

Michigan State University Scholarship Report

Receiving the 2006 Michigan State University Scholarship has been a great honour. I have been very lucky to have travelled extensively for seven weeks throughout the summer, from Canada and North West America, down through central US to Texas in the South. Throughout this time I attended various agricultural and beef industry events across the country and visited ranches in nearby locations.

The Phoenix Genetics Beef Breeders Tour was an exceptional week, passing through 6 states from Missouri to Montana and looking at some of the most well know and respected herds in Central and North West America. Travelling with Jim Bruce and 15 Australian producers and resellers was a great opportunity to discuss the cattle we were seeing and learn about how the cattle would fit into their different breeding programs.

The tour included cattle from Conley Angus, Hoover Angus Farm, Mohnen Angus, Penrhos progeny test herd, Lindskov-Thiel Angus and Charolais, Schaff Angus, Ellingson Angus, TNT Simmentals, Gartner-Denowh Angus Ranch (GDAR) and Sitz Angus. A highly anticipated stop was Schaffs Angus, including a look at Density, a partly Australian owned bull. His use in the US so far has been very well received and the calves on the ground we saw were a good indication of this.

Generally the tour group saw quite a number of progeny from highly used bulls and could often compare across multiple herds. Viewing both established and up and coming sires at a couple of Semen Collection Centres was very interesting and seeing bulls in the flesh, compared to the semen catalogue, has certainly given me a much greater perspective of these bulls, especially those who have progeny in Australia. Many of the cow herds here have been very strong in udder structure with some stand out donor cows at Mohnen Angus. The Sitz Angus Sale was an exciting experience and listening to the auctioneer was certainly different in itself.

The Leaders Engaged in Angus Development Conference (LEAD) over the summer was a very well run National Junior Angus Association event. The leadership based workshops aimed at less than 21 year olds is certainly helping to develop confidence within young people in the breed. During this week we also visited Express Ranches and Blackjack Angus in Oklahoma.

Recently I returned from attending the National Angus Conference and Tour in the North West. The position of Angus cattle and Certified Angus Beef in the beef industry and American Angus Association Genetic selection tools were among the topics presented. With over 400 people attending and most states represented, this presented a unique opportunity to compare differences between their climate, landscapes and operation to what we were seeing on the tour. The tour stops included 101, Spring Cove, Bear Mountain, Malson and Thomas Angus Ranches in Idaho and Oregon. I was very pleased to be able to stay at Thomas Angus Ranch for a few days following the tour also.

Brief visits to the Angus Hall of Fame, the American Angus Association, Camp Cooley and Bradley 3 Ranch have also enabled me to meet some other prominent people within the breed.

The semester at Michigan State University (MSU) began in late August and I am studying five subjects:

- **Advanced Feedlot Management:** feeding systems, manure management, health maintenance and cattle marketing, with hosting professor Dave Hawkins.
- **Animal Products and Evaluation:** beef, sheep and swine evaluation of breeding and market stock, judging live classes one week and then their carcasses in the next class.
- **Animal Products:** dairy and meat processing, usually fabricating the carcasses from the Evaluation Class.
- **Endocrinology of Reproduction:** hormones in livestock reproduction
- **Genetic Improvement of Domestic Animals:** molecular, population and quantitative genetics. Giving me some background for my Honours Thesis I will complete when I return home next semester.

The facilities at the university are fantastic and our regular use of the MSU Feedlot, Beef and Dairy Plants and having ready access to products (such as reproductive tracts) for other classes enables lots of hands on practical experience.

So far I have experienced temperatures ranging from 43°C to -4°C, while expecting it to get much colder as the season changes. One substantial difference I have seen across America is the abundance of irrigation and the unrestrained use of water, a resource we value so highly in Australia. Common topics of discussion within the industry here at the moment include the lifting of international beef trade restrictions and regaining market share as well as implementation of electronic identification systems.

Later in my stay I plan to attend the North American International Livestock Expo at Louisville, Kentucky and I will be spending a month in the United Kingdom on the way home, hoping to visit some more cattle properties and working with a beef marketing company.

The scholarship has taught me a great deal so far and I would really like to thank the sponsors Semex and Phoenix Genetics, Angus Australia and the Australian Beef Industry Foundation, for their continued support of such an incredible scholarship program.