

Northern Territory Buffalo Industry Council

Strategic Plan 2007 - 2012



**November 2007
Version 1.4**

METHODOLOGY

This document has been prepared following 2 workshops of stakeholders held on 6 March 2007 and 1 May 2007. Since that workshop the contributions made by the stakeholders who attended have been put into a framework from which the intention is to develop a cohesive and structured plan for the NT Buffalo Industry over the next five years. Prior to the workshops, the consultant held discussions with selected representatives from differing roles within the industry. The aim of these discussions was to develop key themes and to identify the major areas where strategic approach was necessary.

During the workshops the participants:

- Forecast how the Industry would develop over the next five years,
- Reviewed the mission and considered a vision statement for the Industry,
- Undertook a SWOT analysis,
- Explored many of the issues the industry currently faces and will continue to face in the next five years, and
- Developed a set of strategies to deal with these issues and targets against which the success of those strategies could be assessed.

The third phase in the development of the plan involved the presentation to a wider audience (of all interested stakeholders) of the outcomes of this workshop. These meetings endorsed the approach taken and also highlighted a number of critical areas for deeper consideration and expansion within the plan.

The final phase is the endorsement of the plan and implementation. To implement the plan, it is to be taken to all executive meetings to allow any changes to be presented and accepted. This will also allow the executive to monitor the tasks and implement the plan strategies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	NT Buffalo Industry Council’s Mission	14
2	Vision	14
3	The Buffalo Industry	15
3.1	Background	15
3.2	The Industry	16
3.3	Harvest/Free Range Buffalo	17
3.3.1	Current position	17
3.4	Domestic Buffalo	18
3.4.1	Introduction	18
3.4.2	Tenderbuff Marketing	19
4	OUR CONTRIBUTION TO GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES FOR REGIONAL CENTRES AND INDIGENOUS DEVELOPMENT	20
5	KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY INDUSTRY FORUMS	21
6	KEY ISSUES, STRATEGIES ADOPTED AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	21
6.1	Industry Management – Governance, NTCA services	21
6.1.1	Issues	21
6.1.2	Strategy: Provide good governance and industry management	21
6.1.3	Proposed Actions	21
6.1.4	Strategy: Act as the Peak industry body	22
6.1.5	Proposed Actions	22
6.2	Marketing & Quality – meet the specification and the “product brand” goes on	22
6.2.1	Issues	22
6.2.2	Strategy: Maintain the live export market	23
6.2.3	Proposed Actions	23
6.2.4	Strategy: Develop the domestic market	23
6.2.5	Proposed Actions	23
6.3	Resource/Industry Sustainability	24
6.3.1	Issues	24
6.3.2	Strategy: Develop the Buffalo resource on Aboriginal Land	24
6.3.3	Proposed Actions	24
6.3.4	Strategy: Encourage and support best practice by producers	24
6.3.5	Proposed Actions	24
6.3.6	Strategy: Increase awareness of Buffalo products through promotional activities	25
6.3.7	Proposed Actions	25
6.4	Research and Development - Industry Viability	25
6.4.1	Issues	25
6.4.2	Strategy: Participate in a range of Research and Development Projects	26
6.4.3	Proposed Actions	26
7	Buffalo Industry S.W.O.T. Analysis	27
8	NTCA and NT Buffalo Industry Council Organisational Structure and Operational Governance	29

NT Buffalo Industry Council Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012

8.1	Management Committee	29
8.2	Executive Officer for NT BIC	29
8.3	NT BIC Governance	30
8.4	NTCA provision of services MOU	30
9	Beatrice Hill Farm Buffalo Management	30
9.1	MOU for shared arrangements with government	30
	Notes:	35
	Resource/Industry Sustainability	36
	Notes:	37
	Research and Development - Industry Viability	38

1 NT Buffalo Industry Council's Mission

To facilitate the continued growth and sustainable development of the Northern Territory Buffalo Industry by providing:

- Buffalo producers with technical and practical assistance in buffalo management practices.
- Good organisation leadership, governance and a forum for knowledge sharing, coordinated turnoff and lobbying
- Continue to develop and diversify export and domestic markets
- Encouragement for the adoption of industry best practice standards in the production and marketing of buffalo and buffalo products

2 Vision

To be recognised internationally as a livestock producer, producing free range and farmed disease free buffalo genes.

3

The Buffalo Industry

3.1 Background

The NT Buffalo Industry Council Inc. (NT BIC) is an incorporated association that represents the buffalo producers in the Northern Territory. The NT BIC does not trade in its own right, but seeks market opportunities for live animals, meat products (TenderBuff) and genetics within Australia and internationally on behalf of its members.

Voluntary production levies from members and various fund raising activities can only provide about 20% of the NT BIC operating funds. It would not be possible for the NT BIC to exist without financial and in-kind support from the NT Government.

Like all industries in the Northern Territory the government provides a large amount of support and the buffalo industry is no exception. Northern Territory Government (NTG) assists with market development, supports Tenderbuff development, genetic and reproduction improvement of Australian water buffalo and Riverine buffalo cross breeding research. The buffalo industry must demonstrate unity to the government so that the research activities and financial assistance are not jeopardised in the future.

In order to solve the major issue brought about by the lack of an executive officer and reduced executive and administrative support, in early 2006, the NT Cattleman's Association (NTCA) approached the NT BIC to look at providing executive support services and administration for the NT Buffalo Industry Council (NT BIC).

Integration of the NT BIC into the NTCA had the following objectives:

- Provide an interim management committee structure including governance criteria that will provide the NT BIC committee and industry the required support;
- Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) describing the Executive Support and administrative services that will be provided to the NT BIC by NTCA.
- Undertake a review of the immediate buffalo industry issues with the development of a 6 month Operational Plan December 2006 – June 2007 with milestones to be met;
- Undertake a strategic review and update of the NT BIC Strategic Plan 2003 – 2006 by an NTCA consultant plus the development of an Annual Operational Plan and Interim Performance Report for the periods July 2007 – June 2008 and the future, including an exit strategy for June 2008.

The new joint management of NTCA and NT BIC is as an industry group to lobby governments to meet NT BIC goals and strategies.

The Executive Services provided by NTCA will no longer be an industry development one but a more strategic lobbying role. The industry group (NT BIC) will need to collectively agree on the goals and strategies for the industry in order to partner with the NTG development role to meet everyone's agreed goals.

The industry is required to set the priorities and goals that can be partnered with government. It is important to understand that the industry must be unified and present a unified industry front in order to achieve the best for the future of the industry. This may mean some members may not always agree with decisions, however for the benefit of the industry all agreed decisions must be accepted

In order to address some of the issues identified by the NTCA industry review, the operational plans and prioritised main issues for priority areas / programs for action by the NTCA ED for the 6 months to June 2007. These areas of priority were grouped as:

- Industry management - Committee structure and operational governance for the NT Buffalo Industry Council;
- Live buffalo exports;
- Domestic markets – killing facilities for buffalo;
- Research and Development - including Riverine genetics for meat, milk and breeding and Beatrice Hill Farm herd management;
- Review of the existing Strategic Plan and development of an updated Strategic Plan.

3.2 The Industry

The NT Buffalo Industry consists of two distinct lines of buffalo, free range swamp buffalo and domesticated swamp, riverine and riverine buffalo. The NT BIC with financial assistance from the NT Government has spent the last few years building the live export trade to a good level. The trade in 2005 was lower than expected, however there has been a significant increase in 2006 where around 7,500 head were exported.

Outside and vital to the “industry”, but not necessarily considered a part of it are:

- Export Agents
- Abattoirs
- Butchers
- Food Retailers
- Restaurants

3.3 Harvest/Free Range Buffalo

3.3.1 Current position

Live exports have been the backbone of the buffalo industry post BTEC and will be the major program for the next 5 - 10 years. One of the challenges is to have several producers in order to ensure minimal risks to the industry in turning off a good level of export numbers. There has been an increase in annual buffalo numbers with some turnoff from the inaccessible Arnhem Land Trust areas as well as other producers.

For the industry to increase export numbers the easiest way is to ensure there are more licences for Arnhem Land and that the herds in Arnhem Land are

managed to provide sustainable markets for buffalo that are not included in initial exports. Eg calves, females, older beasts.

One of the major issues is the seasonal supply issue where the land is inaccessible during the wet season. What the industry requires for export buffalo is to re-establish finishing off depot blocks that can be used to grow out stock.

The biggest percentage of exports are shipped to West Malaysia, however there is also a good market potential to increase buffalo exports to Sabah and Indonesia. These beasts in Sabah would be used to graze under oil palms and also used as transport around the farms. The NT BIC has done a lot of work in developing this market.

The necessary protocols are developed by DPFIM staff with the different Asian countries. For the industry to have successful exporting there needs to be a number of countries that are willing to import buffalo with import protocols agreed and developed. This provides the industry with diversity and minimises risks that some markets may cease.

A critical area for the success of export markets is the pre and after sales service to the markets. This is an area the industry needs to liaise with DPIFM so that the Buffalo Industry can request the same service (livestock export services) as provided to the Cattle industry.

In order to grow the industry, successful markets are required. The maturity of a market is one that requires a variety of exporters. In the past with only one exporter producers do not have any flexibility. This was a key issue from the 2004 Buffalo. At the present time there are three or four exporters for the industry. The use of several exporters though will mean the industry needs to have consistent numbers of buffalo for export. In order that exporters can source good markets there is a need to have consistent supply of quality buffalo.

A simple option to improve herd quality for export is to grow out the wild catch animals. To be able to do this there needs to be depot facilities available in suitable areas close to the trucking yards. The benefit of depots for wild catch buffalo is that there is a growing out stage and provides a chance for buffalo to be handled. If the industry continues to export wild catch free range animals and gnarly bulls then there is a chance some export markets could suffer. This is where the NTBIC developed buffalo standards need to be strictly adhered to.

Arnhem Land is a large source of buffalo to be caught. New and controlled licences need to be sought for that area.

The consistency of markets cannot be consolidated if the quality and numbers of export beasts are not able to be provided by the industry. There is a lack of large scale producers in the NT.

What is critical for the industry is the supply of quality buffalo for export. There needs to be a distinction between free range and farm buffalo. The NT BIC has developed export quality standards. These should be reviewed with exporters and the industry and updated. The need for free range buffalo to be grown out prior to export is one the industry must consider. The supply of younger beasts and feedlot animals should be considered.

3.4 Domestic Buffalo

3.4.1 Introduction

The Tenderbuff market is the higher quality buffalo meats that are provided to the domestic butchers and restaurant market. Tenderbuff market was developed to provide high returns for producers. DPIFM coordinates the project in conjunction with the NT BIC. The success of this market relies on the availability of outlets which rely on the availability of a domestic abattoir.

The Tenderbuff buffalo trade require the services of an abattoir in the NT. The industry used the Litchfield Abattoir until its closure. The expansion and promotion of this market is difficult when there is no abattoir facility for the top end. Some of the issues which are common to the domestic and Tenderbuff areas are:

- Raise government awareness about the importance of local abattoirs.
- The closure of the only local Territory Litchfield Abattoir in May 2007.
- Recognition by the local domestic and restaurant trade of the qualities of Tenderbuff to create a demand.

3.4.2 Tenderbuff Marketing

TenderBuff® is meat from young farmed buffalo that have been fed and managed specifically to produce consistently good quality lean meat. The TenderBuff® program is an initiative of the NT Buffalo Industry Council with the product name. TenderBuff® offers purchasers a product which has been quality checked by an independent assessor and identified by a strip brand to signify the carcass has met the following specifications:-

TenderBuff® provides all farmers with a potentially good income source. In the Northern Territory mixed grass/legume improved pastures are all capable of producing young buffalo to TenderBuff® specifications during the period February to July. Production of TenderBuff® after July usually needs to progress to floodplain improved pastures as stored moisture is able to produce green feed through until the first rains. Supplementary or lot feeding systems can be used to ensure animals receive proper nutrition and attain carcass specifications more quickly at any time of year. This constant contact quietens the animals which helps minimise stress at slaughter, and is very important to achieve desired meat quality. The NT Buffalo Industry Council works closely with Quality Meats Pty Ltd, the biggest supplier of TenderBuff® meats to the public and restaurant trade.

NT Buffalo Industry Council Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012

The success of this market relies on the availability of outlets which rely on the availability of a domestic abattoir.

The potential to increase the market for Tenderbuff, requires the resolution of this major issue.

If the market is unstable then it is always going to be difficult to get producers into these markets. An advantage for the landowner is that buffalo can reduce the amount of fuel load from grasses that grow on properties during the wet season. Landholder awareness could make this a successful niche market that could have other benefits. Responsibility for the development of this market should lie with DPIFM with assistance from strategies developed by NT BIC.

The short term or long term grazing of buffalo on small to medium land would be a good wet season business which could have the benefit of reducing fuel loads as well as providing a source of income with a buy back or on selling scheme.

The involvement of the NT BIC and the NTG in the control of the Tenderbuff markets should be decreasing in the future. The NT BIC should develop strategies for the management of the Tenderbuff market.

4

CONTRIBUTION TO GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES FOR REGIONAL CENTRES AND INDIGENOUS DEVELOPMENT

Some flow-on benefits to the **Government's Indigenous Economic Development Priorities** are:

- 90% of buffalo for export come from indigenous land holdings
- Increased sales of buffalo from aboriginal land
- Increased employment opportunities for indigenous people
- Jawoyn Association commenced mustering operations in 2001
- Beswick Community commenced a buffalo farming operation in 2002

Some flow-on benefits to the **Government's Economic Development Priorities including regional centres** are:

- Expansion potential for the TenderBuff industry
- Sales of Riverine genetics to overseas markets as well as NT, SA, WA, NSW, QLD and Victoria
- NT Government involvement in research based in new QLD buffalo dairy
- New farmers being attracted to the industry
- In 2006 6500 live buffalo were exported from the Territory
- Greatly expanded use of livestock road transport and helicopter hire
- Benefits to local hay producers
- ~~Increased spending on buffalo property infrastructure – yards, fences and pastures.~~

5

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY INDUSTRY FORUMS

- Industry Management – Governance, NTCA services
- Marketing & Quality – meet the spec and brand goes on
- Resource Sustainability - Disease Threat
- Research and Development - Industry Viability

6 KEY ISSUES, STRATEGIES ADOPTED AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

6.1 Industry Management – Governance, NTCA services

6.1.1 Issues

- The NT Buffalo Industry Council (NT BIC) Executive Officer was terminated due to reduced funding in mid 2006. Since that time NTBIC has signed an MOU with NTCA for administrative and executive services until June 2008.
- NT BIC does not represent the whole industry, as in 2004 where numbers of producers supporting NT BIC decreased, in 2006 some larger NT buffalo producers are not members of the NT BIC. Over the past few years there has been a consistent lack of member unity of the Buffalo industry.
- The buffalo industry major area of growth is the export segment which has increased in volume in 2006.

6.1.2 Strategy: Provide good governance and industry management

6.1.3 Proposed Actions

- Continue to support the MOU for Administrative and Executive Services with NTCA
 - Implement the strategic action plan by reviewing each meeting to manage NTBIC Proposed Actions
-
- Continue to operate NTBIC under the NTCA Governance Manual
 - Ensure there are at least two general/executive meetings per quarter for NTBIC
 - Unify industry buffalo producers
 - Review the level of membership subscription and the tariff paid by members
 - Review the membership form

6.1.4 Strategy: Act as the Peak industry body

6.1.5 Proposed Actions

- Liaise with Department of Primary Industry Fisheries and Mines on matter such as disease status and other issues
- Regularly consult with AQIS on protocols for new markets, export treatments and requirements

- Lobby politicians on any current issues relevant to the buffalo industry
- Consult with indigenous organisations regarding the better utilisation of their buffalo resources
- Maintain regular contact with Federal, State and Territory Government Departments on the National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS), National Residue Survey (NRS) and any other relevant legislation
- Liaise with the NT Department of Transport & Infrastructure on the need to maintain road infrastructure to a level that allows year round sale of buffalo
- Maintain membership of the Australian Buffalo Industry Council (ABIC) and ensure exchanges of information continue

6.2 Marketing & Quality – meet the specification and the “product brand” goes on

6.2.1 Issues

- Butchers are always difficult to find in the major wholesale and retail outlets in Darwin. (eg Quality meats, Westralia Meats). This has an affect on the throughput of buffalo because butchers will only concentrate on their popular markets.
- All the supply of buffalo to the domestic market comes through the Litchfield Abattoir. The Litchfield abattoir closed in May 2007. If there is no buyer for the abattoir then the domestic market will cease totally.
- Recognition by the local domestic and restaurant trade of the qualities of Tenderbuff to create a demand.
- Lack of supply of numbers for the domestic market
- Lack of export and domestic Abattoirs in the Top end of NT
- Lack of markets of culled buffalo cows
- Lack of numbers in the Riverine gene pool.
- Buffalo meat qualities are low fat, low cholesterol and high protein. This is a positive for the domestic market but requires more marketing.
- NT industry has a disease free status
- Free range buffalo domesticate easily.

6.2.2 Strategy: Maintain the live export market

6.2.3 Proposed Actions

- Continued consultation with network of overseas contacts in an attempt to achieve the below
- Look for diversity in export markets
- Continue to explore the export of Riverine buffalo
- Work with other associated industries to identify new market opportunities e.g. NTCA & NTLEA Livestock
- Work with government to expand and maintain existing markets
- Work with DPIFM to ensure protocols are in place for new and existing markets.

- Work with DPIFM to develop a pre and after sales service for existing exports.
- Lobby the existing market exporters to also include the facilitation of the export of Riverine overseas
- Work with the industry to ensure an increase in the number of producers which increases supply of quality buffalo for export
- Ensure consistent quality of export buffalo by working with NT BIC members to review existing and develop new strategies and standards for export quality.
- Access to consistent numbers of buffalo year around for export

6.2.4 Strategy: Develop the domestic market

6.2.5 Proposed Actions

- Continue to support promotional activities such as food stalls at functions such as the Darwin Show and other suitable venues.
- NT BIC will continue its active participation as a member of the NT Food Group and will positively promote TenderBuff
- Look for a marketer / abattoir to take the carcass to the box that can continue to QA Tenderbuff
- Continue to communicate and consult with potential abattoir operators and wholesale and retail meat outlets
- Seek new marketing opportunities by crossing Riverine with swamp buffalo

6.3 Resource/Industry Sustainability

6.3.1 Issues

- Majority of animals held on Aboriginal land are in a free range state. This will ensure the supply of buffalo for export is assured for many years.
- Small landholders are potential producers
- Under supply of the domestic and tourism-based restaurant trade
- Sales of milking buffalo genetics
- Redevelop a high value export supermarket buffalo into Brunei. Riverine buffalo can be exported to this market.
- Market the buffalo image as a Territory icon.
- Multi species abattoir is required in the Northern Territory.
- Disease free re-stocking animals to the SE Asian markets. This can be a source of export buffalo.
- Approach within Australia for abattoir facilities.
- Lack of supply of numbers for the domestic market
- Disease outbreak can disrupt and close the entire export market.
- Political or financial unrest in overseas market places.

- Currency fluctuations and cattle/beef price movements.

6.3.2 Strategy: Develop the Buffalo resource on Aboriginal Land

6.3.3 Proposed Actions

- Promote to indigenous organisations the benefits of value adding to buffalo through farming rather than relying totally on the harvesting of free range buffalo
- Continue to work closely with staff of the Indigenous Land Council (ILC), Northern Land Council (NLC), and Tiwi Land Council (TLC) regarding the benefits of buffalo farming
- Encourage membership of NT BIC by the NLC, Jawoyn Association and Gunbalunya Meat Supply and other Aboriginal Associations such as ILC, Gagudju, Gulin Gulin, TLC and ADO

6.3.4 Strategy: Encourage and support best practice by producers

6.3.5 Proposed Actions

- Information assistance to producers by demonstrating new or improved livestock husbandry methods
- Contribute articles to the ABIC quarterly magazine
- Promote discussion of Best Practice techniques at membership meetings
- Work closely with the Department of Primary Industry Fisheries and Mines to keep producers up to date with current developments
- Maintain a library of reference materials including international publications for members use
- Coordinate training programs initiated by Government Departments, NTCA, Livecorp

6.3.6 Strategy: Increase awareness of Buffalo products through promotional activities

6.3.7 Proposed Actions

- continue to support buffalo food product stall at the Darwin Show
- NT Food Group – maintain membership and active participation in meetings and promotions
- Seek to find a marketing agent /abattoir to work with Wholesalers
- work with wholesalers to increase sale to larger consumers eg Hospitals, Schools, Defence Force etc
- promote the NT BIC initiative of selling whole or half sets of cryovac primal cuts at a set price per kilo
- Restaurants – provide chefs with meat cut books and charts, recipe books and information on the TenderBuff quality assurance program
- Tourist related food outlets – provide samples of buffalo burgers and sausages and information on corned and roast meat cuts available so as to benefit from the novelty value of NT buffalo meat to tourists

6.4 Research and Development - Industry Viability

6.4.1 Issues

- TenderBuff quality assurance system maintains the standard of domestic buffalo.
- Clean healthy status of buffalo meat is a positive for the Northern Territory.
- The Northern Territory possesses the foundation of the Riverine genetic pool.
- Buffalo meat qualities are low fat, low cholesterol and high protein which is a major selling point for a healthy lifestyle.
- NT industry has a disease free status.
- The Northern Territory has a critical mass of buffalo numbers for export.
- Darwin has high standard export port facilities and SE Asia market proximity.
- Free range buffalo domesticate easily.
- The NTG has supported the research and development of the buffalo industry.
- RIRDC has a well developed strategic plan for buffalo research which requires support by the industry.

6.4.2 Strategy: Participate in a range of Research and Development Projects

6.4.3 Proposed Actions

- Explore and promote opportunities for private funding for R&D projects at Beatrice Hill Farm Research Station and on selected producer's properties with the aim of making the Northern Territory the leading centre in Australia for R&D and ultimately leading to international recognition
- Initial projects planned and/or in progress are:
 - develop a commercially viable A.I. technique in buffalo to facilitate the introduction of Italian genetics
 - following the success of the above, explore embryo transplants
 - meat quality analysis: Conduct tests on various crossbred animals to identify the crossbreed that will produce the best TenderBuff meat while retaining the known low cholesterol benefit of swamp buffalo
 - chromosome counts: Conduct chromosome counts on the various riverine and riverine cross animals at BHF to determine if there are any fertility problems associated with the various cross bred combinations
- Continue to support the Queensland Dairy Buffalo Company, NT BIC, DPIFM and BHF staff members to create a database of milk quality and production figures of various crossbreeds of riverine buffalo

NT Buffalo Industry Council Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012

- Develop and distribute a herd management program for small landholders to assist them to establish and maintain profitable buffalo enterprise Liaise with Government and private research groups to ensure all NT BIC members are informed of latest information on pastures and animal husbandry developments

7

Buffalo Industry S.W.O.T. Analysis

Strengths		Weaknesses	
1.	Good coordination and cooperation between members	1.	Majority of animals are on Aboriginal land which are seasonally inaccessible
2.	Most markets want buffalo	2.	Lack of large-scale producers
3.	Voluntary levies for Association operations	3.	Lack of depot facilities with wet season access close to Darwin
4.	Beatrice Hill Farm Research facility	4.	Lack of supply of numbers for the domestic market
5.	TenderBuff quality assurance system	5.	Lack of export and domestic Abattoirs in the Top end of NT
6.	Clean healthy status of buffalo meat	6.	Lack of markets of culled buffalo cows
7.	Close proximity to SE Asian export markets	7.	Lack of numbers in the Riverine gene pool.
8.	Buffalo are productively suited to the top end of the Northern Territory.	8.	Lack of representation of all producers in NTBIC.
9.	Possess the foundation of the Riverine genetic pool.	9.	Disparity between beef and buffalo prices in SE Asian market.
10.	Buffalo meat qualities are low fat, low cholesterol and high protein.	10.	Lack of appropriate infrastructure across the NT.
11.	NT industry has a disease free status	11.	Lack of a full-time Industry Development & Executive Officer
12.	Critical mass of buffalo numbers for export.		
13.	Darwin export port facilities and SE Asia market proximity		
14.	Free range buffalo domesticate easily.		

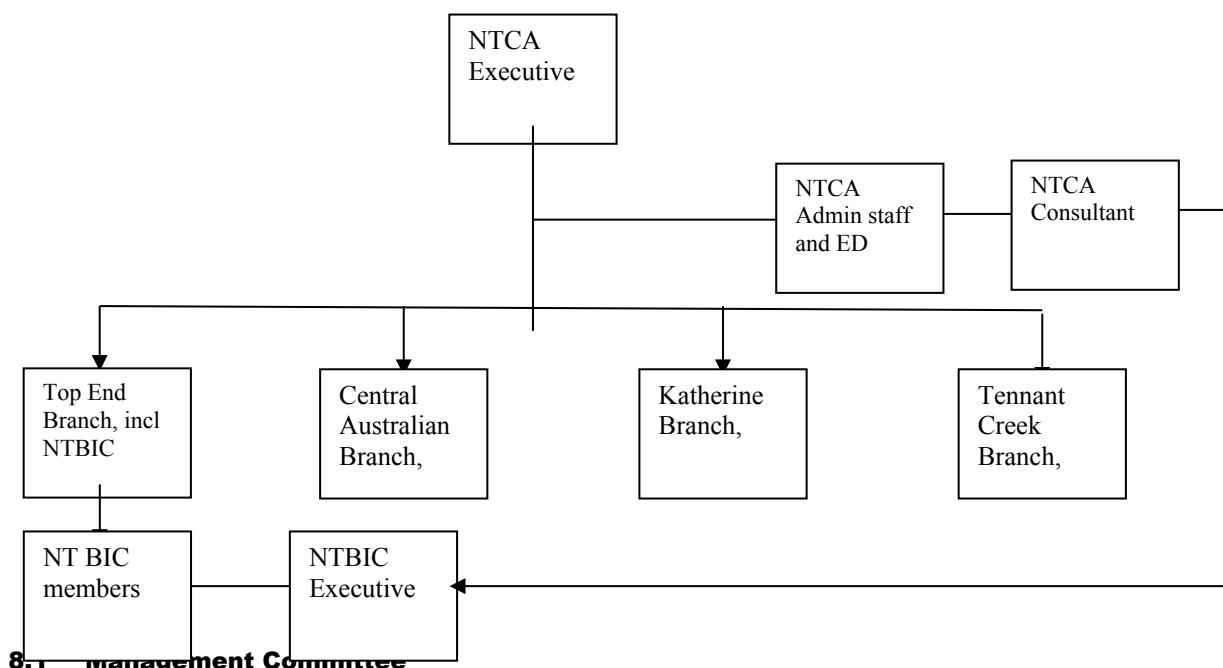
Opportunities		Threats	
1.	Majority of animals held on Aboriginal land are in a free range state	1.	Lack of supply of numbers for the domestic market
2.	Small landholders are potential producers	2.	Reduction or Lack of long-term funding (i.e. NT Government)
3.	Under supply of the domestic and	3.	Fragmentation of producers;

NT Buffalo Industry Council Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012

	tourism-based restaurant trade		
4.	Sales of milking buffalo genetics	4.	Closure of Beatrice Hill Farm as well as reduced funding for research farms.
5.	Redevelop a high value export market in Brunei.	5.	Disease outbreak
6	Market the buffalo image as a Territory icon.	6.	Political or financial unrest in overseas market places
7.	Multi species abattoir.	7.	Currency fluctuations and cattle/beef price movements
8.	Disease free re-stocking animals to the SE Asian markets.	8.	Public perception and green lobby of live exports.
9.	Approach within Australia for abattoir facilities.		

NTCA and NT Buffalo Industry Council Organisational Structure and Operational Governance

NTCA Integrated NT BIC Committee Structure



8.1 Management Committee

The Executive of the NT BIC recommends that the operations of the NT BIC be carried out by the NT BIC Management Committee consisting of the following:

- A Chairperson who is the NTCA Executive Director;
- The President of the NT BIC;
- 3 general NT BIC Members;

This structure will be reviewed in June 2007 and June 2008 with recommendations to continue or revert to the previous Buffalo Industry Council structure.

8.2 Executive Officer for NT BIC

In line with the acceptance of this report and the MOU for Administrative and Executive support, the Management Committee of the NT BIC recommends that the NTCA Executive Director be appointed as the Executive Officer for the NT BIC.

Funding for this position will be from the NT Government grants for the services as described in the MOU.

8.3 NT BIC Governance

The NTCA Director's Manual describing Director's responsibilities and organisation governance is recommended for implementation and use by the NT BIC.

8.4 NTCA provision of services MOU

The NT BIC has accepted the MOU describing the provision of NTCA Administrative and Executive Services to NT BIC. Buffalo Research and Development.

9 Beatrice Hill Farm Buffalo Management

This area is about the Riverine (milking buffalo) genetics for meat, milk or breeding. This is managed by DPIFM as one of their research projects. A status of the DPIFM projects can be found in the Appendices.

9.1 MOU for shared arrangements with government

The Riverine Buffalo Breeding Program is a partnership between the NT Government and the NT Buffalo Industry. In 1994 the then Treasurer Mike Reed agreed to provide \$115,000 of Buffalo Industry Development Funds for the Riverine Program. The Buffalo Industry Development Fund was funds set aside for buffalo industry restructuring after BTEC. The original two riverine buffalo bulls, Bill and Hillary were purchased and imported in 1994 using Buffalo Industry Development funding. They were mated to cows belonging to DPIFM in the first instance, and also used by industry for mating to cows. The basis for the use of the riverine bulls was that they would be made available to industry, and who ever owned the female buffalo would own the offspring resulting. Alan Fisher privately imported 2 riverine cows in 1995. A further riverine bull, OJ, was purchased in 1995 again using Buffalo Industry Development funding. The \$115,000 funding agreed by The Treasurer for riverine buffalo development was all expended by the end of 1995.

In 1997 DPIFM purchased 2 riverine cows that became available in Victoria, and a further bull, using departmental funds. DPIFM also continued to mate and resulting cross bred buffalo, to the riverine bulls, with the long term aim to provide a wider gene pool of pure riverine animals. This work continues at Beatrice Hill with the 15/16 animals on the ground, after 4 generations. The next generation 31/32 will be classed as riverine. The two pure riverine female have been bred up to a herd now numbering some 33 pure riverine animals, all offspring and descendants of the two females.

There is an issue to be resolved over the ownership of the two riverine cows, their offspring and descendants. The Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries in 1997 included the two female buffalo, when replying to a request from NT BIC to recognise the NT BIC as owner of the imported riverine buffalo for their audit purposes. This is at odds with the DPIFM position that the two females and offspring belong to the department. They were purchased from departmental fund in 1997, two years after the Buffalo Development Fund was expended. The department has met all the costs of the riverine breeding program since 1997 on the presumption that the department owns the two female riverine buffalo and their offspring.

There are no issues with the ongoing joint management of the riverine breeding program by industry and the department. The ownership issue for the riverine group needs to be resolved and a new MOU should to be negotiated and put in place for the riverine program, and will need to include the costs for the use of Beatrice Hill Farm.

NT Buffalo Industry Council Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012

The research with Riverine and Riverine cross Buffalo is a partnership between the NT BIC and DPIFM. The buffalo involved in this research are at DPIFM Beatrice Hill Farm (BHF).

In the time the buffalo have been at BHF there have never been any agistment costs paid to the government.

In order to formalise these arrangements the herd ownership needs to be resolved and an MOU between NT BIC and DPIFM will be developed.

AREAS OF FOCUS, STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES AND INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

Industry Management – Governance, NTCA services

Strategy	Proposed Actions	Timeframe	Indicators of progress	Responsibility
Provide good governance and industry management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support the MOU for Administrative and Executive Services with NTCA • Implement the strategic action plan by reviewing each meeting to manage NTBIC Proposed Actions • Continue to operate NTBIC under the NTCA Governance Manual • Ensure there are at least two general per year and an executive meeting per quarter for NTBIC • Unify industry buffalo producers • Review the level of membership subscription and the tariff paid by members • Review the membership form 	Reviewed annually Ongoing Under review Ongoing Ongoing Annually Annually		NTCA ED
Act as the Peak industry body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with Department of Primary Industry Fisheries and Mines on matter such as disease status and other issues • Regularly consult with AQIS and DPIFM on protocols for new markets, export treatments and requirements • Lobby politicians on any current issues relevant to the buffalo industry • Consult with indigenous organisations regarding the better utilisation of their buffalo resources • Maintain regular contact with Federal, State and Territory Government Departments on the National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS), National Residue Survey (NRS) and any other relevant legislation • Liaise with the NT Department of Transport & Infrastructure on the need to maintain road infrastructure to a level that allows year round sale of buffalo • Maintain membership of the Australian Buffalo Industry Council 	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing		

NT Buffalo Industry Council Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012

	(ABIC) and ensure exchanges of information continue. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop an MOU about the current herd and future arrangements at BHF will be developed and signed by DPIFM and NT BIC.	3 qtr 2007		
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Notes:

Marketing & Quality – meet the specification and the “product brand” goes on

Strategy	Proposed Actions	Timeframe	Indicators of progress	Responsibility
Maintain the live export market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued consultation with network of overseas contacts in an attempt to achieve the below • Look for diversity in export markets • Continue to explore the export of Riverine/Riverine cross buffalo • Work with other associated industries to identify new market opportunities e.g. NTCA & NTLEA Livestock • Work with government to expand and maintain existing markets • Work with DPIFM to ensure protocols are in place for new and existing markets. • Work with DPIFM to develop a pre and after sales service for existing exports. • Lobby the existing market exporters to also include the facilitation of the export of Riverine overseas • Work with the industry to ensure an increase in the number of producers which increases supply of quality buffalo for export • Ensure consistent quality of export buffalo by working with NT BIC members to review existing and develop new strategies and standards for export quality. • Access to consistent numbers of buffalo year around for export 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>		
Develop the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support promotional activities such as food stalls at 	Ongoing		

NT Buffalo Industry Council Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012

domestic market	<p>functions such as the Darwin Show and other suitable venues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NT BIC will continue its active participation as a member of the NT Food Group and will positively promote TenderBuff • Look for a marketer / abattoir to take the carcass to the box that can continue to QA Tenderbuff • Continue to communicate and consult with potential abattoir operators and wholesale and retail meat outlets • Seek new marketing opportunities by crossing Riverine with swamp buffalo 	Ongoing		
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Notes:

Resource/Industry Sustainability

Strategy	Proposed Actions	Timeline	Indicators of progress	Responsibility
Develop the Buffalo resource on Aboriginal Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote to indigenous organisations the benefits of value adding to buffalo through farming rather than relying totally on the harvesting of free range buffalo • Continue to work closely with staff of the Indigenous Land Council (ILC), Northern Land Council (NLC), and Tiwi Land Council (TLC) regarding the benefits of buffalo farming • Encourage membership of NT BIC by the NLC, Jawoyn Association and Gunbalunya Meat Supply and other Aboriginal Associations such as ILC, Gagudju, TLC and ADO 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>		
Encourage and support best practice by producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information assistance to producers by demonstrating new or improved livestock husbandry methods • Contribute articles to the ABIC quarterly magazine • Promote discussion of Best Practice techniques at membership meetings • Work closely with the Department of Primary Industry Fisheries and Mines to keep producers up to date with current developments • Maintain a library of reference materials including international publications for members use • Coordinate training programs initiated by Government Departments, NTCA, Livecorp 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>		

NT Buffalo Industry Council Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012

<p>Increase awareness of Buffalo products through promotional activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue to support buffalo food product stall at the Darwin Show • NT Food Group – maintain membership and active participation in meetings and promotions • Seek to find a marketing agent /abattoir to work with Wholesalers • work with wholesalers to increase sale to larger consumers eg Hospitals, Schools, Defence Force etc • promote the NT BIC initiative of selling whole or half sets of cryovac primal cuts at a set price per kilo • Restaurants – provide chefs with meat cut books and charts, recipe books and information on the TenderBuff quality assurance program • Tourist related food outlets – provide samples of buffalo burgers and sausages and information on corned and roast meat cuts available so as to benefit from the novelty value of NT buffalo meat to tourists 	<p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>3 qtr 2007</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>		
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Notes:

Research and Development - Industry Viability

Strategy	Proposed Actions	Timeline	Indicators of progress	Responsibility
<p>Participate in a range of Research and Development Projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and promote opportunities for private funding for R&D projects at Beatrice Hill Farm Research Station and on selected producer’s properties with the aim of making the Northern Territory the leading centre in Australia for R&D and ultimately leading to international recognition • Projects planned and/or in progress are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ develop a commercially viable A.I. technique in buffalo to facilitate the introduction of Italian genetics ○ following the success of the above, explore embryo transplants ○ meat quality analysis: Conduct tests on various crossbred animals to identify the crossbreed that will produce the best TenderBuff meat while retaining the known low cholesterol benefit of swamp buffalo ○ chromosome counts: Conduct chromosome counts on the various riverine and riverine cross animals at BHF to determine if there are any fertility problems associated with the various cross bred combinations • Continue to support the Queensland Dairy Buffalo Company, NT BIC, DPIFM and BHF staff members to create a database of milk quality and production figures of various crossbreeds of riverine buffalo • Develop and distribute a herd management program for small landholders to assist them to establish and maintain profitable buffalo enterprise • Liaise with Government and private research groups to ensure all NT BIC members are informed of latest information on pastures and animal husbandry developments 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>		<p>RIRDC Project</p>

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