



Travel & Training Bursary Report

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Event: The International Tri-Conference for Precision Agriculture, October 2017

I was fortunate enough to attend PA17- The International Tri-Conference for Precision Agriculture in October 2017 with the assistance of a travel bursary from the Future Farmers Network. The two-and-a-half-day event in Hamilton, New Zealand, combined three conferences, including the inaugural Asian-Australasian Conference on Precision Pastures and Livestock Farming (1ACPLF), co-hosted by the Precision Agriculture Association of New Zealand (PAANZ) and the Asian Conference on Precision Agriculture (ACPA) committee.

The conference attracted close to 500 attendants from over 20 countries, with 25 keynote speakers and 120 oral presentations. My particular interest was in the 1ACPLF conference proceedings which I have reviewed here. The first session I attended featured some short presentations by livestock producers that have adopted some form of precision agriculture on their own properties, both in NZ and Australia, cumulating into an active panel discussion with many interactions from the audience. Subsequent speakers addressed technologies available for the wellbeing assessment of livestock, using technologies such as accelerometers, sound sensors/ analysis, proximal infrared technology and on-animal proximity sensors.

Tuesday began with talks on topics such as optical sensing, global strategies for R&D in PA and advancements in rangeland livestock management, before breaking into groups for an "open space" session. The idea of this session was for 1ACPLF participants to "identify and discuss how to advance digital livestock farming or precision livestock farming in research, development and practical farming in their home countries and how to communicate with researchers/ developers as well as consultants/ educators". That afternoon, delegates were invited to attend one of four field trips to different local businesses/enterprises. I attended the field trip to Limestone Downs Station- a property using aircraft to carry out variable rate fertiliser applications to the hill country, inaccessible to ground based spreading vehicles. They are working with Massey University to develop remote sensing technology that can measure the nutrient status of the land using aircraft-mounted sensors which will determine where the nutrients should be targeted. These tours were then followed by a formal dinner, featuring guest speaker, Melissa Clark-Reynolds.

Wednesday was a half day, with discussions around open data, frame conditions for precision livestock farming, the applied use of precision livestock technologies in extensive systems, pasture growth monitors and iWelfare. I gained great value from attending this tri-conference, particularly from the networking opportunities it presented. Delegates were presented with a great deal of information on the many varying aspects of precision agriculture in livestock production and the research that is being conducted and developed in this space. I learnt, heard and discussed a number of things that I will now be able to apply to my honours thesis and which will hopefully be beneficial for future employment.

Thank you again to the Future Farmers Network for awarding me the travel bursary which aided my attendance at this event.