



Rabobank

*Media release
June 18, 2018*

Northland farmers gain insights on Queensland beef sector

Northland sheep and beef farmers Kevin and Annette Boyd were among a group of 20 farmers who attended a week-long educational beef tour in Queensland last month organised by agricultural banking specialist Rabobank.

The tour featured two days at the world-renowned Beef Australia event in Rockhampton as well as visits to a range of beef operations throughout Queensland including Brisbane-based meat retailer Farmer in the City, Grassdale feedlot in Miles, the Roma saleyards and Emerald-based Clissold Downs (beef trading) and SwarmFarm (agri-technology).

The tour was organised by Rabobank to provide the bank's local and international beef clients with an opportunity to network with other farmers and to learn more about beef operations in Queensland.

The Boyds, who attended the tour after earlier this year being drawn as the winners of Rabobank's Beef Australia competition, were joined on the trip by several beef farming couples from Brazil as well as Australian beef farmers from New South Wales and Queensland.

Mr Boyd, who along with Annette runs a 520-hectare sheep and beef farm located 18km outside of Dargaville, said the scale of the operations visited on the tour was the first thing that caught his attention and the visit to 5,615 hectare Grassdale feedlot had been one of highlights of the trip.

"The visit to Grassdale was exceptional and its size and the number of cattle they were running blew us away a bit really. The feedlot is currently running over 54,000 cattle and we were told it is licensed to run up to 70,000," Mr Boyd said.

"I also really enjoyed the visit to SwarmFarm who specialise in farming technology. This company is developing some really innovative robotics machines to assist with tasks such as planting and weed control and some of the robotics were very different from anything I'd seen before."

While Mr Boyd felt New Zealand beef farmers were already adopting many of the better practices he observed on the trip, he said he'd relished the opportunity to learn more about the Queensland beef sector and how the state's drier climate impacted farming decisions.

"It was fascinating to hear about how the dry conditions influence the way they farm in different locations and determine the choices that are made around beef breeds and the grasses," he said.



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“For example, we learned that one of the key reasons Brahman cattle are more prominent in the drier northern parts of Queensland is their resistance to cattle tick which are more of a problem the drier it gets.”

Mr and Mrs Boyd spent the final two days of the tour attending Beef Australia in Rockhampton, an event which is held once every three years and celebrates all facets of the Australian beef industry. The expo features more than 5000 cattle from over 30 breeds; a trade fair promoting more than 500 businesses; a symposium, seminars and property tours to deliver new research information to producers.

“It was good to see all the different breeds at the event and they had it all there as far beef farming goes,” Mr Boyd said.

“We also had the chance to take in a couple of very interesting presentations at the event including one on managing rat’s tail weed which was very relevant to us as we are starting to see this weed appear on some of the farms around our own property in Northland.”

Mr Boyd said he and Annette would definitely consider going on similar farming tours in the future.

“We really enjoyed the experience and it’s really opened our eyes to the type of trip you can take if you have the right connections. It was our kind of trip, it was so well organised and the itinerary was just right in our view,” he said.

“Having spent a week with other families on the tour, we also formed good relationships with the other farmers who attended. Both the Brazilians and Australians said we are welcome to visit them at their farms if we are in their part of the world and we’ve also left it open to them to come and visit us in New Zealand if they decide to come this way.”

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Rabobank New Zealand is a part of the global Rabobank Group, the world’s leading specialist in food and agribusiness banking. Rabobank has nearly 120 years’ experience providing customised banking and finance solutions to businesses involved in all aspects of food and agribusiness. Rabobank is structured as a cooperative and operates in 40 countries, servicing the needs of about 8.6 million clients worldwide through a network of close to 1000 offices and branches. Rabobank New Zealand is one of the country’s leading agricultural lenders and a significant provider of business and corporate banking and financial services to the New Zealand food and agribusiness sector. The bank has 33 branches throughout New Zealand.

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