Following his tour of outback cattle stations last week, Minister for Primary Industry Paul Henderson yesterday addressed the NT Live Exporters Association Annual General Meeting.

"After seeing the production side of the cattle industry, I am pleased to now be able to speak to people who are actually at the heart of exporting cattle from the Territory," Mr Henderson said.

Mr Henderson told the meet that the Territory’s live cattle export industry is worth more than $100 million to the economy, and the NT Government’s commitment to this industry was paramount.

"Live cattle exports are the mainstay of our pastoral industry.

"The live cattle trade has repositioned the pastoral industry of the NT from a trader that had to take whatever price was offered to a perfectly placed supplier in the trade with Asia.

"Because of our proximity to customers, we are ideally situated to supply not only Territory cattle but to process animals from other states such as Queensland."

Mr Henderson said the Northern Territory needed to respond to the strengthening live cattle trade by increasing turn-off from its herd.

"The NT pastoral industry is changing to meet this challenge. In fact in the past 25 years, turn-off percentage has gone from 10% to 30% of the total cattle population, branding rates have increased, mortalities have decreased and herd genetics and health have improved.

"The NT Government will continue to foster this growth, as outlined in the Economic Development Strategy, and we are committed to continuing programs that foster the live trade as well as increasing the supply of cattle for that trade.

"These programs include:

- Providing after sales service to our customers;
- Research and development to increase production from the pastoral industry;
- Increasing the production from Aboriginal properties;
- Continuing research into cross breeding animals suited to the live trade;
- Assisting the development of areas like the Katherine Daly to increase the area of improved pasture and crop land