



Travel & Training Bursary Report

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Event: AAABG 2017 Townsville, QLD – 2-5 July 2017

The Association for the Advancement of Animal Breeding and Genetics Conference was held at the start of July this year in Townsville. Over 170 scientists, agricultural economists, genetics consultants and students attended from universities, research organisations, commercial organisations and governmental departments around the world.

The AAABG's main role is to provide a platform for sharing new research and developments in the world of production animal breeding. The conference is for the benefit of other researchers, students and for industry representatives to continue the chain of communication through to industry members. It is organised by two committees (executive and organizing) with members from CSIRO, UNE, James Cook University, DEDJTR, a private consultant and the University of Queensland (this panel of leaders changes each year by vote). However, the conference is funded by 15 sponsors. The major sponsor this year was Neogen, a multi-faceted company with divisions in animal genomics, food safety, veterinary and pesticides and diagnostics and biosecurity.

Plenary speakers began each session with talks on the functional annotation of animal genomes, genomic selection in tropical environments or developing countries and precision medicine and the similarities between human and animal technologies. Concurrent sessions through the days were divided into the topics of different species, advances in statistics and computational methods and breeding objectives; individual speakers presented their latest research and findings to smaller groups of around 50. I attended the sessions based around sheep and goats, breeding objectives and industry discussions. There were many interesting talks given by PhD students, research scientists from MLA, CSIRO, AGBU, DEDJTR, AbacusBio, the ABRI and different universities from around the world. The talks covered selective breeding for disease resistance, genetic correlations between breeding traits, genetic trends in feed intake, marketing and delivery of workshops to farmers and genetic progress in the Australian sheep industry.

There were also two poster sessions in which students presented their findings in a more casual setting, talking with interested spectators about their research. I was given the opportunity to present my own small research project from the summer of 2016/17 in this setting and enjoyed the challenge of answering questions from leading scientists.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Future Farmers Network for their support in my attendance at the AAABG. My time spent at the conference this year allowed me to speak with many great scientific forward-thinking minds, and make contacts with potential future employers. It stretched my personal comfort zone when I had to discuss my research with senior research scientists and other students; good practice for future presentations. It was a most valuable experience and one I hope to repeat in future years.