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Nuffield scholarship for Meekatharra beef producer

Beef producer Ben Forsyth from Meekatharra, Western Australia, will tonight be awarded Australia's leading farming scholarship, a Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship.

Mr Forsyth is one of only 16 Australians to receive a 2007 Nuffield Scholarship. He will be presented with his award tonight at the Innovative Farming Australia awards dinner, part of the Nuffield Australia Spring Tour being held in Fremantle, WA.

Nuffield Farming Scholarships, each worth \$25,000, give young Australian farmers the opportunity to travel internationally and explore agricultural issues and opportunities in a global context. There are about 1300 Nuffield scholars worldwide.

Mr Forsyth will use his scholarship, sponsored by the Sidney Myer Fund, to explore strategies that will ensure an ecologically sustainable future for the arid pastoral zone of inland Western Australia. He will also investigate the most suitable cattle to maximise returns on that land, and will study the environmental tolerance and market potential of heat-adapted *Bos taurus* and composite cattle breeds.

Mr Forsyth is a partner of Beefwood Pastoral Company, a family operation dedicated to sustainable beef production on stations spread over almost 800,000 hectares in Western Australia's East and West Gascoyne, and in the North Midlands near Eneabba. In his roles of Production Manager and Environmental Manager Mr Forsyth is concerned about "erosion degradation, pasture decline and the general legacy management of our forebears".

"I am committed to finding better ecological management tools to repair this area, and to running the most suitable stock on repaired pastures," he says. "*Bos indicus* breeds thrive in hot temperate regions but their eating quality is often inferior to the European *Bos taurus* breeds, which are suited to cooler climates.

"We need a breed that can adapt to this environment without compromising eating quality. My research aims to determine if heat-adapted *Bos taurus* breeds, predominantly Southern African, and composite cattle breeds developed in the United States and South America can provide a better genetic answer."

Nuffield Australia CEO Mr Jim Geltch says many Nuffield Scholars go on to become active leaders in agriculture and the community. "For many, the scholarship experience changes their lives by opening their eyes to the wider world and giving them the confidence to pursue their goals," Mr Geltch says.

The 16 2007 Australian Nuffield Scholars will leave Australia in either February or June 2008 for a compulsory Global Focus Program. This will involve travel to China, North America, South America and Europe investigating agricultural marketing and trade issues, environmental issues and experiencing the different social and cultural aspects of each region.

Following the initial six-week program, the scholars will go their individual ways to pursue specific study programs in the country or countries of their choice. Mr Forsyth hopes to travel to Southern Africa, the US, South America and the Middle East.

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