

Press Release

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Taratahi Stratford Graduate Success

GRADUATES from Taratahi Agricultural Training Centre's Stratford campus are making their presence felt in the Taranaki farming community.

Since it began in 2004, Taratahi Stratford has assisted over 30 students to find their feet in the farming world and the success of these graduates is providing a bench mark for other young people aspiring to enter the field of agriculture.

Two prime examples of this success are 2005 graduates Jayden Dravitzki and Jason Duffy. For both students, it's hard to believe they only completed their studies three years ago and that they are still so young.

Jayden Dravitzki started his Level 3 Certificate in Agriculture at Taratahi Stratford straight out of school. Before enrolling, he thought he knew a bit about the dairy industry but it was not until the course was underway that Jayden understood just how much there was to learn ... and what his own potential could be.

On completion of his 34 week course Jayden emerged with not only a nationally recognised qualification but also a determination to achieve independent success. He went straight into a job as a farmhand before stepping up to manage his father's dairy property a year later.

"I was managing Dad's 182 cow farm completely on my own. In that year I actually achieved record production and not just by a little bit! I really cleaned up which made Dad pretty happy."

After a year on his father's property Jayden made the step up of leasing his own property where he milked 135 cows. During this time he faced some large hurdles, particularly for a then-17 year old, when the country's drought meant he ran out of water and had to sell all his cows. However that didn't stop the determined farmer. Within three weeks he had saved enough feed to buy in some heifers which he fed until the end of his lease contract and then sold, profiting enough return to enter into a 50/50 sharemilking position this year.

Jayden said so far his farming career has been exciting and satisfying but not without hard work. And he has had to cope with some difficult situations along the way. However he believes his training at Taratahi Stratford has made a big difference in knowing how to cope when times are tough.

"I've had to deal with some challenging situations but basically you've got to be confident in what you know, that your skills will get you through, and that you will always be able to come up tops," he said.

"Training definitely helped me get to where I am today. The staff at Taratahi Stratford provided a supportive environment and gave me all the motivation I needed to get to where I am: 50/50 sharemilking and I'm still only 18."

Another up and coming graduate sharing Jayden's drive is 21 year old Jason Duffy, who was also enrolled at Taratahi Stratford in 2005. Towards the end of his course, Jason had already secured a

position on a 600 cow dairy farm and after two years of wages had saved enough to sharemilk 155 cows in Stratford.

Jason had grown up on a sheep and beef farm and planned to train in this area until he arrived at Taratahi Stratford and switched to dairy. And for a young man who hadn't milked a single cow before he arrived, the rewards of training are clearly evident in his achievements.

However unlike most other dairy graduates who plan to remain in the industry, Jason has a clear goal that does not involve cows and is not far from being reached.

"I grew up on a sheep and beef farm and that's what I want to do in the future – have my own sheep and beef property. I am building up my equity in the dairy industry and hopefully soon I'll have enough to at least get started on my main goal."

Jason's immediate plan is to find a well-established dairy farm to run in the next year and then purchase a sheep and beef block. And this all for a 21 year old. He reports that while his sights are set firmly on the future, he recognises his experiences in the past have put him on the right track.

"Owning a sheep and beef property has been my dream and Taratahi Stratford has helped a lot with that goal. Training pretty much taught me everything I needed to know to get to where I am today, especially when you consider I hadn't milked a cow in my life when I started."

Jason and Jayden are just two of several graduates coming out of the Taratahi Stratford campus each year. After 34 weeks training, successful graduates come away with the Stratford Certificate in Agriculture in either Sheep & Beef or Dairy.

Taratahi's main base is just out of Masterton, where agricultural training has been offered since 1919. Taratahi Stratford was opened in 2004 as a means of offering Taranaki students the chance to train closer to home and, unlike Masterton, the course is non-residential. Taratahi Stratford also has a flexible intake system, where suitable students can start the course at a time of year that best suits their needs.

For Taratahi Stratford enrolment enquiries contact Bronwyn Muir, phone 06 765 4490 or email taratahi.stratford@xtra.co.nz



Jayden Dravitzki at his sharemilking property near Waitara.