

2ND ANNUAL RURAL APPRECIATION WEEKEND

2008

OCTOBER 3RD-6TH

OAKFIELD FARM - DUNEDOO

I had great expectations of Rural Appreciation Weekend, and those expectations were definitely lived up to. 0730hours Friday the 3rd of October, we gladly piled into our mini bus, driven by student and driver extraordinaire Rohan, who we will easily forgive for almost missing a speed hump 2 minutes into our journey! A bus filled with allied health students – we entertained each other and exchanged academic knowledge and had a few laughs with administrator Kay in the hot front seat to join in the fun! Along the way we stopped in Lithgow to fulfill our dream of having the most awesome bus to arrive in Dunedoo! Green and white cardboard, highlighters, textas and stickers later we had our bus temporarily labeled with the letters to spell SHARP and RAW08. a later stop in Mudgee provided us with an awesome and wholesome pub lunch and a trip to the reject shop for torches and hideously coloured ponchos!

On arrival to the farm, Rob exited the bus to open the gates and all of a sudden our bus would not go anywhere! Well we tried everything, people in the bus, people out of the bus, sticks to fix what looked like a misplaced lever under the accelerator, and nothing worked! Kay and Rob ventured to the property to get help and we closed the bus door to wait! Bobs you uncle the bus moved! Bus was too smart for its own good with safety mechanisms! On arrival to the house we met Shannon and his brother and ventured on the camp site to set up! Issued with information packs and free drink bottles we picked a spot and pitched a few tents! It was a stinking hot afternoon but everyone was in top spirits! We all unloaded our gear and scrubbed up for a Chinese food dinner at the local golf club, where we met some of the locals, grabbed a beer and tried our luck at the raffle and trivia. On return to the camp site we all prepared for bed and sat around an awesome bon fire for a few casual drinks and a chance to begin networking with other uni students.

Day one – a huge BBQ breakfast with countless eggs, rashers of bacon and French toast. After breakfast we worked together to rearrange our outdoor hall for the aboriginal welcome and introduction to RAW. Students were then divided into teams and given instructions for activity rotations. For me first event – farm tour! The truck was backed up to a pile of dirt, chairs lined up in the back of the trailer and people looked scared at the thought the chairs might move! Me, I was not worried! I dragged Perrie, Erin and Marisa with me to the front and took spot, not thinking of the black oil splatter from the exhaust! Everyone else followed and Shannon took wheel! It was now time for stereotypical Mexican wave photos and a yell of YEW!!!! We were driven around the farm and taken to various paddocks and explained the breeds of different animals and health issues with animals and introduced to the sheep dogs. We were taught about sheep being fly blown and the interventions to improve their health before maggots infect wounds in the merino sheep. We were shown the dams on the property and told the history of the property. After a lengthy tour of 3 hours and getting drenched from the rain it was back to base. Perrie and I thought we were tough enough to battle out the rain, well 5 minutes into it, we wanted those flouro ponchos more than you know!

On return to the base we were then given an awesome lunch – BBQ sausage sandwiches and salads. On full stomachs we again parted to do a rotation of different activities. First Castration of a calf – well this was interesting to say the least! Shannon you will be a great surgeon!!! As we all watched this session and popped up on fences to view from the top so not to distract the cattle – a fence pailing fell and so did 6 students – straight into cow poo and dirt! A few bandaids and a water was later and legs were mended. After this session we moved on the snake handling session with Neville. He introduced us to some poisonous snakes and talked us through handling

snake bites and how to move and react cautiously around snakes. This man was very knowledgeable and I couldn't help but notice his missing finger from a snake bite! Following this we headed into the sheep sheering quarters and got told about how the sheep dogs work and how to shear a sheep. We were also told about pricing of wool and the use of the sheep types on this farm. We were then sent to an aboriginal session, where we were introduced to aboriginal medicines and treatments. We were given a sample of a medicine used to increase libido – the taste was so disgusting and I had to use numerous sugar and water substances to wash my mouth out. We were then shown how to throw boomerangs, which might I had I am terrible at, and I learnt how to correctly pronounce boomerang.

Following this, it was back to camp for a change of clothes and a trip to the shed for a massive roast dinner and a B&S ball. Roast pork and lamb, cooked at the farm and beautiful salads and pastas and roast potatoes. A few beers from the keg and a UDL and we were all up dancing and singing and mingling away! Having photos with everyone you can think of and playing the boat race! SHARP won! The night was fun filled and everyone enjoyed themselves and made heaps of new friends.

The next morning proved to be a struggle after a late and tiring night and we started with a massive BBQ breakfast again. The morning started with inspiring guest health speakers; Dunedoo GP Dr Tilak Dissanayake and Dubbo-based Indigenous health nurse, Louise Lawler. We then had free time where we went bush walking, or for a trip to the dam for a swim. Duck poo covered shorts and all we headed back to camp to change before starting our stockmanship challenge.

I think the stockmanship challenge was the highlight of the weekend. First a rope between 2 trees, a plank of wood and 20 people to get over the top of the rope without touching it – we struggled but managed to get there in the end. We then had to put fence posts in and get them all the same height and space apart and in alignment – we rocked this activity! We then moved on to the maze between the trees and building a tepee from sticks and blue string. We also had so much fun with this one, not to mention I almost walked head on into a tree. From there we moved onto the stockman challenge – herding sheep through gates and yards, then separating the ewes from the lambs! We managed this one in record time 7minutes 51seconds! Then it was time to put a tent up blindfolded! I was watching due to an injury so watching this was hilarious! We won this activity because we were the only team to keep our blindfold on for the whole activity! We teamed up with university of Sydney and CSU to win this challenge! We rocked!

After this we all scrubbed up for an awesome dinner and a movie while it pelted down with rain! Tents got flooded and a river made its way into the camp site! Luckily our tents were ok – but not everyone was this lucky. It was amazing that people did not complain about the rain. Everyone was so carefree and supportive and not once did anyone deny the farmers including Shannon and his family rain. We all dealt with whatever was thrown our way – cant say we did it in style! Mud and flannos!

We slept like logs and were up early the next morning to pack up tents and head to mudgee! In mudgee we visited the prince hill winery, where we were given samples of wine to try and a beautiful lunch. After this we piled back on buses and headed home. Exhausted on the way home, we all slept and chatted about funny quotes from the weekend! There are too many to be listed on here!

So when 11 universities send approximately 130 students to a farm, what did we get out of it. I experienced aspects of farm life I didn't really know existed. I met a great group of people and can not be more thankful to the Nott family for their generosity. I have made some new friends and gained some great networking opportunities. Over 4 days we were exposed to so many new experiences and introduced to fantastic and inspirational health workers. It was wonderful to be there when SHARP was presented with a plaque for our contribution. I had so much fun helping

serve meals and also just had fun with everything! It was definitely the best long weekend I have had! Im back again next year! Fantastic opportunity.

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