

Sara Konkel

Colorado State University

International Livestock Congress Student Program

Last summer a really close friend of mine, whom I attended Colorado State University with, had the opportunity to attend the International Livestock Congress in Calgary, Canada. She too was an undergraduate student studying animal sciences and agricultural business and was heavily involved in the beef industry. She returned with many wonderful stories and an educational experience of a lifetime. After speaking with her about her trip I was eager to get involved and go on the trip myself. I was very excited to see another country that I have never visited before, but most importantly I was looking forward to learning about the foreign agricultural industry. I now can say that attending the ILC Conference was one of the best experiences of my life.

This was my first trip outside of the United States and I must admit I was a little nervous, even though Calgary is only a two hour flight from Denver. However, my excitement outweighed my nerves. I was so afraid that I wasn't going to get across the border and even more afraid that they weren't going to let me go back home. Luckily the whole customs process went very smoothly and they didn't even mix up my luggage (always a plus). Shortly after getting off the plane I was greeted by six other students who were all from the United States, we all quickly became associated with one another. The amazing thing was even though we had no idea who these people were riding in the van with us, we all had common ground and that is a passion for agriculture.

I was born and raised in Weld County Colorado which is one of the largest agricultural producing counties in the state. I grew up on a small acreage raising custom

crops and livestock. Growing up I was very active in 4-H and FFA. Upon graduation it only seemed natural for me to continue my involvement in the agricultural industry, especially since it was something that I love so much. This brings me to where I am at today; I have one year left at CSU where I am studying animal sciences and agricultural business. I am interested in working in the beef industry after graduating this is one of the main reasons why I wanted to attend this trip. I want to take advantage of every opportunity to learn something new about the beef industry.

We began the trip early on Thursday morning where we would visit Cargill Meat Plant, Western Feeders and Tongue Creek Feeders. While at Cargill we were split into two different groups, one group would go on the tour while the other would stay behind and discuss the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency. I found it very interesting to listen to Megan and Andrea discuss the current issues facing the Canadian Beef Industry. While the U.S. and Canada are two different countries we are both faced with similar issues. I also really enjoyed listening to what they had to say about the national identification system implemented in your country. I was amazed to find out that currently the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency has a 98 percent compliance with their producers. This is a comforting thought to actually know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel for the U.S. beef industry; we have so much to look forward to. We can look at the Canadian industry and have confidence that it is successful in other countries and that it too can be successful in the U.S. I really enjoyed the plant tour as well. I have been to many plants in the states before but I liked this one as well. The grading system is different in Canada and that was neat to watch the graders on the rail. While I have been in plants before I have never been given the opportunity to tour the kill floor. It was

a very interesting process from start to finish and everyone at the plant was very accommodating and attentive to each question.

We then continued our day with a trip to Dave Plett's home where his family welcomed us with a meal and speakers. Two presentations were given, one by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and the other by CanFax. Both presentations were very educational. I didn't realize how closely related the Canadian and United States market trends were. I discovered the history, background and structure of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association is very similar to the U.S. agency National Cattlemen's Beef Association. After lunch they took us out into the yard on a tour and answered many questions about the Canadian feeding industry and their particular operation. I worked in a feed yard for two years and it was really interesting to compare and contrast the differences and similarities between the two feedlots. We were also given the opportunity to walk through their mill which was also very educational.

The bus then took us on to visit Tongue Creek Feeders to visit their compost operation. This was a first for me, I don't know a whole lot about the composting processes and business, but it is very economical and profitable to those who participate in these programs. Not only is a good use of cattle waste, but it can provide for other industries as well in the form of energy.

Later on in the evening we were invited to attend a reception with sponsors and speakers for the conference. I especially liked this part of our day; we were able to interact with so many wonderful people. It also gave each and everyone of us the opportunity to thank everyone for supporting the ILC student program, which I am very grateful for. Everyone was awesome and they were truly glad to have us there, they all

believed so strongly in the program. I have been to many conferences and meetings and I have never had so many individuals show such excitement for the future of the beef industry. It is very reassuring to know that the people who have walked before have so much faith and confidence in the future generations of the agricultural industry.

We rose early again in the morning to attend the conference at the Stampede grounds. There we listened to speakers approaching several hot issues facing the countries beef industry such as trade, future of the products, economical issues and changes to the feeding industry. However, the most interesting part of the day for me was listening to Brant Randles on the Global Feed Grain Market and Supply. He addressed the ethanol industry and how it relates to feeding industry in Canada. This was particularly interesting to me because my father is currently working on building an ethanol plant in eastern Colorado. Canada does not face the issues with fuel economy that we face in the United States, so it was fascinating to compare the two. There is an increasingly demand for ethanol production in the U.S. but it is not as much of a concern for Canada. However, it affects both countries feeding industries in the same way, where will get the corn? This is a great worry for Canada though because of the shorter growing season, as well as the very small demand for alternative fuels. Canada already has a large fuel supply in the country and there really isn't a need for ethanol production like there is in the U.S. It will be exciting to see where it goes for both countries and where we will each be in about ten years. This part of the conference was great as well, once again there were many wonderful opportunities to network and interact with lots of people from all over the country and world.

I have heard lots of amazing things about the Calgary Stampede but nothing does it justice until you experience first hand for yourself. While I really enjoyed the educational component of this trip, I will have to say that the Calgary Stampede chuck wagon races and grandstand show were my very favorite part of the trip. I can honestly say that I have never seen anything quite like it before in my life, it was awesome. I love the atmosphere during the Stampede everyone in Calgary is a cowboy. You are constantly surrounded by so much excitement and energy. I would come back to Calgary in a heartbeat and I would definitely want to be at the Stampede again! It was one of the best experiences of my life

The next morning we woke up for the roundtable breakfast discussion with all of the industry leaders. Once again the hot topic of the ethanol industry was approached and discussed. This was also very enjoyable because the issues that were discussed at the conference were expanded at breakfast. Furthermore, it was very exciting to listen to what the industry leaders had to say on the subject. At the conclusion of the breakfast we had to return to our rooms and pack up to go back home. It was hard to have to say goodbye to everyone we all had become good friends. I was not ready to go back, I wanted to stay. As I left though I thought to myself that this is not goodbye it is merely hello. This was the beginning of many great relationships and connections for the future. The people I met at the ILC will be the individuals whom I will be working with someday; this is what was the most valuable to me after my experience in Calgary.