

My Trip to Australia

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Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover..."

Australia, honestly I don't know where to begin this article because I have so many amazing experiences and stories from my six months in the "Land Down Under". The time I was privileged to spend in Australia, was a part of my life that will never be forgotten. Words cannot describe my expedition, but I will do my best to paint a picture for you of my "once in a lifetime" experience.

My adventure started when I was leaving Minneapolis in February 2014. As I was on my way to the airport I had a million thoughts running through my mind, but one thing that stuck out was the fact that I was leaving the harsh winters of North Dakota, and heading to a place where the average temperature was 75 degrees. I boarded the plane in Minneapolis and flew to Los Angeles, from there it was off to Sydney. I was dreading the 15+ hour flight over the ocean but the free food, beverages, and personal TV actually made the trip rather enjoyable.

I was greeted at the airport by the parents of a young man who actually came over to the states about five years ago who I got to know through the cattle industry. We spent the first few hours sightseeing, and then resting for the next day or two due to the time change. I spent my first night out on the town with their daughter and a few of her friends. Sydney night life is extremely different than anything I had experienced in the states. None the less after a few days in the big city I was ready to get into the country.

I met up with a fellow by the name of Trent Johnstone, who was in charge of coordinating my trip. Trent's stud (farm/ranch name) is located in Lyndhurst, NSW and is called Trojon Shorthorns, his parents call theirs

Ronnelle Park, both of which are very prestigious and well known studs in the Shorthorn industry. I spent the next week with Trent, getting to know his family and a few traditions of the Australian folk. Trent and his father Ross run about 250 Shorthorns along with some commercial cattle. It was here where I got to see and shoot my first Kangaroo; it was an adrenaline rush that I will never forget. Of course for all of them it was nothing because Roos are like deer for people in the states.



After leaving Trent's place I moved around frequently, calling home to Kilkee Shorthorns, Royalla Shorthorns, Nagol Park Shorthorns, and Dunbeacon Poll Shorthorns - each stud was beautiful! I was fortunate to attend a few country shows. This was a big eye opener as hair on the animal is something that basically doesn't exist. Everything is done at a much slower pace and less stressed is involved.

Then it was off to the Sydney Royal Easter show. I arrived at the show with Roger and Niaomi Evans to work for them with their team of Nagol Park Shorthorns. The show itself was much different than I had expected. For example, no tie outs, cattle were bedded with sandy type bedding, many were fed hay in nets, and almost no hair to clip and fit on. Between staying right in the barns with the cattle, meeting so many new people, and really learning the way they run shows over there, I had an absolute



blast. I thoroughly enjoyed the parading (showmanship), because it displayed the passion everyone has for the industry.

One of my next stops down the road was to Spry Shorthorns in Wagga Wagga, NSW. Owned by Gerald and Lynden Spry. They are a well-respected breeder over there and I was fortunate enough to be at their place during their bull sale, which was my first sale while being there. The sale itself was a huge success with the high seller being a bull called "Double Barrel" for \$28,000 going to Tasmania. It was Spry's 50th Anniversary Bull Sale, so I was able to partake in the celebration.

After leaving Spry's I went down to South Australia and attended a music festival with a few mates that I met at the Sydney Royal show - What a blast that was! I didn't know much of the music but the atmosphere of a concert down there is like none other. I was lucky enough to go with a great group of people who made it a one of a kind experience for me.

Over the next few weeks I was able to view some great cattle at studs like Belmore and Comet Shorthorns and see a small part of what Australia is known for, their sheep industry. It's not unusual to see a sheep stud run approximately 10,000 ewes. I assisted in preg., checking, along with putting in embryo's, something I had never seen done before. I quickly found out that sheep and cattle dogs are a necessity for farmers because of the vast ranges they run their stock on, and needless to say these dogs are incredible.

The next stop was Eloora Shorthorns in Cavendish, Victoria. They had an extremely deep set of powerful, attractive females that I felt compared to a lot of Shorthorns here in the states. They had some of the oldest Patent's Ace sons in the country. Ace has the record for the highest selling Shorthorn bull in the



country at \$40,000. These were some very functional, heavy muscled, soggy and easy fleshing cattle that have American genetics in them from Waukaru Shorthorns. He was heavily used (via AI) after he was sold, so it was good to see the first calves were nothing but as good as their sire.

Further down the road I ended up at Futurity Shorthorns in the northern part of NSW, home of Jason and Kylie Catts. Jason was the current President of the Shorthorn Association so it was nice getting to know him and sharing my experiences thus far. During my time at Futurity, they were extremely dry and all of their cows were six hours away on adjustment (rented pasture ground) because there was nothing left for them to survive on at the homestead. Thankfully, I was able to take a day and go see the cows, which ended up being one of my favorite herds I had seen. An experience that I will never forget was when I got to go "Piggin" with Jason for the first time. Chasing wild hogs around with dogs and spotlights in the dead of the night definitely gets the blood pumping. After hunting the way they do, it almost makes hunting things like deer in the states not even worth it, because the rush just can't compare.

After leaving Futurity I made a few more stops at Shorthorn studs such as Southern Cross Shorthorns and The Grove, whose stud is located in Queensland. Then working my way south for the National Shorthorn Show and Sale. The impact this show and sale has on the breed over there is tremendous! People from all over bring their bulls here to sell and they literally sell to all corners of the country. I was blown away by the passion the Shorthorn breeders had for an event. With just about every major stud bringing their best progeny to sell, it made for a very powerful set of bulls in the barn.

After the sale I returned back to South Australia to spend some time at Bayview Shorthorns, Bundaleer Shorthorns, and Southcote Shorthorns. This area is greener and has breathtaking views that overlook the ocean, prairies, gorges, and mountains.

Before heading back north I spent some time at Cowarie Station on the Birdsville track, it is family owned and approximately 1.1 million acres.

Cowarie Station is essentially eight hours from anything that resembled a town. Mail was flown in weekly on their private airstrip and the entire place was run by generators. It takes "days" to do a complete water check at this place, it was a bigger operation then I thought I would ever encounter. The cattle on a station are truly impressive. If you think you've seen rugged, tuff cattle before think again. While I was at the station, they were encountering one of the worst droughts in many years. With minimal grass, these cows needed willpower if they were going to survive. Water troughs were on average 10 kilometers apart, with a day's worth a feed at least that far as well. On top of "not ideal" conditions, the cows had to be on the watch for Dingo's. Every single Ute (their version of a pickup) always had a loaded gun handy in case one was spotted while out working. Dingo's are not large but can do an immense amount of damage. I was able to shoot a few myself. I guess you could say I got to experience the real out back while I was at Cowarie. Some would wonder how people can live in the middle of nowhere, but after spending some time there, it is very easy to see how one can adapt to such a lifestyle.

run their cattle operations. During my six months, I saw just two corn fields, meaning corn is non-existent in their diets. They are able to find alternative nutrients, while still keeping the cattle in good condition, despite the fact their weather conditions are usually not stable.

I found it very intriguing how often I found some American or Canadian genetics in the cattle herds. They would also mate some their genetics with ours to see how the progeny was exceling within their studs. Shorthorn cattle have a very large impact on their beef industry, not only as cows but in the meat locker as well. Shorthorn beef is very popular and marketed in extremely influential ways.

My time down under at the different studs, allowed me to acquire new marketing, breeding and feeding techniques to get the most out of your herd while being as conservative as possible. Especially during times of severe drought that many were enduring while I was over there. The typical Shorthorn breeder is concerned with doing the best they can to meet the demands of the market and making sure their cattle excel when selling either at the locker or to another stud for genetic enhancements.

The breeders here opened my eyes as to what the beef industry needs to thrive to be. I truly believe American breeders and producers could learn a great deal and essentially better their practices from Australians, who have mastered the ways of feeding and producing cattle that look the part without being fed out of a bunk their entire life.

I would like to say thank you to the ASJA and the Shorthorn breeders for allowing me this tremendous opportunity. I will never forget these six months, along with the friendships I have made and the families who hosted

me and made me feel at home. For all of you juniors who are looking for a once in a lifetime experience, I encourage you to apply to be an ASA

Australian Ambassador – It's one you will not regret!



As my trip was coming to an end with over 30 places called home across five states, I got to spend a little time with my parents who flew over to see me. We spent time up in Cairns getting a look at the great barrier reef, visited some studs that I had previously been to, and even got to walk across the Sydney Harbor bridge. It was really great to show them some of the places I had been and was able to call home.

My journey to Australia opened my eyes to how differently other countries

