

Jennifer Van Wyk & Gretal Heywood – International Livestock Congress, Canada in 2009

From the 6th of July through to the 22nd of July 2009, Jennifer Van Wyk and myself Gretal Heywood explored the farming practices of Alberta, Canada. The main occasion for our visit was for the International Livestock Congress, this year titled Beef 2009-Firing up Science and Innovation. The congress was held in Calgary at the Calgary Stampede Park, on the 8th day of the ten-day Calgary Stampede event.

Arriving a few days prior to the congress allowed us to explore the Stampede which is an unbelievable experience with agricultural barns, animal displays, cutting horse competitions, dog trials, and of course the rodeo with all the major events including the PBR bull ride and chuck wagon races to follow.

The rodeo was an excellent display of great riders and fantastic stock and the chuck wagon races are amazing, comprising 4 thoroughbred race horses to a wagon and 6 wagons in one race. At the end of each action packed day a grand show with a brilliant display of fireworks concludes while continuing the amazing atmosphere of the Stampede.

The International Livestock Congress is held every year and is hosted by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Calgary Stampede and the International Stockmen's Education Foundation. International agricultural students are offered scholarships to attend the congress and allow the opportunity to listen to reputable speakers and network with over 450 industry leaders.

This year eight speakers spoke on the following topics; Canalising global recession, Population demographics and the livestock industry, Mega trends of agriculture in the new economic reality, Feed grain complex, supporting the beef industry through science and innovation, Sparking global Innovation, Science and innovation: the future of human health and personalising foods and Innovations in Canadian trade advocacy.

The congress was a fantastic opportunity for networking as well as gaining knowledge on the agricultural sector at an international level. We were both lucky enough to be gain sponsorship from the Canadian cattleman's association which hopefully is a continuing program for future CSU students.

The second week of our trip listed farm stays in a town called Thorhild, Edmonton, four and half hours north of Calgary. We attended Quarter horse stud and training facilities, buffalo and bison farming and were taken on a private tour by the agricultural officer of the county. Our trips to the farm were an amazing opportunity to compare farming practices back here in Australia. While our stay we were lucky enough to blow up a beaver dam with dynamite (3 sticks at that), the beavers strategically build the dams and its banks up the water thus flooding adjacent farmers. It was interesting to see the difference in cropping quality as canola especially had low yields.

During this week we also attended the University of Alberta. We met some amazing people and were interesting to see what their facilities were like. As university had finished for the

summer holidays, there were summer holiday programs taking place, these programs are offered to international students in the fields of Animal, Agricultural and veterinary sciences.

Overall it was an amazing experience that opened our eyes to opportunities and the way of life for people on the other side of the world. We would recommend this experience to everyone.