

My New Zealand Adventure

By Lowa Göransdotter

My name is Lowa Göransdotter, I'm 19 years old and I'm from Sweden. I have grown up on a farm and have always been interested in agriculture. My parents have a Hereford stud with 60 cows, I help out when needed and I really enjoy taking our cattle to shows. When I was 16 I went to an agriculture boarding school. We were taught to drive tractors and other machinery, take care of cows and pigs and how to grow crops beside the conventional school subjects, there among English. On the spare time we learnt to take care of ourselves and each other and had great social time. After graduation in June last year I wanted to travel and my mind had been set on New Zealand for a long time. I had heard about the stunning scenery, meet some really nice people from New Zealand and it's as far away as I could go from home.

I sent my application to a rural exchange program called RENZ, Rural Exchange New Zealand, and got a placement on a sheep and beef farm in Culverden on the south island. I arrived in the end of November leaving a cold and snowy winter behind. On the farm I did both farm and domestic work. It was a great but wild place and I left it with a bag heavier with experience. I spent the week before Christmas in a vegetable shop, it didn't feel like Christmas because the season is the complete opposite to ours, but Santa came with parcels any way. I was with a friend from home over the holidays and we went on a trip to Kaikoura, Picton and Motueka with other young people from Europe over New Year's. I spent January in Roxburgh packing apricots and cherries. I meet a lot of people from different countries there and had a great time but the work almost bored me to death. Luckily for me, the 15th world Hereford tour where in Scandinavia 2008, and some hospitable Kiwis gave my mother their addresses and invited us to visit them whenever we came to New Zealand. I asked my mother to send them an e-mail and after that I was living in a dream. I stayed one weekend with Geoff and Joyce Brown at Lochaburn when I was still working at the orchard. It was a good change and I discovered that driving with farmers makes the surroundings more interesting and they are the very best guides. I finished working at the orchard in the end of January and went to Queenstown where I did the Nevis Bungy (134m). That was scary but awesome!

On the second of February I flew to Wellington and staid for a week. After that I was cared for by Hereford people, they sent me around and I think it was a great way of experience New Zealand. I learned a lot and meet wonderful people. I was first with the Morrison family at Ardo farm. I really liked there place and they helped me a lot with my further travels. They took me to Otapawa where I caught up with two other Swedish girls so I got an opportunity to talk about home and we agreed to meet again in Sweden and talk about New Zealand. After that I was sent to Na putiputi and the Smythes, they showed me around their farm, took me to their summer house at Mahia beach and I swam in the ocean. They passed me on to Ian Brown and he showed me how embryo flushing works and we visited Koanui. After that I stayed with Kevin and Jane McDonald for a few days and their Danish daughter in law took me to Wai-U-Tapu wonderland. That was really cool because we don't have that kind of phenomena in Sweden.

Next stop was Jan and Berry Wills in Matamata, finally someone I recognised and knew a little bit! We talked about her trips to Sweden, we went to the Matamata races, a club day for the breeders in South Auckland Hereford club, they showed me around their son's farm and I went to see the Hobbiton.

My time in New Zealand was about to run out and went back to the Morrisons to get my other bag and then I went down to Christchurch to fly home.

I have been home a month now and I really miss New Zealand. There was still snowy and cold when I arrived but now it seems like the spring has finally arrived and we are checking the fences so we can let the cows out. My first task though was to get my show heifer ready to go to one of our national shows, Mila. I had two weeks and had started before I went to New Zealand. The result was second place for the heifer and I won the Swedish Championship in Showmanship for beef breeds.

The differences in farming in New Zealand compared to Sweden is that you don't house your animals during winter, the use of dogs, that really fascinated me, and that you don't have any substitutes. I also noticed similarities like the care for the stock, the problems with profitability and that when you go somewhere with a farmer they will tell you stories about farms you pass and the people living there or land marks or local history. It's amusing because my father would do the same and I would probably do the same. I like it because it makes a unfamiliar place more interesting.

Finally I really want to thank everyone I met for very memorable time!