AGM reflects major industry issues

More than 160 cattle producers and other parties with an industry interest came together for the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association’s 20th Annual General Meeting and Conference in Darwin in April.

The day-long forum, at Darwin’s MGM Grand Hotel, was officially opened by the NT Administrator, the Honourable Ted Egan OA. The agenda provided members and other participants with updates and keen debate on key cattle industry issues. These included the Kenry Report on the Asian live export trade, the status of NLIS and LPA (Livestock Producers Assurance, and the implications of restructuring of the National Farmers Federation. The program also included excellent addresses by guest speakers on issues ranging from livestock welfare and the free trade agreement to rural roads and renewable energy. Guest speakers including David Crombie and Richard Trivett joined a panel to debate key industry issues. The NTCA’s Cattle Council representative (CCA) Ross Peatling presented an overview of the council’s activities and the issues addressed in the past year. He gave a stern warning about the impact that the current animal rights campaign could have on live cattle shipments (See story Page 3). Members re-elected John Armstrong as President, Ross Peatling the CCA representative and John Underwood as NFF representative.

SPONSORS for the AGM and Conference were AFD (major sponsor), Elanco Compudose, Telstra Countrywide, Meat & Livestock Australia, Landmark, Elders, Australian Primary Superannuation Fund and FarmBis.

THANKS to Terry Underwood for the photos in this edition.

Keeping up the heat on roads

The NT Cattlemen’s Association welcomed the opportunity to meet face to face with the Federal Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads, Senator Ian Campbell in February

Senator Campbell attended a two-day NTCA Executive Director’s meeting and went away well grounded - and with no doubts in his mind - on what action local cattle men want in relation to the Territory’s beef roads.

Minister Campbell accepted an invitation to attend the meeting and addressed the members on the Roads to Recovery and general federal road funding options outside incorporated local government areas.

The NTCA described Senator Campbell’s attendance as extremely important for the NT cattle industry and looks forward to positive outcomes for the Territory.

Meanwhile, intense lobbying throughout the past few months has resulting in significant extra funding through the NT Government, to upgrade outback roads.

John Dyer
new NTCA life member

John Dyer has made an enormous contribution to the Territory cattle industry over many years - and was recognised for his efforts during this year’s annual conference. John was named as an NTCA life member in a presentation by another long-standing industry stalwart, Ian McBean. Participants described the presentation as highly entertaining.
Greetings to all!
The recent twentieth AGM was a tremendous success, and allowed us to reflect on the health of our industry and our association. The NT Cattlemens Association has signed up 23 new members since September 2003. The AGM was officially opened by the Northern Territory Administrator, the Hon. Ted Egan AO, and admirably hosted by the Barkly crew.

During the proceedings, we celebrated some notable contributions. On behalf of the NTCA, Tom Stockwell expressed appreciation to retiring DBIRD Executive Officer Peter Blake who has now left the public sector after a long and productive career.

Roy Chisholm toasted our former Executive Director Bob Lee’s exemplary service to our association and Ian McBean presented John Dyer with honorary life membership. I had the pleasure of toasting my two Top End girlfriends, Jeannie MaGill and Teresa Lugg.

Dr Richard Trivett gave us some strong expressions of confidence in the live export market and NFF Executive Director Ms Anna Cronin presented a run-down on the new and better structured format for this important farm lobby group.

Other speakers touched on topics as diverse as the free trade agreement and solar power. (The addresses will be published in full detail in the NTCA year book).

We presented our speakers with Jeff Hill’s book, Horsebells and Hobblechains - and, of course, the obligatory NTCA stubby cooler.

Next year’s AGM will be held at Alice Springs.

Important topics discussed at the AGM and conference included:

**Our views on NLIS**

NLIS is used to locate all animals that have been in contact with any animal with a notifiable disease or with a banned substance in excess of acceptable limits. We do this in the NT with our permanent brands and waybills. These are not the NLIS in themselves; they help us achieve the standards set by PIMIC that are NLIS. Other states will use other tools. How these tools stack up in reality is not yet known, especially when related to animals that have never been permanently identified or those whose tags have fallen off. Therein lies the biggest RFID myth, that of ‘whole of life history’. This subject is surrounded by a lot of confusion and acrimony.

To touch on where that has arisen leads me to conclude that there has been a failure of the part of senior members of the red meat representative structures to effectively communicate with their grass roots members.

Sir Laurens Van Der Post, explorer, author and philosopher, said: “Human beings are perhaps never more frightening than when they are beyond doubt that they are right”.

The RFID misinformation train has certainly demonstrated that.

The take-home message for us is that we will continue along the brand/waybill pathway and only apply electronic devices where those other states require it.

Cont Back Page

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**Advertising in Cattlenews**

Advertising space is available in the NTCA newsletter at the following sizes and rates (incl GST).

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Camera-ready artwork is preferred. A fee will be charged for design/layout.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Contact the NTCA - Phone: 08 8981 5976 or Editor Kerry Sharp - Phone: 08 89271724 (email: sharp@octa4.net.au)
**Cormo sheep debate could threaten live cattle exports**

NTCA Cattle Council of Australia delegate Ross Peatling has sounded warning bells about the potential flow-on impact of the Cormo affair on Australia’s live cattle export industry. Presenting his CCA report to the NTCA annual meeting, Ross said the Cormo affair was one major, time-consuming issue which left a bad taste in the mouths of most of the general public and a lot of politicians.

“Even though this was a sheep issue it affected the live export industry as a whole,” he said. “I believe many in our industry did not quite understand how many people wanted to close down the live export trade, whether it be cattle or sheep.

“If the industry suffers another disaster like the Cormo or Becrux, I think we, as producers, will be battling to keep the live export trade going.”

The Cormo debacle led to the Keniry Review on live export and the NTCA responded with recommendations to this review.

Keniry’s first recommendation was to prepare *The Australian Code for Export of Livestock* as the national standard for live exports.

“Our response was that the NT wishes to participate in developing the code,” Ross said.

“I raised the subject at the CCA Executive meeting in Melbourne in March this year and the response was: ‘The whole code will be written by the Government and there will be no input from industry’. This was not the Cattle Council’s fault.”

Ross stressed that the cattle industry must make sure it is not totally driven by governments in the near future. He said the matter would be pursued with the NT Government to make sure the NTCA has input into the review.

He added: “This is an important market for the Territory and our ‘short haul’ live export record continues to be well above international standards in regard to mortality and general animal welfare practices. We should be on mainstream TV telling everyone these facts.

“MLA/Livecorp and the industry is working to improve overseas slaughter facilities and address general animal welfare issues.”

He criticised *Sixty Minutes’* Richard Carlton for ‘dredging up archaic footage which blatantly demonstrates his lack of understanding of the industry’s progress in recent years’.

**OPERATION NOONAMAH**

Exercise Noonamah ran for three days in early March and sought to test the capabilities of AUSVETPLAN, Territory plans, local staff and the recently assembled Rapid Response Team in a desktop exercise. The exercise was a simulation of a foot and Mouth disease outbreak in the Top End.

It saw State and Local Disease Control Centres set up in Darwin city’s Chan Building, which became the base for the exercise.

Overall, 100 people, including 40 from the NT, were involved in the exercise. Local staff included representatives from several departments including Business Industry and Resource Development. These were in the fields of emergency management, mapping, legal, wildlife, AQIS, live exports, the North Australian Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) and Industry Liaison Officers.

The exercise was judged a success with the control centres dealing well with the scenario by the end of the third day. The NT has gained a lot of experience and useful planning information and this will add to DBIRD’s agricultural emergency preparedness.

**NTCA represented at Kimberley conference**

NTCA President John Armstrong and Executive Director Stuart Kenny attended the 45th Annual Pastoral Conference at El Questro Station recently.

The conference focussed Aboriginal pastoral station ownership directions and the South East Asian live cattle export industry. John Armstrong presented a comprehensive overview of the NTCA and the Northern Territory’s perspective on the live cattle industry.

John and Stuart took the opportunity, while at the conference, to meet with the Federal Member for Kalgoorlie, Barry Hass, to discuss beef road funding issues.
MEMBER PROFILE - Henry Burke
Brunette Downs Station

It seems incongruous that a Queensland bush boy who was barely out of primary school when he gave up formal education for a job in an outback saleyard, could now be the head man at Brunette Downs, the largest single lease cattle station in Australia.

But Henry Burke’s passion for the bush and cattle work was destined to bring him to the attention of Australia’s pastoral powerbrokers, including AACo which has based him on Brunette to oversee operations on its group holdings across the Barkly Tablelands and into Queensland. Henry, married to Bernadette and with four offspring – Timothy 21, Jessica 18, Sam 16 and Patrick 7, was the fourth of eight children born to a beef cattle family working a ‘battlers’ block at Doughall River near Cloncurry in north Queensland.

He left school at just 14 years to take up his first job with Dulgetys in the Cloncurry cattle saleyards. He moved on to valuable skill-building stints at contract fencing and cattle mustering, and also worked for a while at Mt Isa’s Mary Kathleen Uranium Mine – before the lure of cattle work dragged him back onto the land.

A job offer on Canobie Station in Queensland’s gulf country in the early 1970s introduced Henry to station work and began the ball rolling on a long and impressive career on cattle properties all over north and central west Queensland and the Barkly Tablelands. His employees have been among Australia’s most powerful pastoral landholders – Australian Estates, CSR and the AACo (Australian Agricultural Company).

In the years between Canobie and his arrival at the Territory’s sprawling Brunette Downs, Henry ran a stock camp on Walhallow Station in the NT Barkly - and married Bernadette while there in 1980, then transferred back across the border to manage a Santa Gertrudis stud at Crowfels, an outstation of Millungera Station.

He gradually worked his way up the ranks as a valued AACo employee, becoming assistant manager at the corporation’s Wurung outstation of Canobie Station then Headingly Station in 1985, then managing Wondoola Station in the gulf country for nine years, from 1988. In 2002, after one more gulf job, as senior manager at Wrotham Park Station, Henry transferred to Brunette Downs as manager in charge of the AACo group holdings in Queensland and the Territory Barkly region.

The 1.22 million hectare Brunette Downs Station, 350km away from its nearest town, Tennant Creek, carries 60,000 mostly Santa Gertrudis cattle. It turns off an average 20,000 head a year, both for the domestic meat and live export sectors.

One of Henry’s most important recent roles has been to oversee breeding and production trials on the innovative Barkly composite cross cattle, which comprise 50 per cent Santa Gertrudis, and 25 per cent each of the Senepol and Charolais breeds.

The station’s 10,000-strong Barkly composite herd has emerged from an AACo breeding initiative introduced 10 years ago. The Brunette trials are looking at heterosis (hybrid vigour), meat quality, fertility, fly resistance and other aspects that will determine the cross breed’s potential for meat production in the future. The results so far are looking good.

Brunette Downs cattle are trucked then railed into feedlots and meat markets in all directions around the country, and others are shipped live out of Darwin to Asia.

“Our Santa cross cattle go mainly to self-sufficient AACo owned Queensland feedlots such as Goomoo and Aronui,” Henry says. “As well, we have sold cattle to Victoria’s Charlton feedlot and South Australia’s Naracoote meat markets. We also bring in company-bred Brahman from the gulf to grow out at Brunette for the live export trade, and last year we shipped 10,000 head out through the Port of Darwin.”

“We might be a long way from our nearest neighbours here at Brunette Downs, but from a commercial perspective, we’re pretty central to most markets around the country.”

Henry Burke is confident about the Territory cattle industry’s future, though he has misgivings on some issues – like the difficulties in attracting skilled staff to work in the bush and make it a long term commitment. “There is a lot of interest from keen young people wanting to experience station life, but only one or two out of every 20 stay in the industry. The others will either go home to work on Dad’s farm, or go to university or follow other pursuits back in town.

“Retaining a skilled workforce for the bush is one of this industry’s biggest problems. For a start, families on remote cattle stations face above-normal living costs. I believe governments must start seriously looking at providing tax and other incentives to keep these families in the bush and attract more good skilled people to come and work in these remote areas. The lack of good, reliable health services has also been a major concern for Barkly region people since I have moved here and is one that I feel the NT Government must address immediately.”

“Infrastructure, such as roads, in the NT’s outback areas, is another problem. It’s gone nowhere in the last 10 years. There’s not enough recognition of the value of this industry and nowhere near enough money being spent to make remote Australia more economically viable.”

Putting such issues aside, Henry sees exciting times ahead for the cattle industry over the next 10 years or so.

“Taking into account all the new technology, emerging markets and generational change that is starting to come through, mixing them all together and making them work for the good of the industry, is going to be quite exciting,” he says. “Add to this the quality assurance schemes that will give easy trace-back and help promote our clean brand of cattle, and I can see that in the next few years our product will be the best in the world.”
Landcare & the NT cattle industry

National Landcare’s Charles Wilcox stressed the need to involve landholders and managers in implementing improved natural resource management practices.

“Improved management can contribute to social and environmental outcomes, as well as improve productivity and profitability,” he told the Conference in his address on landcare issues.

“We are looking for ways in which we can assist industries to identify and implement strategies to improve management.”

He applauded the NTCA’s enthusiastic approach to landcare, which had resulted in Matthew Bolan recently being appointed as the association’s landcare coordinator.

Matthew’s brief is to explore natural resource management issues with pastoralists – to determine what their priorities are and to see how and where the National Landcare Program can assist the industry in meeting its goals.

One important task will be to look for ways of improving the communication of messages back to the wider community about improvements in rangeland management practices. “The grazing industries need to get recognition for the advances already made,” Mr Wilcox said. “They need to be able to demonstrate that it is not all doom and gloom out there and that significant advances in management have been made.”

What the Free Trade Agreement means for beef

The Australian Government’s Special International Agricultural Adviser, Virginia Grenville, provided an overview of the Australian-US free trade agreement processes, and commented on what the agreement means for beef producers. She said Australia had gained real improvements in access for its agricultural products to the world’s biggest and richest market.

“On beef, we have eliminated the tariff on our existing exports as soon as the Agreement enters into force. This is worth about $20 million to the Australian beef industry,” she said.

“We have also gained a significant and growing increase in quota in addition to our current quota of 378,214 tonnes that will, in year 2 or 3, equate to another $60 million, and which continues to grow over 18 years. We would have liked more – and we asked for more. I know the industry is disappointed and I understand why. But let’s remember that Australia has only filled that quota on a few occasions. We are unlikely to do so again for at least a couple of years due to the increase in demand for Australian beef from Japan and Korea following the BSE case in the United States just before Christmas. And by the time that situation resolves itself, Australian beef producers will have access to additional quota volume, in Year 3 at the latest.

In Year 3, Australian beef producers will be able to export 398,214 tonnes of beef duty free to the United States – an increase of 20,000 tonnes. That figure will grow to 448,214 tonnes by the 18th year of the Agreement. And by that time, the 26.4% tariff will have been eliminated and Australian beef producers will be able to export an unlimited volume to the US, subject only to a beef safeguard.”

CCA and NFF issues update

The NTCA’s CCA representative Ross Peatling reported to the AGM on a range of issues dealt with by the council in the past year - including the MLA programs review. He said the CCA had spent a lot of time in 2003 reviewing the MLA programs and, overall, the review indicated that MLA performed well in most programs.

One of the major items identified was that by 2005/06 the beef marketing budget, both export & domestic, would not sustain effective programs in the current major markets. Money will have to be shuffled around within sales promotions programs to be effective but there is only so much money available.

The NTCA’s representative on the NFF, John Underwood, also reported on the federation’s restructure. He highlighted the possibility for the streamlined structure to better represent state member organisations such as the NTCA.

John’s overview followed a comprehensive report delivered to the conference section of the day by the NFF Chief Executive Officer, Anna Cronin.
The importance of drinking enough water

Editorial supplied by LNT on Stock-Joy, a water flavouring product that maximises water consumption by travelling/yarded cattle exposed to changing water sources.

According to a common stockmen’s saying, ‘Hungry cattle won’t drink; thirsty cattle won’t eat’. Water consumption and feed intake are definitely linked and this combination of inadequate water intake and reduced feed or dry matter intake can have undesirable effects on the weight of cattle and their general health and well-being. Simple things such as mustering cattle and placing them onto a different bore or water source can influence water consumption. The major stressors involved in transporting cattle include mixing strange cattle together in yards and disrupting social structures, handling cattle and the transportation itself. Transferring cattle can lead to live and carcass weight loss and deterioration in carcass quality of slaughter cattle.

Weight loss during transport results from factors including the animal’s age and weight, nutritional state, animal class, type and time of last feed before transport, length of transport and temperature. Transport stresses associated with water loss from tissue lads to reduce intracellular fluids which is difficult to reverse, loss of muscle glycogen and high pH carcasses which is associated with dark cutting meat. Inadequate water intake also depresses appetite and rumen function, predisposing the animals to disease. Thus, the animal’s overall well-being can also be compromised by inadequate water intake.

Stock-Joy is a water flavouring product that helps mask unpleasant tastes in water and therefore encourages cattle to drink more water. This may assist cattle that are travelling or being yarded for short times on strange water such as in export depot or cattle yards before and after transport.

**Why use Stoc-Joy?**
♦ When maximising water consumption is important
♦ During and after transport
♦ At mustering when cattle and particularly weaners are being held in yards
♦ When sending cattle to and from feedlots and to meatworks
♦ At meatworks before slaughter
♦ At live export depots and onboard ships.

**Directions for use**
Stoc-Joy should be dissolved in the cattle’s drinking water at a rate of 9.54 g/litre. The table below shows quantities required.

**QUANTITIES**

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**Administration**
The appropriate quantity of Stoc-Joy can be dissolved in a small amount of water before being added to the cattle’s water trough. Alternatively, it can be added directly to the trough and dissolved by using a plunger or paddle. As more water is added to the trough, more Stoc-Joy needs to be incorporated at the above rate.

Using proportional dosing systems is also recommended to ensure the correct Stoc-Joy level is maintained in the drinking water. Water must be kept fresh by cleaning out the trough between batches of cattle.

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**Instructions for onboard stockmen**
- Ensure each pen of animals is identified as being a treated group or a control group (Determined by which truck they arrived on).
- Fill water trough with appropriate quantity of water.
- Before treating water ensure the correct group is being treated, ie only add flavouring to treated pens.
- Add appropriate rates of Stoc-Joy to the water trough and stir with paddle provided.
- Ensure treated and control groups are weighed separately at discharge port.

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**STOC-JOY®**

A water flavouring product for maximising water consumption by transported/yarded cattle exposed to changing water sources.

For details call our LNT Helpline
FREECALL: 1800 811 613
or visit www.LNTnutrico.com

Livestock Nutrition Technologies Pty Ltd
Contact Shaun Coutts: 0418654 968

STOC-JOY® is a registered trademark of Livestock Nutrition Technologies Pty Ltd.

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**TRIAL RESULTS:** Treatment of water with Stoc-Joy doubles water intake in steers held in live export depot prior to shipping. A commercial electrolyte failed to stimulate water consumption over control levels.

Comparing water consumption by cattle held in export yards and drinking water with Stoc-Joy and a commercial electrolyte added.
Listening to Territory businesses

Chief Minister Clare Martin wants to hear directly from Territory business owners and operators about the issues important to them in doing business in the NT. The Chief Minister’s Business Round Table meets throughout the Territory ten times a year, and participants can discuss any topic they like during the two-hour session.

“I want to hear directly from business people about the issues that are important to them,” Ms Martin said. “Business Round Table is an important way for my Government to keep in touch with business people and for business people to talk directly to Government Ministers. Business Round Table is a part of my Government’s commitment to keeping the Territory moving ahead. I would encourage all Territory business people – whether you’re from the smallest enterprise or the largest corporation - to consider attending a session this year.”

Register to attend the Business Round Table through www.businessroundtable.nt.gov.au, or by phoning Freecall 1800 193111

For more details, call Kyrn Stevens, DBIRD Marketing & Communications, Ph: 8999 7778

Keeping the Territory moving ahead

The Chief Minister's Business Round Table

The Chief Minister’s Business Round Table is a chance for businesses to talk directly to Government about the issues important to you.

Listening to ideas and issues from businesses is part of our commitment to keeping the Territory moving ahead.

For more information about the next Chief Minister’s Business Round Table in your region contact:

1800 193 111
www.businessroundtable.nt.gov.au
email: brt.dbird@nt.gov.au

Northern Territory Government

www.businessroundtable.nt.gov.au

NTCA Catch-up time

The NTCA’s annual general meeting and follow-up conference in Darwin in April to work through important industry issues, culminated in the traditional dinner at the MGM Grand. More than 270 NTCA members and guests from all parts of the Territory attended the event - the ‘Way Forward’ Gala Dinner - which proved a great success, as always.

Ex-Wallaby champion and now television identity and book author, Peter Fitzsimons, kept the house entertained as guest speaker on the night, and reinforced his reputation as a brilliant raconteur, hilariously funny presenter and great motivator of team spirit. The talented Tree of Us got the toes tapping and guests swinging when they took to the stage as the after-dinner entertainers.

The sponsors for this year’s NTCA annual gala dinner were Landmark, Elders and Australian Fuel Distributors (AFD).
Livestock Producers Assurance

Many questions came from the floor regarding LPA and it was reassuring to have MLA stalwarts David Crombie and Alan Bloxsom publicly state that the new NVD/LPA forms ARE NOT MANDATORY. Even if you have registered for the new forms and have been given your free 10 copies, you do not have to use them. You can continue with the old NVD forms which will continue to be printed.

Road-working the nation

Naturally roads were again a major focus and will continue to be a priority. Minister Vatskalis announced that in response to successful lobbying by NTCA and Government, the NT may receive an extra $30 million in funding over four years for unincorporated roads. While this is $30 million more than we have ever got before, Senator Campbell did promise us $40 million, which we believe is still the case. We will keep working on it. All in all it was a good conference and we have a strong executive in place to continue with the initiatives commenced last year - Cheers

John Armstrong
President