

Update From Down Under

by Katie Mack

Time really does go by super fast when you are having a blast. I still can't believe I have been in Australia for over three months and how fast my trip has gone. This trip has been one of a lifetime and it has been an honor to represent the American Shorthorn Association (ASA), Shorthorn breeders and the United States while touring around Australia.

My journey started out with coming home and unpacking from the National Western Stock Show to packing my bags to say good-bye to the cold weather of Minnesota for five months. After a long flight, I arrived at the Sydney International Airport to go through customs and chat with the quarantine department of Australia for a nice visit.

With touring around Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria and staying with over 35 families and meeting so many people, I have been able to take in a lot of Australian culture and day-to-day activities. Some of my activities have included having hot tea on a hot afternoon, attending a Cricket game, water skiing at the dam, traveling on the New England Highway, seeing over 130 ml of rain come in 24 hours, having a road trip to Tenterfield and learning about beef cattle scanning, taking in an afternoon of rugby league, to mustering cattle on a bike in the open range surrounded by mountains. I was also given the opportunity to help out with a swimming carnival, road trip in a semi, attend the picnic horse races, golf with the locals on tar greens and attend a 21st theme birthday party. After being educated on Wagyu cattle at a feedlot, other adventures included biking around the Dubbo Western Plains Zoo, going to an agricultural classroom and seeing the lab farm, eating meat pies, going to my first country cattle show, taking part in the Dubbo Beef Spectacular Show, winning a junior judging contest and of course, calving Shorthorn cows. Expanding beyond beef, I learned to pregnancy check sheep with ultrasound, was educated all about vineyards, attended the 60th anniversary of Yeoval Rugby Union, took part in the Sydney Royal Easter Show, toured the city of Sydney to see the sights, took a domestic flight to Cairns to snorkel over the Great Barrier Reef and to see the rainforest. I also enjoyed shopping through the markets in Bris-

bane, a long road trip to Longreach for a bull sale, learning all about Australian football, seeing Shorthorn cattle and being able to look at numerous other breeds of cattle, learning so much about Australian cattle industry, and finally, having the opportunity to meet so many people.

The landscape of Australia is so vastly different than in the US. I arrived when everything was bright green and now, after the rain has stopped, I have been able to take part in the drought which Australia has been experiencing for the last 10 years. It has been interesting to be able to see cattle which were born, grown up, and calved in the drought. It really gives me a different perspective on breeding easy doing and structurally correct cattle able to walk vast distances to get to water.

Having little or no water really puts pressure on cattle operations, farmers, and the family. While I was in Victoria, I was able to see the White Swan Water Reserve which is currently operating on only 6.5 percent of its total capacity. After seeing the small puddle that is the water supply for Brallarat, a city with the population of 100,000, it really puts water conservation into play and realizing there is just no water available.

Look through cattle herds and seeing the differences and similarities between American and Australian purebred and commercial cattle has been really interesting. Seeing American genetics, such as Byland and Waukaru, here in Australia has also been interesting and being able to see the Australian genetics used in the states, such as Weebollabolla Theodore and Dunbeacon Venture, in person has been remarkable. Australian Shorthorn breeders living in northern Australia do not want hair on their cattle due to the ticks. Cattle having broken white socks on their legs are not wanted because the feedlots reckon they are not pure Shorthorns.

Attending the Sydney Royal Easter Show was also an eye opening experience. Showing cattle is much different



than in America. Only a few breeders use fans over their cattle and the bedding is a mix of lime and sand. There are no tie outs, hay is fed in hay nets, and clipping and fitting cattle is very different than in the states.

The type of cattle they select to win felt banners is similar to what we want - structurally correct, high volume and capacity, well muscled, and well balanced; however, the way reasons are given is much different. I have enjoyed attending cattle shows and listening to the reasons and being able to see and understand Australian cattle selection.

I would like to say thank you to the ASA and the Shorthorn breeders for allowing me the opportunity to come and have this experience as the 2008 ASA Australian Ambassador. In addition, a big thank you to Australian Shorthorn breeders and to everyone in Australia who have made this journey completely amazing and have welcomed me in as family. An enormous thank you to my family as well for their support and doing my chores while I am gone. I am looking forward to sharing my photographs, stories and memories with everyone at the 2008 Junior Nationals in Kansas City.