NORTHERN TERRITORY CATTLEMEN’S ASSOCIATION
YEAR IN REVIEW 2008/2009

PREPARED AND EDITED BY
Jo Shearn and Luke Bowen

FRONT COVER
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Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association – supporting safety and service in the outback

CONFERENCE AND AGM PHOTOGRAPHS
Thank you to Helen Kempe, Terry Underwood, andMichels, Warren and Munday.

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Katherine

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Steve Turner
Bohning Yards Manager

Jo Shearn
Office Manager Darwin

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Office Manager Alice Springs

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Ian McLean
Executive Officer

Tony Freshwater
Project Manager

Steve Turner
Bohning Yards Manager

Jo Shearn
Office Manager Darwin

Portia Peterkin
Office Manager Alice Springs

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ROYAL DARWIN HOSPITAL Phone: 8922 8888

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Information on Emergency Medical Kits for pastoral properties, including application forms and details of training days, telephone 8922 8220. Send completed forms to the Rural Medical Administrator, PO Box 40596 CASUARINA 0811 or fax to 8922 7799.

Central Australia
Incorporating the Barkly and Alice Springs districts.

General Manager Central Australia Phone: 8951 7800
Remote Health Services Fax: 8951 7185

For a list of health centres and details about visiting medical services, as well as general enquiries, telephone 8951 7808.

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Emergency Medicine Kit licence holders are requested to check kits and replace out of date or damaged items.
The last 25 years has held many challenges for the pastoralists and farmers of the NT, who have proved their resilience and have developed their industry into one of the most valuable and competitive in existence. The NTCA conference this year focused on what our industry will be up against over the next 25 years and how best to manage future challenges and opportunities.

HELD IN ALICE Springs the NTCA’s 25th Anniversary Conference’s theme centred around the future of the beef industry and the challenges that will face pastoralists and farmers over the next 25 years. There was focus on the current economic climate and possible methods to be used by producers to adapt to both economic and climatic hardship. Other associated topics included food security, a subject which is spoken about more and more in recent times, and staff retention, which is often a challenge for pastoralists.

The much-debated topic of Climate Change was addressed by a number of speakers, with the role of agriculture being an obvious focus as well as the future implications for farmers and pastoralists of any legislation that is likely to be introduced in the coming years.

The conclusion of the conference was the much-anticipated panel session, chaired by David Crombie which, once again, offered much food for thought for many attendees.

### CONFERENCE PROGRAM
FRIDAY MARCH 27TH 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30am</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:00am</td>
<td>Welcome Address</td>
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<td>NTCA President</td>
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<td>8:15am</td>
<td>Official Opening</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Hon. Tony Burke</td>
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<td>Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
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<td>8:35am</td>
<td>‘Certainties and Pitfalls: Embracing a Northern Future’ Barney Foran</td>
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<td>‘World Economic Outlook and Local Impacts’</td>
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<td>Paul Beiboer, Rabobank</td>
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<td>9:50am</td>
<td>‘A Commercial Outlook’</td>
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<td>Iain Mars JBS Swift</td>
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<td>10:25am</td>
<td>Morning Tea</td>
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<td>10:55am</td>
<td>‘World Commodity Markets’</td>
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<td>John Chudleigh</td>
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<td>‘Food Security’</td>
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<td>Bob Fagan</td>
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<td>11:55am</td>
<td>‘Climate Change Policy’</td>
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<td>Charlie McEhlone</td>
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<td>National Farmers Federation</td>
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<td>12:25pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>1:15pm</td>
<td>‘The strength of red meat’</td>
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<td>David Palmer</td>
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<td>Meat &amp; Livestock Australia</td>
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<td>‘Attracting and Retaining Staff’</td>
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<td>Nandi Herholdt</td>
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<td>‘Climate Change Information’</td>
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<td>Bev Henry</td>
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<td>Meat &amp; Livestock Australia</td>
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<td>Afternoon Tea</td>
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<td>2:35 pm</td>
<td>Panel Session</td>
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<td>4:15pm</td>
<td>Closing Address:</td>
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<td>The Hon. Kon Vatskalis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>NT Minister for Primary Industries</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:30pm</td>
<td>Conference Closes</td>
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LIFE MEMBERSHIP **WALLY BRAITLING**

He was the quiet achiever who spent many hours shoring up doubtful producers who were reluctant to accept changes. Wally Braitling was involved in the concept, development and promotion of the new NTCA many years ago and was honoured with life membership at the 2009 Cattlemen’s Dinner, as recognition of his remarkable contribution.

IT WAS A volatile and turbulent time in the Alice Springs district, with very low prices, and diverse national groups proposing differing outcomes for our members. Wally was the rock that convinced producers that developing our own Territory NTCA would be the best outcome.

He moved the motion at the inaugural meeting in Tennant Creek for the NTCA to apply to the NFF to become a member. He had convinced members that a united Northern Territory group of cattlemen affiliated with a national body like the NFF was essential for good administration of our industry at both local and national levels.

I am sure there were other people throughout the territory like him, but he was the Alice Springs lynch pin in securing unity and our gratitude towards him is overdue.

Wally was repeating history with assisting in the formation of the new organisation as his father had also been involved as an inaugural member of the Old Centralian Pastoralist Association formed in the 1940’s.

His foresight to develop the industry from walking mobs, to trucking mobs of cattle came in 1953 when he went to Sydney and purchased a Foden Prime Mover and trailer. He followed Kurt Johansson who invented the self tracking tow bars for trailers. He was the second person to use this invention and demonstrate that cattle could be trucked long distances and arrive in good condition. It’s from his forward thinking to use new technology and demonstrate in a practical way, that we have cattle road trains of today. There were still plenty of producers in the 60’s who believed walking cattle was better, but he had cast the die.

This man’s innovation didn’t stop there, he and his wife Barbara both gained private pilots licences and Barb was the first woman in the Alice Springs district and possibly the NT, to use the aircraft to assist in running the station.

We salute you Wally as an integral entity who through your quiet diplomacy ensured the NTCA became a reality. ■
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NTCA PRESIDENT’S REPORT

This is my third and final report as president of our magnificent organisation and I’m proud to be standing here today at this important landmark in our history – the 25th anniversary of the formation of Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association (NTCA). Throughout those 25 years, our association has more than capably performed its primary function of advancing and protecting the interests of cattle producers across the Northern Territory.

OUR NORTHERN CATTLE industry has grown significantly in herd numbers and turnoff since we started out back in 1984. It has ridden the peaks and troughs of changing world market demands, and has seen dramatic changes in production, land management and transport practices.

The Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association continues to lead a robust industry which does far more for the regional economy than it ever receives credit or recognition for. It is an organisation representing well managed land, informed and skilled practitioners and, above all, a united producer group representing diverse pastoral interests operating across all climatic zones and sectors.

Without question, our strength lies in the unyielding support of our members. The NTCA can boast 25 years of solid membership made up of owners and managers of most of the Territory’s 250 working pastoral and freehold properties. We also represent more than 95% of the Territory cattle herd, which totalled a bellowing 2.08 million head at last count. We remain the Territory’s most powerful industry lobby group, making regular strong and effective representation to the highest levels in both Canberra and the Territory on behalf of our members. And our healthy membership means that when we lobby governments on critical issues affecting Territory cattlemen, we have the full weight of the industry behind us.

The NTCA also has an excellent, long-term working relationship with the nation’s peak pastoral industry groups – the National Farmers Federation, Meat and Livestock Australia, Cattle Council of Australia, Cattle Council of Australia and Livetecorp.

STATE OF THE NT CATTLE INDUSTRY – 2008 AND BEYOND

To quote our newly returned Minister Kon Vatskalis in his recent overview address to parliament on the primary industry sector: “Not only is it a major contributor to the economy, but it is the industry that manages the majority of the productive land in the Territory, providing jobs in remote areas, ushering in regional development and allowing a far greater geographic spread of population than would otherwise be possible. On a global scale, the primary industries sector feeds the world’s population”.

The Northern Territory pastoral industry, producing premium cattle for the domestic beef and live export markets, maintained its status as the Territory’s third largest GDP earner in 2008. Our pastoral industry was officially worth $205 million in 2007-08, up 6.4% from 2006-07. This figure we calculate to be in excess of $400 million in real terms. The cattle sector remains the largest contributor to the region’s rural industries sector, making up 39% of the estimated production value of rural industries and fisheries in 2007-08. Our industry injects $238 million a year into the local economy and directly employs 1800 people through the different links of the production chain. This is a far cry from the situation back in 1984 when our association began. At that time, the Territory had three export meat works and seven domestic works slaughtering a total of 96,000 cattle, and a $1.9 million live export trade dealing in just 15,116 head of cattle that were being shipped to Brunei, Sabah, Sarawak and West Malaysia.

BEEF PRODUCTION

The local beef herd has copped a belting in recent years with a massive destock from the Barkly region last year and the Alice Spring herd greatly depleted due to ongoing adverse seasonal conditions. This, coupled with the drought in southern and eastern Australia, made it extremely difficult to move stock, not only because of the depressed market conditions but also because of the inadequate road network.

LIVE EXPORTS

A record 365,000 head of Territory cattle were exported through the Port of Darwin in 2008, an increase of 17% over the 2007 figure. This reflected a continuing strong demand for Australia cattle, particularly in Indonesia. Australia wide, the live export trade sky-rocketed by 20% and contributed a record $644 million to the national economy. Industry forecasters expect continuing medium to long-term positive trade in the live export sector in light of Asia’s insatiable demand for beef, and especially if seasonal conditions allow herd numbers to be rebuilt in the north.

Our producers will also be watching the market situation
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Celebrating 25 years in 2009 with keen interest following the recent talk of Brazilian boxed beef imports into Indonesia. Due to global uncertainty and the effects of the crisis in Asia, it will be difficult to predict where the beef market will find its level. This will of course be underpinned by future exchange rates.

CLIMATIC HIGHS AND LOWS
The start of 2008 saw Central Australia ravaged by exceptional drought and the Barkly district miss out on any significant summer rainfall. This forced affected regional producers to ship out more than 300,000 head of cattle to agistment properties interstate or in other parts of the Territory. 2009 has seen the complete reverse with significant parts of the Barkly spending much of January and February underwater and the Alice district receiving good rain in the latter part of 2008. Drought affected properties in those districts are not out of the woods yet. Unless we see continuing good general rain, what has been received so far will be insufficient to drag the district out of the prolonged drought conditions experienced during the past seven years?

INDUSTRY ISSUES
Fatigue management
The NTCA joined the MLA and trucking companies to remedy the National Transport Commission (NTC) move to apply a single approach to long-distance driving hours in Australia which would have a devastating impact on livestock transport across the NT. The study differentiates remote area livestock transport activities and provides a scientific basis for a Remote Area Livestock Transport System (RALTS) and the basis of a driver and company accreditation program to manage driver fatigue within northern Australia’s remote area livestock transport sector. Draft standards and policy have been developed and will form the basis for a submission to the NTC mid-year. If ratified, these will enable chain of responsibility operators impacted upon by driver fatigue legislation to continue to operate commercially while complying with the objectives of the driver fatigue legislation. The draft standards promote necessary change in operator culture and attitudes to driver fatigue management, and compliance across the beef supply chain.

Speed restrictions
We are still pushing for a more sensible and properly targeted government approach to tackling the Northern Territory's tragic road toll. We have seen no real improvement in Territory road statistics since a reduction in speed limits on the old open limit sections of outback roads. The only thing the speed restrictions have achieved is to inconvenience Territorians in remote regions. We reiterate that the real killers on our roads are alcohol and seat belts – and this is where the government’s money and public awareness marketing should be focused.
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Calcium, sodium, potassium and magnesium are electrolytes needed for normal metabolism of an animal. It has been suggested through trials that stress in animals is the imbalance of these electrolytes. Stress such as prolonged and continuous heat stress in animal in live export boats, animals being transported domestically over long and short distances, livestock walking long distances during musters, working horses, weaners in the yard during weaning or even sick animals all suffer from stress.

Studies done in Australia have shown that supplementing cattle with electrolytes reduces glycogen loss and improved dressing percentage on cattle prior to slaughter. electrolytes supplied in drink water can also markedly increase daily water intake.


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**NTCA PRESIDENT’S REPORT CONTINUED**

**State of our roads**
At the risk of sounding like a broken record, our roads network remains in the most appalling state and urgent action is required to fix them. We have lobbied long and hard on this critical issue and we will keep fighting strenuously, because the situation out there is at crisis point. The dangers, inconveniences, and economic impact that these bad roads cause for our members, clients, and the drivers who have to negotiate their way along them to get our cattle to ships and markets cannot be overstated.

We have submitted our list of recommendations to the Northern Territory Government for urgent rural road works and infrastructure funding in the 2009 NT budget to help the pastoral and resource industries expand in the future. The perfect opportunity to invest in the Territory’s road network has presented itself with the Federal Government’s National Stimulus Package of handouts to the general public and commitment to infrastructure. We hope the NT Government shares our view of infrastructure spending priorities when it brings down the budget in May.

**Super Shires**
This issue has taken up a considerable amount of my previous reports. Due to the lack of time to prepare for the introduction of the new shires, major problems have emerged with the implementation of the management of the councils. This has effectively angered and confused the council staff and managers, particularly in light of the lack of appropriate business systems in place to run the accounts and set budgets.

The election process was most unprofessional, resulting in voter turnouts as low as 35% in some electorates. That clearly demonstrated a regional protest against the rushed introduction of these shires. With nearly twelve months in operation there is little change or improved service delivery into the communities that this experimental reform was introduced to address.

While on the subject of elections, the decision by the Henderson Government to rush Northern Territory voters to the polls in August, almost a year ahead of the full term, left many of our members and other remote area constituents out in the cold. Hundreds of constituents in bush seats were robbed of the opportunity to have their votes counted because the NT Electoral office simply could not turn the polling papers around quickly enough. This issue must be addressed prior to the next territory election.

**Wild dogs**
The NTCA has battled relentlessly with the NT Government for more than four years for the right for properly accredited landholders to access dried baits to control wild dogs. And finally this year we have had a breakthrough with the ready-made baits now being released for use by landholders with appropriate training the permits. The existing fresh meat baiting service, which has been delivered by departmental staff, will stay in place but be transferred to a user-pays system from 1 September 2009.

We are grateful for the breakthrough, which at long last gives landholders some capacity to respond immediately to problem areas and the ability to target individual rogue animals. But we have to say it is totally unacceptable that it has taken so long
to come to this arrangement, when you consider that wild dog and dingo attacks on cattle are costing our industry up to $2.5 million per year. We still have concerns about the unwieldy, multi-agency administrative process involved for people seeking a permit to use the baits, and will continue talking to the government to try and resolve this – but getting access to the baits is a good first step to resolving the wild dog issue.

**Camels**
The issue of wild camels has had more surveys, discussion and meetings without yet achieving a single positive outcome. While we take our time trying to make a decision on how to deal with the problem, the camels are happily breeding themselves into a huge uncontrolled herd and will continue to double their population every eight years. There are now more than one million of them trampling across our arid Territory landscapes, and creating havoc on pastoral land. It is now time to take decisive action to drastically reduce their numbers.

**Pastoral Land Act**
The Pastoral Land Act, established in 1992, has served the industry most effectively as a production-based document – but it was never intended as an environmental document.

A review of the act was completed in 2006, and the recommendations have never been acted upon. Since that time, the Pastoral Land Act has been sitting in limbo gathering dust. It is now time to place the act with a more appropriate department, be that Primary Industries or Lands but we stress that the act must be moved in its entirety with no review or change prior to moving.

**Pastoral Lease valuation**
The mess made of the unimproved capital valuations undertaken in 2006 by the AVO will require a complete revaluation of the pastoral land in the NT on a property by property basis.

**Land Clearing**
The land clearing issue continues to cause headaches, especially for our members trying to develop their properties in the Douglas Daly district. We have had a look at the government’s new draft land clearing guidelines and have provided feedback on their real potential for adverse impacts on our food and agricultural industries if left in their present state. Basically, they are all about conservation and give no consideration to primary industry output and its importance for the NT economy.

During the year, we welcomed a new Environment Minister with a more conciliatory attitude to the need to develop the Douglas-Daly, but we have been dismayed by her department’s first attempt to write guidelines and application forms. On what we have seen so far of the redrafted guidelines, they are single-mindedly focused on conservation and give no consideration whatsoever to the primary industry sector, its role in food production and its importance for the Territory economy.

The guidelines have been devised with no view to development or production, have had no input from the Primary Industry Department and are devoid of any technical substance relating to agricultural practice. They flag a process and a financial and human cost which industry will not be able to sustain. There is no reference whatsoever to the need to develop land for intensive food production. We have warned that unless the powers-that-be come up with an effective, sensible and workable framework, the livelihoods of a significant number of our producers, our food production industry and the Territory economy as a whole will suffer.

**Environmental issues**
Climate change, Greenhouse emissions, carbon trading, renewable energy, sustainable land practices. They’re all powerful words with huge implications for the decisions we make as cattle producers today and where we will sit as an industry in the future. They are issues we cannot ignore – which is why we have again set an agenda that places them at centre stage at today’s conference. And what better time than at our 25th anniversary conference to not only reflect on where our industry had come from, but what challenges lies ahead for producers and how we can work with them.

**Climate Change and Carbon Trading**
Government policy is determined to follow the climate change agenda in spite of the recent economic downturn and an election promise to deliver a climate change and an emission trading scheme. The policy makers have failed to recognize that this could cause the agriculture industry to be unviable.

Until there is incontrovertible evidence that climate change is having the effect on the earth that the government-paid scientists would have us believe, there must be a hold on any further development of climate change policy. Governments need to cool their heels until the whole scientific community can agree on weather climate change is actually being caused by manmade influences or whether a natural life cycle is the culprit. It is irresponsible for the Federal Government to introduce legislation
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and impose penalties on business and industry, particularly the agriculture industry, which could unhang the economic viability of the food production sector of the Australian economy.

Caring for the land

The wider community continues to be hoodwinked by the ill-informed, including the Environment Centre, into believing that the pastoral industry flogs the land. This is a belief founded on emotion, not fact. The truth is that the Northern Territory pastoral land base is in a healthy state, and this is almost exclusively the result of sound land management practices within our industry. The stark reality is that the pastoral sector is production based and we make no apology for this. To achieve successful production outcomes, we have no option but to manage the land conservatively. It must be remembered that the pastoral industry is the Territory’s oldest industry and it is important to understand that conservation and production are not mutually exclusive.

The land and environment are the lifeblood of the cattle industry and our members take land management and other environmental responsibilities very seriously indeed. They are staunchly committed to protecting the land as a productive and healthy resource. If it were not for the pastoral sector, 45% of the Northern Territory would be left unmanaged, so long-term prosperity of our operations will deliver long-term prosperity for the land we manage.

So... despite arguments to the contrary from some misinformed quarters, the Northern Territory cattle industry is in the enviable position of being an environmentally-friendly, low impact food production sector ideally located to supply markets to our north at a time when the world is becoming increasingly conscious about efficient energy use and emissions.

A number of the top level speakers we have mustered for today’s conference will address land management issues and advances, reinforcing the importance that we as an industry place on keeping the land and the environment in good shape for the future. The speakers will showcase the work being done to find a balance between the vital role agriculture plays in maintaining food security around the world, and protecting the environment that makes this important work possible.

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**Claiming pastoral land for wildlife**

There is growing disquiet among our members about the ill-conceived environmental policies and over-simplistic expectations of groups like the WWF. We are all concerned about the status of our dwindling wildlife species and we fully support moves to conserve populations across the Territory for the good of biodiversity. But commonsense must prevail.

We have seen how the NT Government’s ill-conceived land clearing moratorium over the Douglas Daly district has frozen the security and livelihoods of generations of families, the environment and the region’s economic viability. Farmers bought properties in the government designated prime agricultural district in good faith and with hopes for a viable future, and they are now being prevented from even being able to maintain the paddocks on which their lives depend.

**Animal Welfare**

Animal welfare remains one of the most difficult and pressing issues confronting Australia’s live cattle export industry. The issue places an unjustified stigma on our industry in light of this country’s world-leading efforts to make sure our livestock are treated with appropriate care through every stage of their journey from the farm to the markets.

Despite this, we are forced to deal with an extremist and dangerously ill-informed lobby movement which we cannot allow to get the upper hand in terms of public perceptions about our industry. Our reputation for producing healthy, high quality cattle and our commitment to animal welfare is helping drive international demand for our livestock. That’s the way we want things to stay – and that’s the message we must get out into the community.

**Bio-security**

In our recent 2009 Budget ‘wish list’ submitted to the Northern Territory Government, we lobbied for increased funding and support for bio-security early warning, detection and response capability across the Territory. We asked for an immediate increase of technical and extension staff by four and appropriate back-up resources. We also called for maximum cooperation between AQIS and other responsible primary industry agencies and greater funding for enhanced local and regional early warning capability in communities, many of which are located along the remote northern coastline.

Our members were horrified recently to learn of a recommendation to the Australian Government that live viruses, including the dreaded FMD, could potentially be imported into the country to be used at Victoria’s Geelong Veterinary Laboratory. We maintain that the importation of FMD for scientific purposes represents an unacceptable risk to our livestock industries and that alternate risk strategies should be adopted to maximise response capability, in the most disastrous event of a future outbreak. As we are all aware, the outbreak of a disease such as FMD would be the end of the beef industry as we know it today.

**Landcare/Caring for Country**

The NTCA participated in a number of significant pastoral landcare partnerships across the Territory in 2008 as part of the former National Landcare Program. 2009 is shaping up to be just as busy, with a whole host of new initiatives starting up under the Caring for Our Country sustainable farming program.

Some of the key pastoral landcare initiatives finalised in 2008 and ongoing this year included improved information management technology on extensive cattle country. NTCA’s Futures Project which will identify the major strategic issues and impacts facing pastoral lands for future generations. The NTCA combined with the Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources on two Grazing Land Management projects in 2008, using funding through the Caring for our Country program.

**INDUSTRIAL AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

The cattle industry up till now has been working under the Northern Territory Pastoral Industry Award, though this is in a state of change with the Federal Government’s rationalisation of industry awards across Australia. We have been working with the National Farmers Federation to attempt to retain most of what was in the NT Pastoral Award, though at the moment struggling. The outcome will become clearer later in the year.

**MILESTONES IN 2009**

**Primary Industry Review**

The Northern Territory Government wound up its long-overdue but welcome Primary Industry Review in 2008. The review has highlighted some of the areas where the Primary Industry Department has been marking time and not achieving significant outcomes for either the industry or for government. The review is timely considering that the department now has the opportunity to align itself with industry priorities within the constantly changing and challenging economic and environmental conditions we are exposed to. The key recommendations from the review will present an opportunity for government to develop a policy statement and strategy for a vision on primary industry. They also provide the impetus for government to come up with a mechanism for better communications between Industry associations and the department.

**Ministerial Statement on Primary Industries**

One thing that remains constant among our Primary Industry Ministers – (and we’ve had few and just about as many department reshuffles) – is that they all enjoy their portfolio. Most of what they are dealing within primaries is positive.
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acknowledged this and with 90% of our live exports focused in more than half of our Territory industry. The NTCA has long recognised Australia’s live export market is critical to the livelihood of the emergence of new competitors, diversification of Northern Territory has been necessary to develop the Territory. With constantly changing markets, changes in disease status and securing a greater slice of the Asian markets will be necessary to achieve this outcome. It will require the Northern Territory Government to make a serious commitment to supporting the primary industry sector to grow and increase production without placing restraints and bottlenecks in the way, that hamper development.

To achieve that growth, the government will have to work closely with the industry to explore new and emerging markets and to strengthen ties with existing markets to ensure that our livestock production has access to strong and supportive destinations.

**Drought EC**

A major review of the Drought EC relief package is presently underway with the intention to phase it out in the future. The NTCA along with the Territory Government will have major input into the new structure. There will be no changes for the current EC declared areas while they are still drought affected and the Southern Alice Springs district will soon be inspected for the continuation of federal EC Drought assistance.

**TOWARDS THE FUTURE**

**Infrastructure**

As a rural industry body, we expressed serious concerns about where a major chunk of the Federal Government’s recent $42 billion stimulus package was being directed. We argued that more money should have gone to vital infrastructure such as roads and port facilities, which have a longer term impact on the ability of industries like ours to boost economic development. The NTCA and NT Treasurer are working together to identify major projects to attract part of the infrastructure funding that will be necessary to develop the Territory.

**Securing a greater slice of the Asian markets**

With constantly changing markets, changes in disease status and the emergence of new competitors, diversification of Northern Australia’s live export market is critical to the livelihood of more than half of our Territory industry. The NTCA has long acknowledged this and with 90% of our live exports focused in a single economy, our association gained in-principle support on this from the former Federal Government prior to the last election. In cooperation with the NT Government and NT Live Exporters Association, the NTCA has refined the proposal to strengthen the existing Indonesian market while diversifying into new markets such as Vietnam. We are still waiting in anticipation for the outcome of a submission for funding.

A Memorandum of Agreement signed in Vietnam on 7 November 2008 has opened the way for Northern Territory live cattle to be exported to Vietnam’s Khanh Hoa Province. The first shipment carrying 1500 head of cattle left the Port of Darwin late last year and other regular shipments will follow as the trade gains momentum.

We acknowledge the valuable groundwork done since 2007 by former NTCA executive director Stuart Kenny, the Live Exporters Association and the NT Government in helping to re-open trade with Vietnam. This groundwork targeted everything from health protocol negotiations to feedlot inspections and seminars to help the Vietnamese cattle industry understand how the trade operates and the special technical elements involved in Asian feed lotting.

**Government and Government policy**

Food production has been highlighted globally as a major industry of the future. Today’s conference will highlight that as an industry we are committed to looking toward the future, therefore it is imperative that we keep the Government focused and directed to our major issues that will lead to the responsible growth and development of our industry.

Government policy must be directed at facilitating responsible production and not hampering production by over-regulation.

**Staff changes**

The NTCA has seen significant staff changes, both in Alice Springs and Darwin, during the past 12 months. We have replaced our excellent former staff members with an equally skilled and energetic team that I very much enjoy working with. Though I am leaving the president’s position, I look forward to continuing that happy relationship as the NTCA’s new National Farmers Federation representative. Mataranka district producer Rohan Sullivan was elected president at our AGM yesterday and I know that under his leadership the NTCA will continue to grow and to lead on key issues that enhance the Northern Territory cattle Industry.

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Roy Chisholm. Outgoing President
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

In delivering this report I will touch on key activities and milestones since I took up this position 9 months ago, and the range of industry issues currently before us. A year of change past, this year’s Annual Conference is particularly special as the NTCA is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

A special mention to all staff and members who have worked hard over the last 6 months to organise this conference. This will be a conference to remember.

ON THE WALL of the NTCA office in Darwin hang the photographs of the past and current NTCA presidents and executives. These are just some of the people who have played an integral role in developing this dynamic and strong association over the last 25 years. This photographic record is just one part of the history of the NT Cattlemen’s association; a history of a great organisation that is testimony to the dedication and conviction of many people who have worked together to achieve collective goals.

For me, working for the NTCA is a privilege, and carries with it a great sense of responsibility.

The NTCA’s history will unfold over the next day and a half; we will hear many stories and see some of the faces of those who have been part of the last 25 years, as well as those who will play their part in the next 25, years of the NTCA.

The last nine months has seen a number of key staff changes; I took up the position of Executive Director in late June 2008, replacing Stuart Kenny. In November, heralding from Brunette Downs, Jo Shearn took over the Darwin office management from Trisha O’Hehir after five years of dedicated service. The Alice Springs office has also seen changes with Bev Seidel taking on retirement and Ian McLean heading back to the family farm after an outstanding contribution to the NTCA. Tony Freshwater has continued his valuable work across training and employment, while Steve Turner has provided continued service to members and industry from the Bohning yards.

INDUSTRY ISSUES
Since joining the NTCA, I have been actively and publicly weighing in on a range of major issues. I recall on Day 1 of the job, the carbon trading debate was hot… it still is, and will be for some time to come!

As at June 2008, a good list of other issues were on the NTCA radar including land clearing, delivery of health services to regional and remote areas, the NT elections, improving the condition of roads and infrastructure, live export, and implementation of local government reform; as well as the process of identifying key stakeholders, organisations, committees, ministers, minders and departments, with direct or indirect impact on our industry.

Then the world took a breath with the global financial crisis and to some extent we are still in that expectant phase – what, if anything can we expect?

INDUSTRY
The Cattle Industry continues to make up more that 50% of the non mining, primary industry sector and has a production value exceeding $300m and over $600m both directly and indirectly through manufacturers, suppliers, service providers, contractors and transport companies; our industry provides a major contribution to regional economic development.

Employing up to 1800 people directly and up to 2000 indirectly the pastoral sector is a major driver in regional development, and in the responsible management of over 45% of the NT landmass.

Despite the difficult seasonal conditions our northern industry is in good shape. Notwithstanding the current economic crisis the long term outlook for live export remains positive; Export figures showed an increase of 17% on 2007 with 365,000
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