

Broadcast Alert: ABC North West WA

Broadcast summary:

Improving market access, maintaining a clean animal welfare image

ABC North West WA, Karratha (Rural Report)

hosted by Michelle Stanley

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Improving market access, maintaining a clean animal welfare image and better cooperation across the cattle sector were just some of the topics at this week's live export forum in Townsville. It's no secret the sector has experienced a tough 12 months as low supply and high cattle prices have combined to cause a headache for exporters over a deal with regulatory handbrakes from our most important customer, Indonesia. Morse says it has been a tough few months. Gina Rinehart's Hancock Prospecting has the drive to set up a complete supply chain sending cattle to Jintang Island of Shanghai, China for processing and it could be a game changer opening up the world's largest market to Northern Australia. Australian Livestock Exporters' Council CEO Simon Westaway says what Hancock Prospecting is pushing forward with is a fantastic opportunity for Northern Australia. Will Wilson, director, AgForce Cattle Board says the key take on message for producers and exporters alike are listening to their concerns and a strong live sector is important to the entire industry.

The full transcript for the broadcast is included below:

TOM MAJOR REPORTS ON THE LIVE CATTLE EXPORT SECTOR.

INTERVIEWEES: JAKE MORSE, DIRECTOR FOR FEEDER AND SLAUGHTER CATTLE, AUSTREX; SIMON WESTAWAY, CEO, AUSTRALIAN LIVESTOCK EXPORTERS' COUNCIL; WILL WILSON, DIRECTOR, AGFORCE CATTLE BOARD; BIM STRUSS, CATTLE PRESIDENT, AGFORCE

ABC NORTH WEST WA

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06:15 AM

MICHELLE STANLEY: But first up today; improving market access, maintaining a clean animal welfare image, and getting better cooperation across the cattle sector were just some of the topics at this week's live export forum led in Townsville. It's no secret the sector has experienced a tough 12 months as low supply and high cattle prices have combined to cause a headache for exporters, all the while dealing with regulatory handbrakes from our most important customer, Indonesia.

Tom Major has this report from the floor of the conference.

[Excerpt]

REPORTER: It's been a tough few months for Jake Morse, the director of feeder and slaughter cattle for exporter AUSTREX.

JAKE MORSE: I think it's no secret it's really tough trading conditions for live cattle exporters at the moment. We're currently in a herd cycle, the Australian cattle herds are at 20 year low so we're seeing record cattle prices which is fantastic for producers; however, just a lot of our customers overseas are struggling follow that cattle price and pay the market price.

REPORTER: A slump in demand is slicing into the exporters' profits.

JAKE MORSE: I suppose we're seeing a downturn in demand of- it could be around 20 per cent, I suppose, year on year, that currently at the moment ...

REPORTER: And that's a market share that will be hard to claw back. AgForce cattle president Bim Struss says pressure on key export markets has lead to concerns of losing out to international competitors.

BIM STRUSS: Indonesia's got concerns, from our point of view, with buffalo meat coming into that country. It seems to have levelled out now so that's put some pressure on the marketplace over there for Australian cattle.

REPORTER: Which brings us to the hottest subject of the conference: China.

Gina Rinehart's Hancock Prospecting has a drive to set up a complete supply chain sending cattle to Jintang Island off Shanghai for processing and it could be a game changer opening up the world's largest market to Northern Australia.

Australian Live Exporters' Council CEO Simon Westaway:

SIMON WESTAWAY: Look, the feedback I think's been really good. What's been really interesting is that I think people have really bought into what the future China story looks like. I think what Hancock Prospecting are pushing forward with, it's got fantastic opportunity for Northern Australia and they've got a segmented business- and, importantly, I think, it's been somewhat misunderstood, their strategy. So it's great for them to continue to talk about the options for Northern Australia which is certainly of interest in this part of the world, through to the opportunities out of Southern Australia.

We're very supportive of that, we're very supportive of them trying to break down those walls to get more Australian livestock into that Chinese market, which is the world's largest meat market.

REPORTER: Will Wilson is a director on the AgForce Cattle Board from Calliope, near Gladstone. He says the key take-home message for producers and exporters alike is that policymakers are listening to their concerns and a strong live export sector is important to the entire industry.

WILL WILSON: I think it's always on my mindset and I'd like to think that people think that their representative bodies have it on their mind and we work together and try and get messages in and out of these organisations that service the needs of the people that become members or that aren't members but are producers. So, it's really important that that's remembered and then relationships with the live exporters. Yesterday we had our meeting with them- we had a catch up with some of their directors and it was really interesting that we have similar goals and we have the same outcomes so we're actually united rather than apart and whilst that's in the room, well, it's going to have a good outcome, I believe.

REPORTER: Yeah, working together, one of the lessons from a couple of high-profile hiccups in the industry; something that you need to work on?

WILL WILSON: Yeah, I'm a producer and I have the feelings and thoughts that all producers have and that's just that we've got to make every effort to stop that from happening in the future. We're one industry, we're not a number of industries that don't like each other, we're one industry that work out how

we can produce product to the consumer. So when we get to that stage we'll be laughing.

[End of excerpt]

MICHELLE STANLEY: Will Wilson, AgForce Cattle Council board member from Gladstone in Queensland, ending that report from Tom Major.

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