

Careers in Primary Industries – transcript

Emily Johnston, Genetics Development Officer, NSW Department of Primary Industries

Hi, my name is Emily Johnston and I'm a Genetics Development Officer in Extensive Livestock with the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries.

Where did you grow up and study?

So I went to Lake Mumurah High School, which is a high school in the Central Coast, and I never had an agricultural background, but I was always interested in working with animals. So after that I began to study a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture at the University of Sydney.

What other roles have you had?

My first job out of university was in plant biosecurity and I was there for about a year and a half. And then I saw this job come up and I was really excited to just get back into livestock and also be a bit more involved in the science because that's what my degree was in.

What is the purpose of your role?

So my role as a development officer, most of it really is just about building relationship with farmers and making them feel really supported and also helping them to adopt new technologies on their farm, which then allows them to have a better production and also feel confident in the tools they're using.

What is a typical day like in your role?

So a typical day in my role, every day really is so different. There's no typical day. It can be anything from going to field days, going to different events, organising workshops, talking to different stakeholders in the region, going out to farms, some other things, writing out publications and guides and all that sort of stuff to give out at these events as well, just to make sure farmers feel supported and have all the information that they need.

One way that by doing this is we actually have a genetic podcast coming up which will be able to be used as a tool for farmers to be able to understand complex topics in a conversational style, which will then be able to be used for them for years to come because it's going to be a resource that they can come back to when they need to.

What do you love about your job?

One thing that I really love about my job is the diversity of it, no doubt is the same. Another thing that I really love about my job is just it feels so rewarding to break down complex topics into simple terms that producers are then able to go back to their farm and use these new technologies and all these different things that we've spoken about and have the confidence to do so.

So a huge component of this job is traveling. So for example, one month, one week I was in Dubbo, the next week I was in Orange, the next week I was in Grafton and the week after that I was in Armidale. And this is because it's a statewide role and because you really need to be hands on with these producers as well. There are a lot of times where you need to go to these locations to do your job.

What personal attributes are beneficial in this role?

To get the most out of this role. You're going to need to be someone who really enjoys talking to people, able to build good and strong relationships, good time management, creative thinking, and of course, be self-motivated.

What advice do you have for young people who are interested in this sort of work?

Some advice that I would give to young people who want to get into this area is just to volunteer your time with different farms, different consultants and even universities if you can. It would be a great way to find out if you actually like this type of work as well as what areas you enjoy. If you're eager to learn and keen, there's an abundance of opportunities out there.