

Exchanging Experience,



Australian seedstock producer brings the Outback to the Little Apple.

by **Shelby Mettlen**, assistant editor

Nick Boshammer likes the Midwest; he just can't get used to the cold.

Maybe that's why the Australian felt a little more at home in sunny San Diego, Calif., as he took a seat at an empty table overlooking the bay at the Cattle Industry Convention & National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) Trade Show in January.

The Aussie, who earned a diploma of agribusiness from Marcus Oldham University in Geelong, Victoria, Australia, isn't a tough one to pick out of the crowd at NCBA. Floating among a sea of cowboy hats, he dons a traditional Australian stockman's hat.

"[Queensland, Australia] just doesn't get quite as cold [as Kansas]. It might get to 20° (F), but we're up in arms if it gets that cold," Boshammer explains with a laugh. "[California] is a little closer to what I'm used to."

Coming to America

Boshammer spent the "backside" of the fall semester, starting in November, and a couple of weeks into February sitting in on classes at Kansas State University (K-State) as part of

an exchange program between the Angus Society of Australia and K-State. The program, sponsored by Australian artificial insemination (AI) company Semex, aims to give one candidate per semester a chance to trade the Outback for the Great Plains and encourages an exchange of information and learning between Australian and American Angus cattle production.

"Kansas is good," he says. "It's different. I've met some really good people there."

Boshammer's family owns and operates Sandon Glenoch Angus in Chinchilla, Queensland. In addition to the operation's registered-Angus seedstock herd, his brother and sister-in-law manage a commercial Brangus and Wagyu cow herd.

Boshammer trained as a diesel mechanic after graduating from high school, then worked as a *jackaroo* (what we know as a cowboy) on a large cattle station (what we call a ranch) preceding completion of his agribusiness degree.



► Nick Boshammer's stay in the United States included at least two visits to CAB headquarters in Wooster, Ohio.

In fact, a bit of pop culture for you: Boshammer worked on the same ranch where the movie, *Australia*, starring Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman, was filmed. He said he enjoyed the station's scenic location.

"Every morning, we'd wake up just as the sun starts shining over the crest of the mountain; you could see it shining off the rock face," he explains. "It's pretty cool."

Boshammer is one of three students to experience K-State through the exchange program. It was originally stationed at Michigan State University, where it was founded in the 1970s and managed by Dave Hawkins, former professor of animal

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NICK BOSHAMMER

Improving Knowledge

science. Following Hawkins' retirement from Michigan State, the program was moved to K-State and managed by Dan Moser, former professor of animal science and current president of Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI), before finally being transferred to Dave Nichols, professor and teaching coordinator for the Department of Animal Sciences and Industry at K-State.

Larry Corah, emeritus professor of animal science at K-State and retired vice president of Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB), says there's just nothing stopping Boshhammer.

"He has a curious mind, and he's fun to work with," Corah says. "He has a curiosity to know where the beef industry is going, not only in Australia or the United States, but globally."

Corah points out Boshhammer's curiosity a lot.

"One of the things I've really enjoyed about Nick is his curiosity and willingness to learn so many aspects of the industry as he has during his time here," he said. "He's a young man who will become an industry leader. He has a nice future in the cattle industry."

A taste for adventure

During his time in the United States, Boshhammer crisscrossed the country, visiting more than 20 cattle operations in at least 11 states. In one trip, Nichols says Boshhammer covered 1,800 miles.

In addition to his U.S. travel, Boshhammer had previously set aside four months to tour Asia, the Middle East and eventually Europe and the United Kingdom to explore consumer beef preferences in those countries, and he took a live export boat from Darwin to Vietnam to travel the Pacific Rim.

Nichols, exchange program coordinator at K-State, was also impressed by Boshhammer's — you guessed it — curiosity.

"One of the things that impressed me the most was his curious mind," Nichols says. After a slow Visa process, Boshhammer showed up at K-State halfway through the semester in November — meaning he would be participating in the program over the University's semester break. "One of the



► Nick Boshhammer (bottom left) visited Kansas State University as part of an exchange program between the Angus Society of Australia and K-State. The program, sponsored by Australian artificial insemination (AI) company Semex, aims to give one candidate per semester a chance to trade the Outback for the Great Plains and encourages an exchange of information and learning between Australian and American Angus cattle production.

things that concerned me was what we were going to do with him during that break from mid-December through January," Nichols explains.

That break didn't slow Boshhammer down. He packed up his things and trekked out to Pratt Feeders in Pratt, Kan., where he spent Dec. 19 to Jan. 3 working, learning and immersing himself in feedlot culture.

Boshhammer visited CAB headquarters in Wooster, Ohio, at least twice and made a stop at Select Sires in Plain City, Ohio. He even had a contact at the McDonald's headquarters in Chicago, where he's convinced he suffered some "permanent damage" due to the blustery cold of the Windy City.

Boshhammer told his Australian sponsors he was "astounded" at the access to information in the United States.

"It is clear that the research and development programs in the U.S. have been well-established for many years now," he wrote in an email to his sponsors. "Most notably has been the depth and precision that goes into the data because of the strong and continuing history. It has been great to read facts and data that have been real values; I can appreciate the work that goes into much of this."

Boshhammer says he enjoyed his visit to the American Angus Association in Saint Joseph, Mo., and that his time spent talking "beef, beef and a little bit of football," with Moser and Corah was "very interesting."

His time spent with Moser gave him a magnified look at DNA systems and genomics, Boshhammer says. "In my opinion, there are some very interesting times ahead in terms of using DNA along with existing systems."

Boshhammer completed the *Certified Angus Beef*® brand's Masters of Brand Advantages (MBA) class, a short series of courses that provides students with more in-depth understanding of and training in beef fabrication and cuts. The class lasted just under a week for him.

The class included "everything from grading to fabricating to meat analysis and testing," he says. "Every day at CAB proves to be very educational and rewarding, with an outstanding team fueling the engine room to get the brand to where it is today."

Corah expressed his admiration for Boshhammer's interest in beef cuts, beef quality, and his desire to figure out what the consumer wants in a way that effectively and economically benefits the producer.

Connecting with consumers

Corah says Boshhammer's ideas for an Australian program gravitate toward working

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— Nick Boshhammer

CONTINUED ON PAGE 222

Exchanging Experience, Improving Knowledge CONTINUED FROM PAGE 221

with a packing company to put in place a quality grid, similar to a “U.S. premium-type program.” He explains Boshhammer is looking to partner with the packer to sell cattle out of the feedlot and earn premiums on quality cattle for the producer. He focuses on carcass quality and superior genetics. Ultimately, Corah explains, Boshhammer would like to create some opportunities for his bull-buying customers and put in place a program where the cattle are fed out and into a quality grid.

“I think there’s more of a connection to be gained with the consumer,” Boshhammer explains. “I’m not sure what it is, but I’m going to find out.”

Boshhammer says he thinks seedstock producers should continue the initiative, with their advantageous position for doing so at the beginning of the value chain.

“If anything,” he says, “I think we can make the most influence.”

Meat science and genomics are Boshhammer’s targeting subjects. He hopes by understanding those two factors better, he can put an effective process in place to benefit both the producer and consumer.

“Trying to find that connection with the consumer, it’s been done to a lot of degrees, but I think there’s still room to make further improvements to see what the consumer is needing, what their wants are,” he says. “Then

we can come back from that as seedstock producers and try to target that a little bit more directly.”

Boshhammer’s program will focus on meat tenderness and marbling.

“It’s all something I don’t know much about at the moment,” he says, “but going about ways and learning, I’m trying to gather as much information as I can.

Value-added programs make up a lucrative sector of the industry in the United States, one that isn’t widely explored in Australia, and one that Boshhammer would be wise to bring to the Land Down Under. Ultimately, his goal is to develop a brand.

“I think that’s a long way down the track yet,” he said of his plan. “I’m probably thinking that it’s more beneficial to direct product into an existing market.”

Eventually, he hopes to bring a premium through to the producer.

Making the exchange

The exchange program strives to go beyond offering a taste of American beef. Nichols says his goal is to provide students, both American and Australian, with the opportunity to learn from each other and explore a new culture.

Boshhammer says his experience wouldn’t have been possible without the support,

advising and friendship of Corah, Nichols and Australian beef industry expert Richard Raines.

“I have to express my appreciation for their hospitality, friendship and expertise during this trip,” he says. “It really could not have happened without those guys.”

Nichols says he wants the exchange program to be a two-way street. As much as the program focuses on immersing Australian students in the American beef industry, Nichols wants to ensure that K-State students learn just as much from the Aussie among them.

“He really appreciated the openness and willingness of breeders and ranchers to welcome him to their operations and to visit with him,” Nichols says. “These guys are busy people. They took the time to get to know him and show him their operations.

“The formation of those friendships,” Nichols says, “that’s what’s really important.”

Nichols urges students, producers and cattle industry professionals all over the world to think beyond borders.

“Think globally,” Nichols urges. “You’ve got to think bigger than your operation. You’ve got to think beyond Kansas or where you’re at geographically.”

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