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**Cattle Committee Update by Richard Chamen**

The Cattle Committee had our second face to face meeting for the year in Walgett on 24 May followed by a dinner with local members and other producers. It was great to get out to Walgett for our meeting to hear the concerns and issues of our members. On behalf of the Committee I'd like to thank the Walgett District Council for hosting us, together with the local members and producers for attending and making it such a great event. Also thanks to Rob Anderson (MLA) and David Inall (CCA) for taking part and providing input.

One of the major topics raised at our meeting was the live cattle trade. Since the meeting, the live cattle trade to Indonesia has been suspended. The potential ramifications of this suspension to our markets in NSW are unknown but given the possibility of large numbers of northern cattle travelling south, one can only guess that there will be downward pressure on price. The quicker that Government changes position and lifts the suspension enabling supply to compliant abattoirs in Indonesia the better. The Government should also be engaging with their Indonesian counterparts to enable compliance to occur quickly on the ground. Certainly there are lot of questions to be answered, and once the trade recommences a full and open inquiry should be held to make sure that the situation doesn't occur in any location again. More detail on live exports is provided below.

A new disease that is raising concern is Theileriosis. This is a disease that is causing some cattle losses amongst our members and will be monitored. The Association is calling for random blood testing to be carried out at abattoirs to ascertain the spread of the disease, Buparvaquone (a drug to treat Theileriosis) be made available as quickly as possible, and work to be commenced on the development of a vaccine. There was a Theileriosis forum held in Tamworth on 2 June where Industry and farmers had input.

LIVE EXPORTS

The Association was shocked by the horrific cruelty shown on *4 Corners* on Monday 30 May. Following this report, which showed less than 1% of Indonesian abattoirs, the Federal Government has moved to suspend all live exports to Indonesia for up to 6 months. This knee jerk decision penalises a number of Australian families and communities for the actions of a minority. With approximately 10,000 cattle per week previously destined for the Indonesian market it is imperative

that this situation is resolved quickly. The Association is already seeing flow through effects into the NSW cattle industry and there is concern that there will be implications for other industries such as grain as Indonesia is our largest export market for wheat.

The Association has been working closely with industry groups to resolve this situation. The industry plan of a closed system with identifiable abattoirs that meet international standards is the way forward for the resumption of trade, ensuring

that animals are treated in a humane manner without completely decimating an industry. Together with destroying an industry, suspending 10,000 cattle a week to Indonesia would put significant downward pressure on domestic cattle prices.

The Association has written to all NSW State and Federal politicians as well as the Prime Minister and Federal Minister for Agriculture. Updates on Association action can be found at www.nswfarmers.org.au or by ringing Cameron.

TEYS CARGIL JOINT VENTURE

On 11 May 2011, Teys Bros and Cargill announced that they intended to merge their cattle feeding and beef processing assets to form a new Company: "Teys Australia- a Cargill Joint Venture". Teys current assets are based in Queensland and South Australia and Cargill's are in New South Wales. The new company will be 50% owned by the Teys family and 50% by Cargill. Allan Teys will chair the Board of Directors comprised of four Teys family members and four persons from Cargill.

The agreement to merge is subject to approval by the ACCC and Foreign Investment Review Board. Until such time that this approval is given, both Teys and Cargill will remain separate companies and competitors.

The Committee has been told that no plants will close and Teys Australia expects to operate all assets at/near full capacity. However, the Committee is concerned that even if the volume of meat purchased remains constant, the consolidation of the meat processing sector down to two major buyers will lead to reduced competition and increased exposure to risk, particularly between the Teys Naracoorte and Cargill Wagga Wagga plants, and Teys Brisbane and Cargill Tamworth plants. These concerns have been raised with the ACCC.

MOUSE PLAGUE

With favourable climatic conditions, there have been large increases in mice numbers (5 times

larger than anything seen in the last 15 years) across wide areas of NSW in the last month. There are two rodenticides currently permitted or registered for field use. Zinc Phosphide (for crop use) is available through rural merchants and Bromadiolone (for boundary baits) is available through Livestock Health and Pest Authorities (LHPA). The spike in chemical demand has resulted in delays accessing to pre-mixed Zinc Phosphide. This is a concern not only for the crops that have been planted, but also for human health, as mice are one of the many different animals that can harbour *Leptospira* bacteria in their kidneys that can cause Leptospirosis.

The Association called for the APVMA to enable accredited and trained chemical users to mix Zinc Phosphide and grain for use as mouse bait. The Association is working with DPI to increase the speed at which bait is made available and to determine if any support mechanisms could be made available to farmers. Information and maps on current activity are available on <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/vertebrate-pests/mice>



As NSW Farmers' Association is a member of Cattle Council we are participating in the Cattle Council Rising Champions Initiative, which is designed and coordinated by Cattle Council of Australia with the support of NAB Agribusiness, Rural Press Limited and DAFF. Those who want to create networks among beef industry leaders and between the ages of 21 and 35 passionate about cutting positive tracks for Australia's cattlemen and women can apply for Cattle Council Rising Champions Initiative. Matched with a mentor, who is also a beef producer on Cattle Council, candidates will travel to Longreach to share their views on the 'real-life' beef industry challenges. The 2012 NAB Agribusiness Rising Beef Industry Champion will win all-expenses paid beef tour and Livestock Congress in Denver, Colorado, USA, aligned with the National Western Stock Show. Applications close 31 August. Visit www.cattlecouncil.com.au/risingchampions to apply.