

Benefits of attending the Western Canadian Feedlot Management School, a student's perspective

My name is Courtney O'Keefe and I am in the final year of my master's program at the University of Saskatchewan. My studies are primarily focused on ruminant nutrition and my thesis is titled 'Validating the Stage of Maturity at Harvest for Barley, Oat and Triticale for Swath Grazing.'

I would first of all like to thank the Livestock Marketers of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association for giving me the opportunity to attend the Western Canadian Feedlot Management School (WCFMS) in Moose Jaw, SK from February 7-9, 2017.

This was my first time attending the WCFMS and it will surely not be my last. This year's theme of the school was "*putting technology to work*" - I believe this theme really outlines the way the cattle industry is headed. Embracing the changing technologies and learning to push forward is a major aspect of future success for cattle producers.

Attending the WCFMS has been a great opportunity to gain practical experience in the feedlot industry. Two full days were planned and engaged with relevant topics ranging from animal health, nutrition, economics and the future of the feedlot industry. The range of information was exceptional and there was opportunity to learn something new from every speaker. The tours were an invaluable part of the school – we attended Buffalo Plains Cattle Co. and Schlamp Cattle. Both operations were notable and unique in their own ways. It was very informative to see in practice how these producers run their operations and how they manage various issues that they are faced with on a daily basis.

One of my favorite aspects of the WCFMS was the producer panel; "*Does more data really mean more \$?*". It was impressive to see how each of these producers are implementing technology into their facility and how they can interpret the data to make better choices that will benefit their operations. I had the opportunity to network with producers and industry experts as there was a good representation of both in the group. Learning from these individuals has been a priceless experience, listening to their advice and experiences in the industry. Overall, the WCFMS was a great learning opportunity and I would encourage people to attend in 2018.

As I am approaching the end of my schooling, attending the WCFMS has allowed me further insight into the cattle feeding business and its future. It is a technologically innovative place to be in the industry, the people are next to none, and this field is exactly where I want to find employment. My career goal is to be in the animal nutrition and health sector of this industry to help producers make the most educated decisions that will benefit their operation. The connections that were made at the WCFMS will last a lifetime and will help me in my future endeavours. Not to mention the practical knowledge I gained through attending and will be able to apply in my future career in the cattle business. Listening to the producers and industry experts at WCFMS has sparked my excitement and I am eager to get out into the workforce and make a difference.

By: Courtney O'Keefe, 2017