved to the opposite end of the island state. The enterprise is now called Tasmanian Buffalo.

"We have moved the whole herd to a 100 acre property at the northern end of the state - a larger property than we had at Oyster Cove." owner Phil Oates says.

"The grass and water are limitless here and everything is going well, with the young 'uns growing like weeds.

"We also have a couple of cows in the breeding program with VicBIC. We look forward to getting these cows home and their addition to the genetic pool of the herd."

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

● Buffalo-producing Mullalyup chefs Daryn and Beck Rowlands have recently inseminated their eight 'girls' purchased from Andrew Stewart. They engaged a local vet to do the job and used Italian-imported semen from three different bulls.

They are now waiting eagerly to see if the process has been successful. Daryn and Beck's buff's have all been handraised and will eventually be used for milking.

● Andrew Stewart is planning to add a new yearling bull to his herd in WA's Vasse district. He is looking at getting the bull from Top End farmers and bringing it south by horse float.

NEW SOUTH WALES

The drought has well and truly given way to wet conditions in NSW. "It just keeps raining, which is very unusual - and now we're waiting for the locusts to hatch," says Doug Robertson. "The lambs and sheep are worth a small fortune and beef not limited to 300kg - so all in all, things look pretty good here just now."

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'TAS' FOR SALE



Buffalo bull 'Tas' is for sale after winding up his good work in southern Tasmania. He is extremely quiet and at only 7 years old still has a lot left to give to new owners. He is 7/8th Riverine, by "Son of Diego" - Beatrice Hill and out of Beatrice Hill #565. Progeny for the last 2 years have been 95% females.

**ENQUIRIES TO: Tasmanian Buffalo - 0427 889 487
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