

New Zealand Journal from Ag in a Global Context (AGBE 315)

From Kelsey Haughian

Day 1: Thursday, May 8, 2014:

Arrived in Auckland at about 7am. Boarded a charter bus that took us into the city and towards our hotel. Our driver gave us a lovely tour of a bit of the city and had great commentary for us.

We had some time to freshen up in our rooms after many hours on flights and in airports in the last 24 hours. We were then given Free Time until about 3pm. A bunch of us met up and walked around streets near our hotel (finding ATM's to exchange money were the priority!). After which, we made our way to a ferry that takes one to an island called Davenport (a naval base with unused missiles). We walked and toured around for a couple hours.

That afternoon we had our first speaker, Matthew Ross from Cargill New Zealand. He mostly enlightened us on the growing dairy industry, isolated location disadvantage to grain fed cattle; with their use of cotton and canola for supplementation and an increasing use of confined areas.

The evening was once again open for Free Time. We split into multiple groups to find dinner and enjoy some of the local culture. Many of us were in bed before 7pm due to the long hours of traveling!

Day 2: Friday, May 9, 2014:

We were back on the bus at 7:30am – some forgot to set alarms upon falling asleep so early from the jet leg and almost missed the bus! We drove through more of Auckland (1.5 million people!).

Our first stop of the day was to AgResearch; a research center that was government funded (\$161 million in annual revenue) meant to benefit the NZ economy. After a tour of the facility (we saw Genetically Modified cattle and sheep!), we heard from speakers about grass and dairy, as well from their general manager and human nutritionist. AgResearch provided us a great lunch with some tasty NZ foods.

The afternoon was spent driving to Rotorua. It was a gorgeous drive through diverse land – farm ground, tropical looking forest, and ended in a caldera of a volcano. We saw lots of dairy cows and dairy steers (fattening on grass), along with Red Deer farms.

Our stop for the night was at a Maori village for tourists. Here we were enlightened about the native culture to New Zealand. We learned the words and actions to a song that we later performed in front of about 100 people. We had a traditional Maori dinner with welcome ceremony included. We spent the night in Maori sleeping huts.

Day 3: Saturday, May 10, 2014:

The morning's breakfast was provided by the Maori – it was very fruitful! We then spent the day in Rotorua with a Free Day. An information center just a few blocks from the hotel was where the adventure began.

We broke up into groups that wanted to do similar things for the day. Some went to Hobbit Town, to horse races, private boat fishing, white water rafting, etc. It was a great day for everyone to get to know each other a little better and enjoy the “touristy” attractions in Rotorua.

Day 4: Sunday, May 11, 2014:

Boarded the bus early for another day of travel. We followed the Pacific Ocean for quite some time before ending in New Plymouth mid-afternoon. More Free Time to do as we pleased. Some people needed to do laundry, get caught up on rest, while others kept touring. We had a beautiful walk along a wooden path near the ocean, followed by a tour through a local museum, and ended with the sun setting over the ocean during our walk back to the hotel.

Day 5: Monday, May 12, 2014:

More bus time as we drove through the beautiful countryside – lots of green grass and dairy cows. The houses were mostly one level and quite small. The pastures are small paddocks with high stocking rates for intensive grazing. It was nice to be out of the city and see rural NZ.

We arrived at Fonterra (Dairy for Life) for a tour. Fonterra is a milk co-operative that basically controls about 95% of the milk market in NZ. They operate on a very large scale – with about 800 people employed. Fonterra is very efficient in production – cheeses, powders, whey, etc. were made/utilized. Asia is one of their main markets. About 10,500 farmers invest in the Co-op.

The afternoon was more driving to Palmerston North to visit Massey University. Upon arriving at the Uni, we heard from speakers about the school. There are 3 campuses in NZ with over 33,000 students. We toured the Health & Human Development Department as well as saw their campus brewery. Dinner was their beer and sausages.

Day 6: Tuesday, May 13, 2014:

We were up early to hear from a last minute Massey Uni speaker who was in meetings the day before, but wanted to talk with us. Professor Hammich grew up in NZ, but spent considerable time in the US earning his PhD at Harvard. He offered loads of insight into New Zealand’s economy - 95% of New Zealand’s production is exported making New Zealand seem as if it is a developing country!

Following the visit with Hammich, we traveled to Wellington (143km!) where we were able to take in the view from a site where Lord of the Rings was filmed and we toured around the city on the bus a bit before getting ready for more speakers.

We were gathered in a conference room to listen to a variety of specialists on Ministry of Primary Industries. The purpose of MPI is to invest in its farmers and growers and develop the industry via its Sustainable Farming Fund and Irrigation Funds. They presented to us on the Dairy, Beef/Sheep Industries and their Commodity Levies Act.

Day 7: Wednesday, May 14, 2014:

We walked to visit with Beef and Lamb of New Zealand. As a private champion company by the farmer and for the farmer, they serve as a check off program funded by the levies. They work closely with the United States National Cattlemens Beef Association (NCBA) and American Sheep Institute (ASI). They offer the extension aspect much like our programs here in the US, where they reach out to farmers and develop their skills with respect to the various niche markets.

Our time on the North Island was coming to a close. We loaded on a very large ferry to the South Island. The ferry could hold 60 rail cars, 125 cars, and 12 semis! The waters were rough that day due to the wind, so the ride was long for some.

We arrived in Picton, where we grabbed some dinner before loading on a new bus that took us on a winding drive through the mountains to Nelson to spend the night.

Day 8: Thursday, May 15, 2014:

On the bus to visit The Giesen Winery – only got a little bit lost getting there! Wine is a large niche marketed industry that is concentrated in the Canterbury region and a few other regions around New Zealand. It was an interesting experience where we had the opportunity to learn about an industry none of us were well versed in. Learning about the leaf colors and the affect of soil nutrients on the grape's taste and how they affect the wine's flavor.

Woodbank Angus was our next stop. It was probably one of the most appreciated tours amongst students. Absolutely beautiful place with snow capped mountains that transitioned to the ocean and open grass fields. They operate a 4,500 acre farm and ranch with 4,500 sheep and 900 angus cattle. They run a registered Angus herd, of which they do a fall and spring bull sale. It was a great tour.

We loaded back on the bus to head towards Kaikoura. We were following along the ocean and came upon a seal nursery, so had to stop and see them frolicking in the water. Upon arriving at the hotel, we split up again to find dinner.

Day 9: Friday, May 16, 2014:

We were up and loaded before the sunrise, so got to see it rise over the ocean as we headed towards Christchurch.

In the early afternoon we visited MaltEurope near Lincoln. It was a huge realization to us that they are the only breeding facility of the whole company because many of us know that they send their wheat to MSU for trial runs (the way our different seasons fall, it works out perfectly time wise).

Lincoln University was next on the list of stops. We heard from professors that were ecology/land specialists. We were also placed in a cheese tasting experiment that was very interactive and we learned about the preparation and aging process. We finished with a tour of the Uni's dairy.

Arrived in Christchurch that evening. We had a great night socializing with one another as it was our last night in NZ.

Day 10: Saturday, May 17, 2014:

Christchurch brought us on the final day of the trip. I was up early to get to the airport to catch a plane to Australia for the summer to fulfill an internship. The rest of the crew wandered around the city for a bit. Three years ago it been devastated by an earthquake, so barge containers were utilized for shops where streets were torn apart.

This was a great trip that I will never forget. The knowledge I gained and the experience I had was once in a lifetime. I hope MSU can keep providing such a wonderful opportunity for students to apply their studies to. It also opened so many doors for me, including my internship in Australia on a cattle station.