The First Tocal Schools Steer Challenge

Tim Eyes

Past Student - Donna Fraser

Email from Ex-Student Laura Welling

Tocal Stockhorse Sale

Machinery Skills Training

Strong Demand for Tocal Graduates

Career Spotlight 'I'

Photo courtesy of Cessnock Advertiser.

THE FIRST TOCAL SCHOOLS STEER CHALLENGE

Tocal College has set up a competition for local schools to encourage students to learn about caring for and showing cattle. Eight local high schools were lent one or two steers and provided with feed and training on how to look after them and prepare them for the college competition—held in August 2011.

During the program, teachers of agriculture and their students fed the steers and trained them to lead in the show ring. They also learnt about the beef industry including animal husbandry and welfare.

Prizes were awarded for the school and individual students in a number of different categories including “best growth rates”, “steer presentation”, “parading” and “judging”.

According to Tocal’s Beef Cattle Lecturer, Bruce West, the Schools Steer Challenge is based on a similar program which has been run at the University of Western Sydney in the past.

Mr West explained;

“The schools involved came from the Central Coast, Cessnock, Maitland and Lochinvar. The participating schools had a great time preparing the steers and acquiring new skills.

The teachers also said they learnt many skills that they can apply to the main competition in August when the schools will return to Tocal with their steers to showcase what they have achieved. I am most impressed with the enthusiasm shown by local students and I am sure they will gain a lot from being involved in our first Tocal Steers Challenge,“’

When the competition was over, the steers were sold and the schools shared in the proceeds of the sale. Feed costs were sponsored by Castlereagh Feeds. The program was so successful; it will be run again next year with a greater number of schools.
**TIM EYES**

Tim was dux of the Certificate III in Agriculture in 2009. He was the first Tocal student selected for a BBM (Big Brother Movement) travel award to the UK. This award paid for his overseas trip to learn about beef production and agriculture in England, Scotland and Wales.

He returned from this trip recently and came back to Tocal to speak to students about it. He visited London and Paris, worked on cattle and sheep studs, went to a number of country shows around the UK and spent time on an large Artificial Breeding Centre in Wales which has some of the best bulls in the world.

Tim was fortunate to have the opportunity to meet some of the UK’s top beef producers and see the amazing breeds of sheep and cattle that are so different to those in Australia. He showed students photos of Galloways and British Blue Cattle, as well as Swelldale Sheep. All these look very strange compared to the livestock at Tocal.

‘The overseas trip was a wonderful opportunity for me and I will always be grateful to Tocal and BBM Ltd for giving me the chance to travel and learn so much. I have decided to set up my own Limousin Stud and have arranged to import semen from the people I worked for in England,’ he said.

Tim Eyes showing cattle.

**PAST STUDENT DONNA FRASER**


She worked in the dairy industry at Cowra for 5 years, before diversifying into the pig industry, first at Grenfell and then starting work with Westmill Piggery, a large intensive piggery near Young. Donna has been with Westmill for 5 years and loves her work.

Donna now manages all the 9 farrowing sheds, and is responsible for animal health, welfare, nutrition, care and management of all sows and piglets, and record keeping.

The piggery has over 1000 breeding sows and produces 400-500 pigs per week, or 24000 pigs a year for the Australian market. Modern piggeries are high tech with the heating, feeding and watering systems completely automated.

Donna is an important member of the management team which consists of 10 staff. She has developed many new skills and recently designed a piglet box for use when piglets are born cold and weak. This box has saved the lives of countless piglets.

A graduation ceremony was held in Young recently and the Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson presented awards to Donna and other staff who had gained the Diploma in Agriculture through skills recognition.

Donna received credit for all the skills she has gained on the job since leaving Tocal. As a result, she achieved a Diploma without having to do any study or further training.
EMAIL FROM EX-STUDENT LAURA WELLING

“Hi, I was at Tocal in 2004 as a mature age student. Yes a little older than your average student. I whizzed through it but did need to get working after the Certificate to earn money but I would have liked to have stayed on to complete the Diploma.

To be honest I’m not your typical agriculture/beef/wheat/sheep kind of person. I’m 100% dairy. Dairy farming, dairy shows, dairy cows, genetics, dairy sciences and technologies.

I’ve been working in the Australian and North American dairy industry’s since leaving Tocal.

I’ve been travelling and dairying around Canada the past few years. I’m also doing a degree through Charles Sturt University by distance education. I’ve been lucky enough to work with world class dairy animals on some state-of-the-art dairy farms. Not to mention attending cow shows and sales.

I’m so thankful for Tocal for the training I received all those years ago. But even more so the friends I made... I’m still very close to Lizzy Bennett, Bianca Stanford and Rachael O’Keefe (another dairy buff working in Victoria!). The connections and the friendship are fantastic!

My little brother Stephen went to Tocal after me and now he is working for the Aussie government and getting married next year to Lisa Anderson, another Tocal student... All of this would NEVER have come about if Tocal didn’t sandwich us all together... My parents are so happy with the way my brother turned out, and that’s thanks to the direction from Tocal staff.

Long before I studied at Tocal I was one of two students from my high school Ag class to be picked for a free visit to Tocal. I remember we went camping out in the back paddocks of the college, a GREAT program and I hope you still run things like that for prospective students. I still look back and laugh at the way things all fell into place.

I wish I could say I went on to University and am now a millionaire with a degree but its all been very slow because I physically cannot stay put anywhere long enough to finish it.

The dairy world is so exciting in North America, so I’ve got to be here in all the action!

I sent a recent photo of me at Rocky Mountain Holsteins; Mountain High 2011 Sale in Cochrane Alberta. It’s like the “Mercedes Benz” of the elite cow world.

Kindest regards, Laura.”

TOCAL STOCKHORSE SALE

The third Tocal Australian Stock Horse Sale will be held at the college on November 6, 2011.

The 2008-2009 Tocal Stockhorse Sales were very successful. There weren’t enough horses available to run a Stockhorse Sale in 2010. However, with good results in the Tocal breeding program and a lot of hard work by staff and students who have trained and prepared the sale horses, Tocal has great offerings for the 2011 sale.

This year there will be 24 Tocal horses bred and trained on Tocal and about 16 horses from other vendors.

“We take great care to ensure the horses we sell are quality animals both in terms of breeding, temperament and ability,” College Principal, Dr Cameron Archer said. “This way we know that those who buy a Tocal bred Stock Horse will be more than happy with their purchase. We have had great feedback about the quality of the horses that were sold at our previous sales,” he said.

A catalogue for the sale will be available shortly and the details of each horse will be recorded in this. A parade of the horses, ridden by Tocal students and staff will be held at 9am on the day of the sale with the sale commencing at 1pm.
I JOB PROSPECTS

Instructor
Trains students in practical skills and agricultural theory. Usually employed at an Agricultural or TAFE College.

Irrigation Farmer
A person who grows irrigated crops and/or pastures such as cotton, sorghum, wheat, oats, and lucerne. Many areas use flood or spray system irrigation.

STRENGTH DEMAND FOR TOCAL GRADUATES

Tocal College gets numerous calls from employers looking to recruit keen young people for their farms and businesses. Some of the job opportunities available at the moment include:

- Livestock buyer for a large meat processing company
- Pen riders & trainee managers for a number of NSW feedlots
- Station Hand for a large Wagyu Stud near Mendooran in central west NSW. Involves AI and ET programs for 1500 breeders, other cattle work & farm operations
- Trainee manager for large rural produce stores in the Hunter Valley
- Station hands for North Australian Pastoral Company & Kidman properties in QLD & NT
- Tractor operators and farm hands for large cropping properties at Bourke & Walgett.
- Horse person for large Thoroughbred Studs at Scone & Denman
- Station Hand on a cattle property at Narrabri that also has a Stockhorse Stud

Students at Tocal are trained in the safe operation and maintenance of farm machinery. Whether you work on a cropping or livestock property you will still need to use quad bikes and tractors, hand tools and chainsaws at times. Safe use of these is most important so all students are trained to work with this machinery.

Having good livestock skills as well as being able to use machinery and equipment makes Tocal graduates highly employable. Hunter Institute of TAFE assist college staff by providing training in small engines, hand tools and welding. They have excellent trainers and all the gear to provide very good experience for students.

Tocal has worked closely with local TAFE colleges in the Hunter for many years and this benefits our students as they are also enrolled with TAFE.

Tocal Brochure Out Now!