

*It was a fresh early winter morning in Sydney. Her first overseas trip. With a mixture of excited anticipation and the tiniest amount of fear, she lugged the majority of her wardrobe with her from the taxi into the international terminal. Immediately she started to drown in the swarm of people and luggage, they were like insects buzzing in all directions. This girl from the bush felt like she was the only one who didn't know where to go. Her adventure was just beginning.*

I managed to survive and somehow made my flights on time. I flew from Sydney to Wellington and then to Palmerston North (south part of the North Island), and was picked up by Brooke Mullooly, the Charolais breed manager and Future Beef (all breeds youth organisation) coordinator. That night I was treated to my first "Angus Pure" steak, which is the equivalent of our CAAB.

I had a quick stay with Michelle & Alan Dalziell, Atahua Angus, Fielding. I had the chance to look through some of their sold sale bulls, but not their cowherd. The reason for this is that they were away "grazing" (on agistment). There are many farms over here that are in drought. Not the Australia type of desert drought, but the NZ winter drought. Although the paddocks look green, there is simply no bulk or quantity of grass because the rain didn't come early enough (Autumn) and although they're getting winter rain now, it's not doing much good because it's simply too cold for any grass to grow. Michelle is from Australia so it was a great place to stay first to ease me into my trip.

Over the next 3 days I attended 4 of the 6 bull sales in the Gisborne area (Kaharau, Turihaua, Combined Vendor Sale, Turiroa). These sales were all quite strong, averaging between \$4500-\$6000 each sale, topping in the \$20000's several times, with extremely high clearance rates.

I stayed with Angela and Hamish Williams, Turihaua (Two-Ri-How), which is the oldest Angus stud in Australasia. They celebrated 100 years last year. It is an amazing property of 5000 acres, and joins the ocean. They run 18 000 stock units (sheep and cattle). It is magnificent country. The Williams' are great people and wonderful hosts (and Angela has 9 acres of gardens and over 700 roses!). I helped wash and brand their sale bulls, and helped out for the sale. Their cattle seem to be quite moderate framed and their point of difference is that their bulls are bred in the hills, for the hills. Very sound cattle that definitely and obviously have a place in the industry here.

I then moved on down to Grant and Sue Crawshaw, Kenhardt Angus, Nuhaka. They have three children, all keen on the beef industry and involved with Angus Youth/Future Beef (which is quite new over here).

After a few days and a trip back to Turihaua (to have some time to recover from the severe flu I had picked up) I arrived at my next destination, Viv and Will McFarlane, Waiteranui Angus, Hastings. Once again all their breeders were away grazing. Will is a very smart farmer, and this stud has been around since 1914. The McFarlanes are very focused on monitoring and optimising the beef production, from a pasture point of view. There is little to no fertilizer used, less steep paddocks are used very intensively, with a full on cell grazing system to maximise weight gains and manage pasture effectively. A man with a very interesting approach and someone I will be definitely learning more from in the future.

Next I went to Richard and Vicky Rowe, Merchiston Angus, Marton. Richard is the President of NZ Angus. All the cows were away grazing, but I had the chance to inspect his in-calf heifers, weaner heifers and weaner bulls. I was very impressed. I also went through his sold sale bulls, waiting for delivery to their purchasers. It was one of the best line-ups of sale bulls I've seen yet over here. So consistent with so much grunt in them, and all featuring those important constitutional traits only the real cattlemen never lose sight of. Another attraction here was the homestead. It is the oldest and largest family owned home in NZ! 14 000 square feet with four storeys (including a bell tower!). It features native NZ timber extensively throughout and was built in the early 1900s. It is used for functions and is listed as a heritage building. It really is impressive and interesting to see!

I attended and contributed to a Future Beef meeting, which is the newly developed all breeds youth organisation. It was quite interesting listening to their progress. I felt so grateful that I have the opportunity to be involved with Angus Youth in Australia. It made me realise that in Australia Angus Youth offers such a high level of everything, in such a professional manner. I think it's because we've been running for a while, and it has been this time combined with good management that has been able to perfect the organisation. We also have the foresight and ability to make new things happen and change old things so that they're better for everyone.

I then visited Lindsay and Maria Johnstone, Ranui Angus, Wanganui. It was interesting to see this stud, as I have some of their genetics in my own herd back home. Lindsay is the trustee of NZ Angus Youth, so he was great to talk to about all things related. It was just SO cold here, I couldn't believe it. After a while I suppose I got used to feeding out to cattle on the sides of hills I would never dream of driving on! While I was here we had shearing on, which was pretty interesting for me to help with because I haven't had much to do with sheep.

After Ranui, I had a great weekend in Palmerston North with Brooke Mullooly, which included taking part in a Young Farmers car rally, which was quite interesting! This weekend I also met up with Natalie Marshall, the recipient of the 2006 NZ exchange to Australia.

My final stud was Waitapu, which is also near Taihape. This is an example of proactive succession planning. The parents, Marty and Lisa Williamson, have transferred the responsibility to son Josh and his wife Stacey. Josh is only in his twenties, so it's a pretty big deal to have such an important role in the operation at that age. Josh took me snowboarding (he used to be an instructor), which was an awesome experience. I've never been to the snow before, so the first ten minutes were slightly frustrating. It took a bit to get over all the four-year-olds flying past me on their mini skis while I was repeatedly sprawled somewhat awkwardly in the snow, but I put my mind to it and had an amazing afternoon (It was at my own discretion that I chose not to progress from the learners slope!).

Back to Dalziell's who kindly had me stay again and took me to the airport. It was with mixed feelings that I watched Auckland slowly slip away behind me through the window. What a great country. I was sad to be leaving, but happy to think about seeing those important to me back home. My heart was touched by so many who offered me such care, support, generosity, encouragement and knowledge during my stay.

These people were one of the main highlights of my trip. These wonderful, down to earth Angus breeders who just love to talk cattle. I became a little part of every family I stayed with, and always regretted leaving each place at the end of my few days with them. I've gotten to know some great people. I'll be keeping in touch with all of them, and no doubt they'll be of great help to me in the industry. Hopefully there'll be many more visits both in New Zealand and Australia.

Overall, the New Zealand exchange was a great opportunity to broaden my horizons and make invaluable contacts, have my eyes opened to the beef industry on an international level, appreciate the strengths of the industry in Australia and also realize where there may be room for change or improvement for the future. Personally, the experience was wonderfully character building. I grew as a person, and I learnt from my host families just how important it is to help others and how little things can make all the difference. Thank you so much to Angus Youth for offering me this great opportunity, and I'd highly recommend it to every other young person interested in the beef industry – you never stop learning!