

SA Sheep Expo - NZ Tour 2016

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I had a ball in NZ and have come back with a wealth of knowledge, a huge list of contacts and even more of a passion for the sheep industry.

Last month I spent a week visiting farms in the Canterbury Region in the Central South Island of New Zealand.

My Itinerary included NZ's largest Agricultural show, The Canterbury Agricultural & Pastoral Show. The newly developed Charring Cross Sheep Dairy just out of Darfield where Lyn and Guy Trafford aim to produce Sheep Yoghurt and Ice Cream for a niche market. At Ashburton I visited Glenfiddich Deer farm which produces deer velvet.



I also spent time at Lincoln University's Research Dairy farm learning about their current research trials from the pasture and dairy technicians.

My highlight was visiting 'The Doone', a 10,000 acre high country property where the Taylor family are developing the Romney breed to be able to thrive in any location and in any seasonal or pastoral conditions. The Taylor's work closely with Lincoln University in which they utilize genetic selection to select ewes with better EBV's around meat yield, growth, wool yield and fertility to improve their growing 'Doughboy Romney' flock.

All the farms I visited were completely different and allowed me to get a diverse taste of NZ's Agricultural Industry. I was very impressed by the high fertility of NZ's sheep flocks and the steps farmers were taking to maximize the number of lambs weaned. There has been a lot of competition between sheep and dairy and the conversion to dairy. Those in sheep are making the most of their land often running sheep in challenging environments.

My inner journalist came out as I met with NZ farmers. I asked questions and took notes as I learnt about their very individual farming goals, challenges and ways in which they run their enterprises.



It reinforced the importance of actually getting first-hand on farm experience. Not only did it consolidate the concepts learnt at the Sheep Expo and University this year, it also further reinforced my goal of becoming a large animal Veterinarian. It has been made clear how important it is to work and talk to farmers to be an effective Vet as not unless you understand the farmer's personal enterprise and what they hope to achieve can you decide on the next action to take.

Although vets are sometimes a rare site on large rural farms, I believe going into the future they will play a big part in the developing genetic selection of traits in animals to maximize production, nutritional planning and combating disease and worm resistance.

In the short term I plan to use what I learnt to improve my new stud (Tuerong Valley Corriedales) which I run with friend Kate Methven, and continue to gain experience in the sheep and Agricultural industries. Upon graduation as a vet I want to be an asset to the Agricultural Industry - a vet that has a lot of knowledge behind her with strong understanding of not only veterinary science but also production and industry. I want to work with farmers to improve and maximize their productivity without comprising the welfare of the animal.

I am enthusiastic about mentoring fellow young sheep enthusiasts at next year's Expo which will be held from April 19 – 21 2017, and encourage all interested youth to get involved.

I'd like to express my thanks to the Organizers of the SA Sheep Expo for an unforgettable opportunity and to the sponsors; Australian Stud Sheep Breeders and the Sheep Meat Council of Australia.



