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BATS VISIT TOCAL COLLEGE

At the end of 2011, a small group of grey headed flying foxes made their home along the creek near Tocal Homestead.

They roosted in the trees during the day and flew off at night to find gum blossoms or fruit to eat.

Over the summer, more and more of them arrived until at least 200,000 bats were residents at Tocal.

This caused a bit of a stir in the area with some people wanting them to go while others felt it was great to see such a large group of bats from an endangered species finding a home for a while at Tocal.

Some bat experts from Sydney University came to study them and gave talks to visitors at the Field Days.

It is interesting that this is possibly the largest gathering of bats ever seen by non indigenous Australians.

Although they are known as fruit bats, they prefer to eat nectar from gum blossoms which are flowering around the Hunter during summer and autumn.

They move up and down the east coast to find food depending on the season and which areas have flowering trees.

It is only when gum blossoms are scarce that bats start to eat fruit and cause problems for orchardists.

Recently the bats left. No-one knows where they went or when they’ll be back. We may see them next summer if the season is right for them.

Or we may not see this big a colony ever again in Australia as bat habitat continues to decline.
**FIELD DAYS**

Tocal students were involved in helping to run the very successful Tocal Field Days over 3 days in May. It was a great event with around 26,000 people visiting the college to see demonstrations on various aspects of agriculture. Many ex-students were also involved as exhibitors and some did demonstrations to the public on horse training, working dogs and cattle handling.

Students were employed to assist with the operation of the event which has been running at Tocal for 29 years. During this time it has expanded from a one day educational activity for small farmers to a major three day event for farmers, hobby farmers and the general public. It is one of the most successful field days in Australia and exhibitors and visitors look forward to attending every year.

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**STUDENT SUCCESSES**

**TOCAL STUDENTS TO RODEO IN AMERICA**

Congratulations to Luke Moore and Bryce Magnay who have been selected in the Australian High School Rodeo team to compete in Rock Springs, Wyoming in July.

This is the American National High School Finals and they will be part of the largest rodeo in the world. Good luck to Luke and Bryce and safe travels.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING STUDENTS**

Mel Adams was a member of the Australian Meat Judging team that competed at the International Meat Judging Competition in America in January.

Tyaan Tuckey and Penelope Swatton received BBM Ltd Travel Awards and are currently on a study tour to the UK.

Giles Ditchfield who received an RAS Youth Scholarship valued at $5000 to assist with costs of his course and future study.

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**TOCAL SCHOOLS STEER CHALLENGE**

The Tocal Schools Steer Challenge is on in 2012. A number of local high schools around the Hunter and Central Coast have collected their Tocal steers to prepare them for the competition.

The schools will feed and look after the Steers, train them to lead and learn about the beef industry during this time.

In August, students will bring them back to Tocal for the judging day. Last year it was won by Cessnock High School but this year the competition will be intense and all of the schools have a chance of winning.

Major sponsors of the Steer Challenge are Coal & Allied through their Community Development Fund. They are providing funding for each school to cover the costs of feeding and preparing the steers.

Steve Sneddon from Coal & Allied said he is very pleased to support this activity as it assists school students to learn about the importance of agriculture and in particular the production of quality beef for the Australian consumer.
COWS CREATE CAREERS

Mt View High School in the Hunter Valley is one of the local schools involved in Cows Create Careers (CCC). The program provides dairy calves to schools for students to look after for a few weeks. They also learn about animal care and the dairy industry.

Agricultural teachers from Mt View, Craig and Samantha Jarrett explain that there is at least one horse husbandry student from their school at Tocal this year and several others interested in coming next year. They also have a number interested in a farming career.

Craig says the CCC’s program is great, they have over 35 students in the program that is structured so that it completes many curriculum requirements.

He also speaks highly of the Tocal Schools Steer Challenge and the way it rolls on from CCC.

He said it makes for a busy term 2 but it covers so much of their curriculum in a fun and interactive way.

TOCAL ADDS MORE PRACTICAL TRAINING

Tocal is well known for its hands-on practical training in farm skills so that graduates are able to do most jobs on farms.

Over the last few years, Tocal has increased this practical training even more so that new students get more individual attention, particularly on tractors, quads, motor bikes and horse riding.

It is essential that those wanting to work in agriculture have the necessary skills and Tocal practical training aims to give them the confidence and head start in the workplace.

Following initial training, students gain a great number of opportunities to gain practical experience.

They get to muster cattle, ride quads, do dairy work and all the other jobs required to run the college farms.

Tocal students love the practical work and that is why they come to Tocal instead of other training providers.

With 1400 beef cattle, 120 stock horses, 180,000 chickens, 300 dairy cattle and 350 sheep, there is plenty of practical work to be done.

TIFFANIE LITTLEJOHN

Tiffanie completed the Certificate III in Horse Breeding in 2010 and then Certificate IV and Diploma in 2011. This is quite an achievement given that she suffers from dyslexia and has always found schoolwork challenging.

Tiffanie did very well at Tocal. She loved the practical work and even found doing theory was much easier than school.

Since completing Tocal, she has set up her own horse breaking and training business at Dooralong.

During the recent Tocal Field Days, Tiffanie gave demonstrations on natural horsemanship which were very popular.

Hundreds of people stopped to see her demonstrate her horse training skills and to ask questions about how she trains horses.
‘J’ JOB PROSPECTS

Jackaroo/Jillaroo

Jackaroos and Jillaroos are often classed as 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th year depending on their experience and are trainees, based on beef or sheep properties. They work with managers, overseers or stationhands and perform tasks such as mustering, working sheep or cattle in the yards, shearing, fencing and other tasks.

Journalist

Regional publications and country newspapers usually hire journalists with sound knowledge of agricultural practices and issues. Some Tocal graduates work in this field, including Neil Lyon, Chief Editor with Australian Farm Magazine.

Tocal Brochure Out Now!

PAST STUDENT - MEL SHEPHARD

“Hi Bill,

I have been at Llanver now for about 13 months and I still love my job. We are increasing our stock numbers on both my commercial first cross ewe mobs and my border leister stud.

We are getting ready to start sowing again we will have a total of 2800ha of crop in this year as we have just brought another property so we are putting more crop in than last year.

We are getting ready to harvest 80ha of cotton and 4ha of pigeon peas.

Since my last email I have achieved a lot of different things. I can now drive trucks from semi’s to tip trucks. I have picked up a number of animal health issues in the sheep and the training I received at Tocal helped me identify these.

Sincerely,
Mel Shephard.”

PAST STUDENT - TALEAH MOULT

“Hi Bill,

I am a previous student from 2003 who completed Certificate III in Horse Breeding. I also purchased my breaker at the completion of the course. I’m guessing you guys would get feedback from students.

Just a quick email to say ‘Hi’ and tell you that Tocal Brunette and I competed at the Nullarbor Muster which is located in the desert of Western Australia, 300km from the South Australian border from the weekend 13-15th of April 2012.

It’s been 10 years since I began at Tocal Agricultural college and broke in my first horse ‘Tocal Brunette’ who is now almost 12 - we had a small break from each other the last few years but she (finally) has joined me in Kalgoorlie Western Australia where I am currently stationed as a Police Officer on a large gold mining town 600km from Perth.

Brunette and I are competing most weekends either barrel racing or camp drafting and she’s winning a bit, word has spread around and people recognise the quality of stock that’s coming from the college and making it to Western Australia.

I would like to say a massive thank you for the training and support you provided whilst at the college and helping me find my feet when it came to training - this includes my occupation change as I completed a job placement at the NSW Mounted Police while completing my certificate at the College.

Regards,
A very grateful past student and purchaser.
Taleah Moul.”