

## *Angus Youth*

# **Michigan State University/ Semex Genetics Scholarship**

*Report from Will Creek, 2011 scholarship winner*

It seems like only yesterday that I was fortunate enough to be awarded the 2011 Semex Genetics Michigan State University Scholarship. This scholarship has given me a once in a lifetime opportunity, to both assess and gain knowledge in a country that helps shape and determine so many of Australia's agricultural markets.

I left Adelaide on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August flying straight to Toronto, Ontario, Canada. After spending a couple of days in Toronto both sightseeing and recovering from jet lag, I was met by Myles Immerkar, the Manager of Beef programs at Semex Alliance, based in a town called Guelph situated about a hour outside of Toronto. Guelph is a town that consists of approx. 125,000 people and is home to many agricultural companies. Here I had the opportunity to meet the Semex Genetics team while being given a tour of the offices.



The next day Myles and I drove out to the Gencor collection facility and observed stud Holsteins being collected. We also drove out to a property called 'Gold Bar' where Semex had some Brahman bulls from Brazil being tested before going into the collection facility. From here we visited Dunford Royal Cattle Company, who breed a very sound Angus herd.

Travelling with Myles allowed me a lot of insight into the beef cattle operations in both Canada and the US. His depth of knowledge in the beef industry both locally and world wide was astonishing and I learnt a lot in the week I travelled with him. Other studs we visited included Bar 5 (Fleckvieh), Medonte Highlands (Polled Herefords), Cedardale Farms (Charolais), Elmlodge (Poll Herefords/Simmental), and Whiskey Lane (Poll Herefords/Angus). Visiting these properties helped me see many different management systems, husbandry practices and different beef breeds. The demand for structurally correct, moderate framed, easy doing cattle was apparent and most of the cattle I saw over

my days travelling had these traits. In some cases growth might have been an issue for Australian cattle breeders, with some cattle being only small/medium score.

I was fortunate enough that my time in Canada coincided with the Semex Alliance stud bull photo shoot for their 2012 catalogue. This allowed me the opportunity to travel to the Eastern Breeders stud, where beef bulls purchased by Semex from around the world are brought to, kept, and collected. With five of us there it took two large days to prepare the bulls for photographing and then trying to get them to 'pose'. I learnt patience. This was a great opportunity to have a look at some impressive bulls from around the world varying from Angus through to Simbra's. I am very thankful for my time spent with Semex it was truly an amazing experience.

I then left Canada, flying to Chicago and was met by the Leemon family. Leemon Stock Farm is a family operation in the heart of the prairie land located near Hoopston, Illinois about 100 miles south of Chicago. Along with breeding Shorthorns they also crop about 3000 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat, oats and hay. I was fortunate enough to be able to spend the week on the Leemon's property. Time was spent helping Scott and Cody preparing show calves, feeding cattle, and bailing hay. The Shorthorns bred by the Leemons are successfully shown throughout the States and are probably one of the best examples of the breed I have seen. While staying at the Leemons, I was able to visit the Farm Progress Show which really highlighted the technological and scientific changes that are taking place within the cropping industry.

I travelled from Illinois to East Lansing in Michigan which is home to Michigan State University. I was greeted here by the Farmhouse Fraternity which would be my home for the next couple of months. Farmhouse Fraternity is made up of about 60 blokes, 29 of which live in the house.

I am currently studying Animal and Product Evaluation, Advanced Feedlot Management and Meat Science. These subjects are very relevant to all areas of beef production and I am sure that these studies will help me when I return to Australia. My favorite class is Animal and Product Evaluation. This consists of judging live animals for both carcass potential as well as breeding potential. These animals are then slaughtered and another carcass evaluation is done in the lab. This shows us our live judging ranks to the actual ranking.

Michigan State University has a very impressive agricultural history and its facilities are outstanding. The resources they have allow sheep, hogs and beef to be bred and shown at Fairs as well as having an undercover beef feedlot and an onsite processing plant used for laboratory work. Their wide network allows them to get many valuable speakers who can give real incite into the agricultural industry.

During my time at MSU I have been able to spend some time on weekends visiting Las Vegas, Los Angeles, New York and Washington DC. My weekend in Washington was especially interesting as I stayed with Dr Chris & Dr Jane Parker, Veterinarians who have recently moved from Australia to Washington. Chris is currently the Minister Councillor ( Agriculture ) at the Australian Embassy there. During my time with Chris and Jane I was

shown through the Embassy and was fortunate enough to have lunch with Stephen Edwards, the Regional Manager – North America for Meat & Livestock Australia.

I look forward to the rest of my time at MSU. I have been made feel extremely welcome here and have been very fortunate to meet many great people and learn so much about the beef industry in the US.

**Read more about the MSU scholarship & how to apply on the Angus Youth website**

<http://www.angusyouth.org/index-scholarshipsMSU.htm>