

“Sheep week” - giving students a taste of sheep farming and rural life in central Queensland

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The location of the Townsville Campus of James Cook University, being at least 4 hours driving from any commercial sheep properties, creates significant challenges as far as the theoretical and practical teaching of small ruminant medicine and production is concerned. A week-long field trip to central west Queensland gives students the opportunity to have a first-hand look of wool, sheep and goat meat production systems. Students visit a range of high-profile producers and learn about some of the important animal health and production concerns that occur on-farm. A strong emphasis is placed on the understanding of grazing systems and grazing land management issues in western Queensland. During this field trip, the students stay at the Australian Agricultural College in Longreach. They attend a range of seminars presented by DAFF staff and local veterinarians, including several modules from the *Making More from Sheep – Best Practice Manual*. They also have practical skill sessions in body condition scoring, soundness evaluation, pregnancy scanning, tail docking, wool classing, and carrying out field post mortems. Time permitting, they also spend some time at DAFF's Rosebank Research Station.

For many students, this is their first experience of outback Queensland, and it is expected that this exercise will encourage students to seek employment away from metropolitan areas and be comfortable and content with working in rural locations.