

Northern Territory TenderBuff®

TenderBuff® is meat from young farmed buffalo that have been fed and managed specifically to produce consistently good quality lean meat.

The TenderBuff® program is an initiative of the NT Buffalo Industry Council which has registered the product name.

TenderBuff® offers purchasers a product which has been quality checked by an independent assessor and identified by a strip brand to signify the carcass has met the following specifications:-



- 150-300 kg carcass weight (Customers can be more specific with their weight requirements with producers)
- even distribution of fat over carcass, measuring from 3 to 12mm depth over the p8 site (rump)
- no permanent teeth (aged less than average of 2.5 years)
- electrically stimulated within 10mins of slaughter
- muscle pH of less than 5.8 measured after the carcass has been hung overnight in a chiller.

TenderBuff® provides small farmers with a potentially good income source, but greater attention to the growth and handling of stock are necessary.

In the Northern Territory mixed grass/legume improved pastures are all capable of producing young buffalo to TenderBuff® specifications during the period December to July. Production of TenderBuff® after July usually needs to progress to floodplain improved pastures to enable continuing growth, as stored moisture is able to produce green feed through until the first rains of the next wet season.

Supplementary or lot feeding systems can be used to ensure animals receive proper nutrition and attain carcass specifications more quickly at any time of year. This constant contact quietens the animals which helps minimise stress at slaughter, and is very important to achieve desired meat quality. Quiet handling through the yards is a prerequisite to good behaviour in the abattoir yards

The NT Buffalo Industry Council works closely with Quality Meats Pty Ltd, the biggest long term supplier of TenderBuff® meats to the public and restaurant trade.

There has been a problem since April 2007 with the closure of the local Darwin Abattoir, so supply has been an issue. In 2012, new abattoirs are expected to come on line and the product become available again

A limited range of buffalo meat cuts, burgers and sausages are available at Quality Meats Pty Ltd retail outlets at Parap (08)-8981 3946, Palmerston 08-8932 1906 and the wholesale outlet at at Coconut Grove (08)8948 4868)

When purchasing buffalo meat, consumers should ascertain if they are buying TenderBuff® or a similar standard product to ensure a consistent quality meat.

At May 2012, there is currently no abattoirs accredited to produce TenderBuff product from local producers. Some buffalo product is currently coming from interstate, but not of TenderBuff quality. It is hoped to rectify this problem with abattoirs coming on line soon in the Darwin area.

Healthy Eating

TenderBuff® is the healthy red meat option; it has three important attributes for healthy living

- a) it contains about 30% less saturated fats in the lean meat than beef; this helps keep your blood cholesterol down.
- b) there are higher levels of polyunsaturated fatty acids in the meat which are also beneficial in reducing blood cholesterol.
- c) It is a good source of dietary iron and zinc.

High content of myoglobin pigments in TenderBuff® causes the meat to be slightly darker in colour than comparably aged beef. Very dark meat indicates a high level of stress in the animal at slaughter, so lighter colouring in the meat indicates a younger animal with no stress at slaughter.

Generally speaking, the quality (tenderness) of buffalo meat is indistinguishable from that of cattle of comparable age, condition, sex and the same processing method. Most of the differences lie in the cooking techniques used. These techniques need to be altered for buffalo meat due to its lower fat content; therefore cooking methods need to be refined to reduce moisture losses from the meat. This can be achieved by sealing when cooking at high temperatures, reducing cooking times or temperatures, wet cooking methods or any combination of the above techniques.

Producers who would like to participate in the TenderBuff® quality assurance scheme need to submit a request to the NT Buffalo Industry Council. The request should include how participants will meet the requirements of the scheme, including an independent assessor at the place of slaughter to inspect and classify the carcasses and apply the stamp to identify carcasses that meet the quality assurance scheme.