



May 14th 2007

University of Illinois Scholarship, an experience of a lifetime!

Before I left for the U.S many people said to me that my trip was going to be an experience of a lifetime. What an understatement that was. My time at the University of Illinois and the people I met is something I will cherish for life. I've returned home to my South Australian farm with a better knowledge of the U.S Beef industry, as well as an in depth look into Animal Nutrition, Meat and Breed Evaluation for Beef, Sheep and Swine.

While on campus I was very privileged to stay at an Agricultural Fraternity, Alpha Gamma Rho (AGR). This 101 year old, prestige Fraternity housed young men from all over the regional parts of Illinois and surrounding States. Most are majoring in Animal Science but there are also Engineers, and people working towards getting into Medicine. I was able to relate to and learn from my house mates, as they too came from farming backgrounds. Most of their families are Corn, and Soybean growers, but there were student's from families with intense swine farms and cattle feedlots. Some of which I got to visit and work on.

At U of I, I attended five classes, as well as participating on the Meat / Animal Evaluation Team.

The five classes I attended were **ANSI 100** (Introduction to Animal Science) – this class gave a general overview of all sectors of Product Agriculture, covering genetics, behaviour, reproduction, nutrition, in beef, dairy, swine, sheep, poultry, and companion animals. It is a pre-requisite class for those majoring in Animal Science, and also has a lot of pre-vet students who make up a large population of the students at the University of Illinois.

ANSI 213 (Beef and Swine Production) - This course consists of 8 weeks for Beef, and 8 weeks for swine. I learnt about the U.S Beef industry, and the factors that effect production, and profitability. Having little experience myself in the feedlot industry in Australia, I learnt a lot about the U.S feedlot industry and the costs involved in the operation of a feedlot. This currently is a growing concern particularly now that corn prices are so high due to the production of ethanol in the U.S, which is having a huge affect on feedlot's profit margins. This class also covered the use of E.P.D's (Estimated Progeny Difference) as well as USDA Quality grades.

ANSI 211 (Breed Animal Evaluation) – This is a judging class that is taught by Dr Parrett and Dan Shike. In this class I learnt to evaluate beef, sheep and swine on their breeding merits. It involved a lot of training and practice judging breeding animals, ranking them and giving reasons for placements. This has enabled me to be more confident in my evaluation of livestock and has also been good practice for the Livestock Judging Team, as well as the Meat Animal Evaluation team that I was involved in at U of I. I really enjoyed this class and I became relatively accurate at ranking and evaluating breeding livestock. This class in future is going to help me in the selection of breeding stock for my Beef and Sheep enterprise.

ANSI 209 (Market Animal Evaluation) - This class teaches the fundamentals in evaluating and pricing market animals live and in carcass form. This started out as being one of the hardest classes I attended, due to having to convert to inches and pounds, but a class in which I learnt the most. It involved evaluating and pricing live animals on Mondays (whether that is beef, sheep or swine) and then evaluate them on the rail as a carcass on Wednesday. This class taught me to Quality Grade and Yield grade carcasses, as well as making fat depth and Rib eye estimations on live animals.

ANSI 402 (Sheep Production) – I took this class as I have an interest in and farm sheep as well as cattle back home. This class is very basic and covers sheep production in America. I found it particularly interesting comparing the U.S Sheep industry to that of ours back home. Their industry is rather small due to the lack of consumer demand, and revolves around the breeding of sheep for the show industry and club lambs. My lecturer Mr. Cobb often referred to me and asked questions in class on the Australian Sheep industry and I think he learnt just as much as I did.

As well as this I spent a lot of time training for the Meat/Evaluation Team, as well as having the opportunity to attend and compete in judging competitions at Madison Wisconsin, as well as the U.S National Judging Championship, held in Oklahoma city, in which our U of I team came 3rd overall out of some 20 University's and Colleges.

I also had the opportunity to view a lot of U.S cattle. Firstly at the Western National Stock Show and sale, in Denver, as well as spending a week in Springfield, Illinois, where I attended the Illinois Beef Expo and was apart of the U of I Show team, preparing, showing and selling a team of U of I cattle. I also helped organize and was involved in the running and participated in the University of Illinois "Hoof and Horn" show.

In conclusion I want to thank Angus Youth for giving me this fantastic opportunity to go and attend the University of Illinois. As well as a big thank you to Dr. Doug Parrett and Dr. Tom Carr for their support and guidance and Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity for making me feel so welcome and such apart of the house.

This Scholarship was a great way to broaden my knowledge on livestock, something that is going to be invaluable in becoming a success in the beef and livestock industry.

Regards,

Jason Schulz.

Winner of the 2006 National Judging competition Scholarship to the University of Illinois