

## Taratahi treats Career Advisors to a day on the farm!

Generally speaking, there's nothing quite like pouring rain to dampen one's enthusiasm for farming life. Unless, of course, you're one of the seventeen quite incredible Career Advisors who visited Taratahi Agricultural Training Centre on November 18<sup>th</sup> 2009.

They were there to find out everything there was to know about studying and living at Taratahi, not to mention career prospects, available scholarships, and the kitchen's daily menu – and they left not a single muddy pebble unturned!

When this group of seventeen advisors quite literally burst into Taratahi's staffroom on a wet Wednesday morning they were charged with so much energy, vitality and enthusiasm that after their visit both I, and Madonna the cow (who gave them a passive, yet graceful reception in the dairy shed), were left feeling rather stunned!

The Career Advisors present at Taratahi's "Day Out" included representatives from many schools from as far as Warkworth north of Auckland, and Tuatapere in Southland! They were there primarily to find out more about Taratahi's residential agricultural training courses, as well the ways in which Taratahi works with schools on the STAR and Gateway programmes. Many had been successfully sending students to Taratahi for a number of years ... now they wanted to see it for themselves!



Liaison Officer, Natalie Bowie, showing everyone photos of some of the extra activities on offer after hours at Taratahi

Donovan Wearing, Taratahi's CEO, welcomed everyone and gave a brief introduction to life at Taratahi ... he was then besieged with questions, including Taratahi's criteria for enrolment. "We assess every student's application on a case by case basis," said Mr Wearing. "We look carefully at their academic and extra-curricular records, but, most importantly, we expect the applicant to demonstrate a real desire to get into farming. We have no qualms about accepting students from city backgrounds – some of our best graduates had only seen farm animals from the car window before they arrived here!"



The Advisors were particularly interested in career pathways for their students, and were impressed by the fact that study at Taratahi can lead on to University for some of their students. "We work quite closely with both Lincoln and Massey," said Mr Wearing. "From 2010 students will be able to do the Lincoln University Diploma through us – that's a Level 5 sub-degree diploma. That opens the doors for bachelor degree programmes at Lincoln and Massey .... so our students really can go all the way if they choose to."

By this point the rain has eased off a little, so the Careers Advisors bravely shouldered their umbrellas and headed off to explore the campus. They enjoyed a detailed tour of the classrooms, computer suite, dining room, common room, gym and the new accommodation.

In the dining room the Career Advisors were met with an enormous range of photographs and notices that demonstrated just how busy and fulfilling extra-curricular life is at Taratahi.

“I love this room because it sums up just how much is going on here,” said Natalie Bowie, Taratahi’s Liaison Officer. “These are the pictures from our annual rugby match versus Smedley, and over here is all the information about the Young Farmers Club. Then there’s also twilight hockey, small-bore rifle shooting, and last night we had an Iron Man Competition! Students are also kept busy at the weekends with events such as Rural Challenge at the A&P show and the Hunterville Huntaway Festival. Life here is a seven day a week affair!”



Engineering Tutor, Tony McCosh, explaining some of the great projects students have been working on

On to the Dairy Unit, where the Career Advisors met with both the Herd Manager and Assistant Dairy Manager, and, of course, Madonna the cow who is 15 years old and has 4 generations of progeny at Taratahi! The Career Advisors inspected student rosters, wet weather gear and the milking equipment itself ... and left fully satisfied!

Next they were treated to a tour of Taratahi’s brand new, high-spec technical engineering workshop. The eight welding bays mean that students now have state-of the art facilities in which to work in major projects such as building dog trailers and fixing motorbikes.

“What we had before was pretty good, but this workshop has transformed our engineering learning environment,” Tony McCosh, Engineering Tutor, explained. “I have to literally kick the students out of here at dinner time ... and I don’t blame them!”

Not content with seeing Taratahi’s wide range of motorbikes and ATVs parked in the shed next door, many of the Career Advisors undertook an intrepid journey across a paddock to watch students Nick, Jasmine and Kallum demonstrate their considerable skills handling ATVs in wet, muddy and extremely challenging conditions. What was obvious to everyone was that the students were focused, calm and competent at all times - of course, they were clearly enjoying it too!

The Career Advisors had seen everything and spoken to everyone, so it was time to treat them to lunch at a local vineyard, and answer yet a few more questions before taking them back over the Rimutaka Hill in time to sign in for their International Careers Conference due to start the next morning. There is no doubt that the day was a tremendous success!



*“A huge thanks for having us at Taratahi, it was great to put names to faces and also check out the awesome facility that we send students to. Very impressed with hospitality and friendliness of all staff and facilities are fantastic.”*

*Delwyn Roberts, Gateway Coordinator,  
Tauhara College, Taupo*