**NEWS RELEASE**

**Motorists urged to be on alert for cane trains**

Be alert, don’t take risks and always give way to cane trains is the Burdekin Cane Supply and Transport team’s warning to motorists ahead of the 2014 crushing season.

With three of the Burdekin’s four mills set to start crushing on 3 June, cane trains will begin to operate throughout the district from as early as late next week, with the whole network live from the week beginning 26 May.

Burdekin Cane Supply Manager Steve Postma said that meant motorists needed to be on alert when they approached any of the district’s more than 150 cane railway crossings.

Mr Postma said that particularly applied to motorists who had an EV Alert receiver installed in their vehicle and relied on it to alert them to the presence of a locomotive.

“Unfortunately, we’ve had to cancel the EV Alert program this year,” Mr Postma said.

In recent seasons all of Wilmar Sugar’s 36 Burdekin locomotives have operated with an EV Alert transmitter, which emits a signal when the loco is in use.

A large number of motorists, particularly haulout operators, have purchased and installed receivers, which detect the signal when the locomotive is nearby.

Mr Postma said the system was an effective and relatively low-cost safety initiative. However, it was based on analogue technology and was no longer supported by its manufacturer.

“Unfortunately, several of our current loco transmitters are broken,” he said.

“New ones are no longer available to buy and we’ve been told existing ones cannot be repaired.

“From a safety perspective, it’s a greater risk to people with receivers if some locomotives have transmitters and others don’t, so we’ve had to stop the whole program.”

Mr Postma said although various alternative technologies were being trialed across the industry no obvious replacement system was currently available.

As work continues on the Bruce Highway upgrade north of Brandon, motorists are again advised to take extra caution when approaching the cane railway crossing near Sugar Research Australia. The overpass under construction is not expected to be open until several weeks into the season.

Mr Postma said motorists driving in the Kalamia area should also be aware that a section of Burstall Road had been realigned.

“This was a joint project with Burdekin Shire Council,” he said.

“The cane railway line now runs parallel to the road, which has enabled two cane railway crossings to be removed and has significantly improved safety for motorists.”

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