



## New Italian semen achieves 64% buffalo pregnancy rate

After many months of negotiation with a supplier and importer, four buffalo producers in three separate jurisdictions of Australia have successfully imported semen from the Italian company, COFA.

The Haldanes from Victoria, Thompsons and Humphries from Queensland and Beatrice Hill Farm in the Northern Territory participated in the shipment.

Buffalo researcher Barry Lemcke said a total of 680 straws were added to a shipment of Italian dairy cattle semen brought in for the Australian producers in June this year. On behalf of the group, he acknowledged the valuable assistance received from the importer, 21st Century Genet-

ics in Melbourne, for allowing this to occur.

“We had access to nine different sires suitable for Australian importation and semen from all nine were brought in, in varying amounts by the four producers,” he said.

“This selection now allows for a bigger expansion in the gene pool than was previously available for Australian dairy buffalo production.

“We have only had a limited number of bulls available in the past and the price was becoming prohibitive and the quality of the semen was somewhat suspect.

“With the new semen in the vat, we carried out a fresh AI round in July, following the first round involving 16 head

in March. “A total of 26 cows were involved in this second round, and a third round this month with 13 cows will be the last for the year. “The results of the first round (old semen) were seven out of 16 pregnant; the second round was 15 out of 26, with the new semen being used on a total of 22 cows (4 bulls used). A count of 14 from 22 of the cows impregnated with the new semen resulted in a foetus seen at six weeks into the pregnancy, using the ultrasound. “This represents a 64% pregnancy rate which is finally the sort of result that we have been seeking over four years of this program, and it is no coincidence that it occurred with the new semen from Italy.



Top: Beatrice Hill bulls. Below: A foetus on ultrasound screen. Bottom: Barry Lemcke and Joanna Robertson record data in July.



## Buffalo industry in the spotlight



The Australian buffalo industry has received plenty of high profile media attention in 2009, with stories run on national and state radio, television and in print. Highlights have included stories televised nationally on Channel Seven's lively cooking show, *Mercurio's Menu*, and on ABC Television's *Landline*. Crews from both programs filmed at facilities including the new buffalo dairy venture being established by the Arthurs at Adelaide River in the NT. The popular *RM Williams OUTBACK* magazine profiles the Australian buffalo industry as its major 'Outback Story' for the October-November edition presently available in newsagencies Australia-wide. The magazine has published a comprehensive 16-page feature on the changing face of the buffalo industry since the earliest days when feral herds were being hunted for skins and pet meat. Many players, ranging from old-timers to today's industry visionaries, were featured in the profile. A number of Australia's most widely-read rural and regional newspapers, including the *North Queensland Register* and WA's *Countryman*, have also run feature stories this year on local buffalo producers, cheese-makers and other industry stakeholders - and ABC Radio's state and territory *Country Hour* programs have maintained their usual keen interest in this year's developments in the Australian buffalo industry.

Emboldened by this success a third round in the off-season was attempted using two protocols on the last 13 cows.

“It is too early for results yet but on the AI day some cows were not showing signs of heat, so it is obvious we were pushing the envelope a little in doing it in a hot time of the year and on dry season low nutrition feed.

“Horticulture waste in the form of reject rockmelons were the only good source of feed available for this group.”

An update on pregnancy rates will be reported in the next newsletter.