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TOCAL SCHOOLS STEER CHALLENGE

The Tocal Schools Steer Challenge was a great success in 2013. With increasing participation from Hunter and Central Coast high schools, the competition gets bigger every year.

The schools borrow one or two steers from Tocal College; they feed and look after them, train them to lead and learn about the beef industry during the time they have the steers.

In August, students bring them back to Tocal for the judging day. Last year the Tocal Schools Steer Challenge was won by Cessnock High School but this year the competition was fierce and a number of schools have a chance of winning with the final points score to be announced in October.

The major sponsor of the Steer Challenge is Coal & Allied through its Community Development Fund. It provides funding for each school to cover the costs of feeding and preparing the steers.

A Coal & Allied representative said she was very pleased to support this activity as it assisted school students in learning about the importance of agriculture and in particular the production of quality beef for Australian consumers.

Above: Students from local High Schools helped to prepare the steers before they went out to the schools.
The Big Brother Movement (BBM) Youth Support provides 2 travel awards for Tocal students each year valued at $8000 each.

These awards allow students to cover the cost of travelling to the United Kingdom to gain further experience in agriculture or horse breeding.

Sisters Grace and Laura Cheal from Inverell won this year’s awards that have given them the opportunity to work on horse properties in England and Wales. All their costs are being covered by BBM Youth Support.

Laura recently wrote to us about her experience so far:

“Apologies for the long wait between news! Can’t believe I’ve been away for nearly six months - time has flown... I’m missing you all, and hoping you are keeping well.

Here in Wales the sun is shining and great things are happening. I am still at Dolbadarn Film Horses, living in the old “Fawlty Towers” hotel, working with horses every day and working in the bar in the evenings.

A general day for me starts at nine, when Emelyne, the French girl I’m training with, and I muck out the stables and groom the seven stallions.

After a quick break for breakfast, we get into lunging the young stallions and riding some of the others, usually in the little sand school above the stables.

Sometimes we will have a lesson, sometimes we work them by ourselves, and occasionally we ride out through the village and across the mountains.

I’ve recently been riding a very tall young Spanish/Portuguese/Friesian, which has been a big challenge, but a great learning experience too. He was a stallion, and is in the process of recuperating at the moment. He’ll go out with the geldings sometime next week.

This area is breathtakingly beautiful, especially up in the foothills of Mount Snowdon. Up there it’s open and wild; only crumbling rock walls, sheep, sky and water.

The village is built on the shores of Padarn Lake and woods and flats surround it. Some of my favourite spots are a waterfall hidden in the hills just above the village, and the Dolbadarn Castle, which is a grey stone tower presiding over the narrow spit of land between Padarn Lake and Lake Peris.

There are also mines and massive dumps of rock littered through the hills. The mountain opposite the village is half carved out and covered with huge piles of shale - the remains of one of the biggest slate quarries in the world.

I’ve missed the Aussie sun. All the locals say the weather here in the last four years has been badly out of whack. Last year there was only two weeks of summer (in March), then huge floods through the village in December, snow this April, summer not starting till now, and in general way more rain (is that possible!?)... Climate change, they say!

The worst thing is that the rain has made it difficult to work the horses every day... Frustrating! But when a gorgeous sunny, warm day like today comes up, I really appreciate it. We Aussies don’t realise how lucky we are!

I’ve also been working in the Dolbadarn bar in the evenings for a bit of an income (it might be hard to picture me working in a bar, but odder things have happened...). I’ve been able to get to know some of the locals... and hear some good stories.

P.S. Very excited for next week, when Grace gets time off. She’s coming to spend some time here! Looking forward to catching up, swapping stories and making plans. Woohoo!”

* BBM Youth Support also provides $40,000 in student scholarships each year.
A group of 13 Tocal students attended the Australian Intercollegiate Meat Judging competition in Wagga Wagga during the July school holidays.

Four of these students competed while the others were official observers to learn the skills they need to compete next year.

The competition involved judging various cuts of meat from a range of animals. There was a strong contingent from universities around Australia and overseas.

These included universities from America, Japan, Korea and Pakistan as well as a number from around Australia.

Tocal students were very successful against the strong competition with the team beating a number of the university teams, to come 8th overall.

Tocal graduate, Tyaan Tuckey, was placed 6th which gained her a chance of selection in the Australian team which will compete in the United States early in 2014.

Tyaan said that she had worked on large cattle stations in the Northern Territory which got her interested in the production side of the industry.

‘When I studied at Tocal, I learnt more about the processing of meat and the importance of tenderness and quality,’ she said. ‘This is the side of the industry that I would like to have a career in. It is very important that consumers are able to rely on consistent quality in the food they buy at the supermarket.’
TOCAL’S PART TIME TRAINEESHIP PROGRAM

Some Tocal students prefer to do a part time course while working as trainees on a farm. This allows them to earn an income, learn on the job and come to the college for a number of 5 day blocks during the year to gain further training.

Trainees can gain the same qualifications as full time students while being employed as a farmhand. All they have to do is find a job as trainees on a farm, have their employer sign them up with an Apprenticeship Centre and then enrol at Tocal.

Tocal has trainees working on farms from around NSW. Most farms have dairying or beef cattle but they also learn about pastures and machinery, fencing and farm safety as well as many other areas.

This means graduates have the skills to work in a wide range of agricultural enterprises around Australia.

TOCAL FACEBOOK

Have you seen Tocal’s Facebook page? Like the page to see what Tocal students are up to each week on the college farms. We aim to put photos and info up regularly so current students and others can be kept up to date with what’s happening.

There are also some short videos of Tocal students on YouTube. Search for 'Tocal' and you will find some interesting information.

Don’t forget to check our website www.tocal.nsw.edu.au
James Gooch

James has his own Stock and Station and Real Estate Agency in Gloucester. When he completed his course at Tocal, James worked at a feedlot near Dubbo. Then he enrolled in a Stock and Station Agents course and started working for Jones Berry at Maitland and Dungog saleyards. He transferred to Dwyer Young in Gloucester and after a few years bought the business and set up Gooch Agencies. James and his staff sell cattle at Maitland, Gloucester and Nabiac saleyards as well as real estate around the Gloucester area.

Tiffanie Littlejohn

After Tiffanie completed the Certificate III in Horse Breeding, she decided to set up her own business training horses. Known as ‘The Horse Translater’, Tiffanie breaks in and trains horses, re-educates those that have behavioural issues and runs workshops for people who work with horses. She has managed to turn something she loves doing into a successful business. Considering she is dyslexic and didn’t find school work easy, she excelled at Tocal and is at the start of a very exciting career.
The Certificate III in Agriculture students completed a Horse Industry case study earlier this year. This case study is an overview of the horse industry and suitability of breeds for these industries. It also covers daily horse care, nutrition, horse therapies and work health and safety requirements.

We were fortunate enough to visit Ryans at Newcastle Equestrian Centre where Heath Ryan gave a detailed explanation of horse gaits and the corresponding hoof falls of each movement.

Participant James Dowd (pictured right) is doing a flying change on foot under the instruction of Heath while other Certificate III students watched on.

Certificate III in Agriculture students were given a demonstration and talk by Tony Jones, a horse chiropractor, during the Horse Industry case study.

Tony went over several of the College horses to check for soreness and worked on any problems that he found. The Certificate III Agriculture students were able to watch and ask relevant questions.
A-Z OF JOB PROSPECTS
ON THE LAND

“A” Job Prospects

Artificial Breeding Technician
Travels the countryside giving advice on, and aiding in, the artificial breeding of cattle.

Apprentice Dairyman
Trains in managing pastures, milking cows and feeding calves.

“B” Job Prospects

Beef Stud Manager
Manages the day to day operation of a beef cattle stud including breeding programs, showing of cattle and stud cattle sales.

Beekeeper
Manages a number of hives, transports them to areas of flowering plants, robs the hives and collects the honey for sale.

Staff Member - Zona Porter

Zona has been at Tocal for as long as anyone can remember. Her responsibilities include the maintenance of the records for full time students and sending out reports to them and their fee payers.

She is also the First Aid officer who helps students when they are sick or injured, treating minor injuries and making appointments with a doctor when necessary. Zona is also available when students just want someone to talk to.

Her efforts are invaluable in ensuring that students have a great experience at Tocal. Zona has been involved in running team building activities for staff and students for many years. This is a great program which involves camping on the college property, learning bush skills and how to work effectively in teams.

Her dedication to students is one of the main reasons they all have such a great time at the college. Many of them keep in touch with her long after they leave and often bring their families back to meet her years later.