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Muresk Agricultural College

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MURESK AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

By W. SOUTHERN, B.Sc. (Agric.), Dip.Ed., Principal

MURESK Agricultural College was established by the West Australian Government in 1926, on one of the earliest settled properties in the Northam district.

Since then it has made a valuable contribution to agricultural education and agricultural science in this State. It has been responsible for the production of a great many successful farmers with a good basic training and a scientific approach to the land, as well as for the early agricultural training of men who have become some of Western Australia’s top agricultural scientists.

It has also been the site of valuable agricultural research work, and through its stock breeding activities, has helped to raise the standard of the State’s livestock.

Ever since its establishment the College has been steadily improved, in keeping with the rising standard of agricultural education and the growing needs of modern farming, but over the past few years its development has increased tremendously.

A number of changes have also been made to the diploma course and to the requirements for entry to the College.

Major works which have been finalised include the provision of an amenities block, a large workshop, a new milking shed, a large garage, a rifle range, a
slaughter house and skin shed and much rebuilding of yards.

In recent times the dining/kitchen block has been completely modernised, the tennis courts have been fitted with lights, and many buildings completely renovated.

The building workshop has been considerably increased in capacity.

At present a new science block (lecture room and three laboratories) is nearing completion and an early start is to be made on a large gymnasium, a full sized oval and a new house.

Increased enrolment has been the main reason for this expansion of facilities.

MANY ADVANTAGES

The College lands are located between Northam and York, nine miles from Northam, and 15 from York.

Situated as it is on the verge of the wheatbelt, Muresk has an assured rainfall and its location allows practical instruction to be given in cereal-growing, dairying, fruit-growing, and the production of root and forage crops.

The property is located in excellent stock country and affords opportunities for students to receive instruction and practical experience in most branches of animal husbandry.

The College buildings are on rising ground commanding a noble view of the Avon Valley. The Avon River flows through the property, adding to its beauty and affording the students facilities for swimming.

The surrounding country is undulating and well-wooded. The average elevation of the property is 600 ft. above sea level, an altitude which makes the location a particularly healthy site.

Being only 64 miles from Perth, the College is readily accessible by road or rail, which facilitates the close association between it and the Department of Agriculture.

Muresk is similar in standard to other Australian agricultural colleges, such as Dookie, Gatton, Hawkesbury, Longerong, Roseworthy and Wagga, and has already made worthwhile contributions to tertiary education in our State.
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Its aims are:—

1. To train students in the science of agriculture and farming practices, and at the same time to provide opportunities for continuing with some aspects of general education.

2. To raise the general standard of efficiency in farming by holding short courses of instruction for farmers.

3. To carry out research work.

4. To raise the standard of stock in farming areas by breeding and distributing pure-bred stock.

PRACTICAL TRAINING

Wheat, oats, barley and peas are grown on the College lands and, in accordance with the rotation which obtains at the College, certain of the paddocks are laid down to pasture, principally subterranean clover and Wimmera rye grass. To provide green feed in summer for the dairy herd, pigs and poultry, a plot has been laid down under irrigation.

For instructional purposes, the College has an orchard, vineyard, vegetable garden and apiary.

The Muresk dairy herd consists of pedigree Guernsey cattle and is noted as one of the finest herds of that breed in Australia.

The pedigree herd of Berkshire pigs was founded on stock imported from Great Britain, New Zealand and elsewhere and it is a leading stud in the State. It is virus pneumonia free.

The College sheep flocks consist of—

(a) A small flock of quality Merinos.

(b) A commercial Merino flock which is mated with Border Leicester rams; the cross-bred ewes are then mated with Southdown rams to produce excellent lambs.

(c) A small Corriedale Stud.

In the poultry section the main breeds are Australorp and White Leghorn. Turkey raising is becoming a feature.

A complete building scheme has been laid down for the College and subsequent additions will conform generally to this
plan. The present College buildings consist of two dormitories, a science block, lecture rooms, a domestic block, and residences for members of the staff. In the dormitories each student has a separate room and in the bathrooms hot and cold showers are installed.

A large common-room, a library and reading rooms and a dark-room are set apart for the use of students. Radios have been installed.

The science blocks contain laboratories and lecture rooms. An up-to-date gas plant is in use in the laboratories. A carpenters' workshop and engineering workshop are provided in which technical instruction is given to the students.

The College is linked with the S.E.C. mains which supply light and power for the buildings, and for its water supply the establishment is connected to the Goldfields Water Scheme. The septic tank system has been adopted for the treatment of sewage.

**ADMISSION STANDARD**

A selection is made each year after the Junior Certificate results are known. The successful applicants then continue with secondary school studies for another year. Some prefer to do still another year and take the Leaving Certificate before starting the Muresk Course.

Preliminary knowledge of agricultural science, as a subject, is not necessary. It is much more desirable that applicants have basic knowledge of science and other subjects; and consequently the subjects which must be studied prior to selection are:

1) **At Junior Certificate Standard.**

   (a) English, Mathematics (Arithmetic and Algebra), Mathematics (Geometry and Trigonometry).

   (b) Physics and Chemistry (or Science A and Science B, or General Science).

   (c) Book-keeping.

   (d) Others, such as Geography.

2) **At Sub-Leaving Standard.**

   English, Mathematics A, Physics (including Heat, and Magnetism and Electricity if possible) Chemistry and others.
The new biological sciences building in the final stages of construction

Some applicants find it convenient to take Junior standard Book-keeping in the Sub-Leaving year.

When Chemistry and Physics cannot be taken at the Junior standard, Science A and B, or General Science can be substituted, but the student who takes only General Science must do special Chemistry and Physics in the Sub-Leaving.

(c) Another testimonial.
(d) Medical certificate of general fitness.
(e) Applicant's own statement as to his interests, future intentions, etc.
(f) Scholarship applications—if such are being made.

APPLICATIONS

The completed application should reach the College by December 31, of the year that the student takes the Junior Certificate.

A preliminary selection is made as soon as the Junior Certificate results are known. Those chosen are certain of a place in 13 months' time provided they perform a satisfactory Sub-Leaving year in the meantime.

Example.—A student chosen at the end of 1962 enters Muresk in 1964 provided his 1963 report is satisfactory. A place will be reserved for 1965 admission if he wishes to take the Leaving Certificate in 1964, again provided that satisfactory progress has been made.

Any vacancies which exist after the preliminary selection are filled, in order of receipt, by qualified applicants.

Each application must include:—
(a) Completed application form.
(b) Headmaster's testimonial.

THE DIPLOMA IN AGRICULTURE COURSE (M.D.A.)

The course is one of two years' duration. A large number of subjects are covered including English, Farm Management and Economics, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Chemistry, Engineering, Bookkeeping, Veterinary Science, Woolclassing, Surveying, and so on.

Students are engaged in practical work on the various farm sections, every alternate week.

First-year students have to remain for further practical experience during four weeks of the summer vacation. Second-year students remain for two weeks during the winter vacation.

Lectures and demonstrations are given to the students in the lecture-room and laboratories. Records are kept by the students of all work performed and a farm dairy course covers routine work on the farm.

Excursions are arranged to places of agricultural interest, and in addition to
theoretical and laboratory work, students must cover the full range of practical work. They take part in all field operations on the farm and work in the engineering and carpenters' shops. Their training covers the handling of tractors, various implements and different types of machinery.

Each student is given practical instruction in building construction and mechanical work and in turn they spend time in the dairy, piggery, poultry sheds, orchards, vineyard and garden. They also gain practical experience in the breeding and management of stock, and work in the sheep yards and woolshed.

FEES, SCHOLARSHIPS, ETC.

The fees charged are low—in accordance with Government policy—and are approximately £190 per annum.

Several scholarships for Muresk are available for award each year.

Applicants who have attained Leaving Certificate standard are eligible to apply for assistance under the Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme.

Education Department scholarships and allowances may be continued at the College and the "living away from home" allowance of £50 per annum is available to students entitled to it.

The McCaughey Bequest and the Canteens Service Fund's assistance apply to Muresk College students who come within the provisions of these schemes.

GENERAL

The College year is divided into two terms of 20 weeks each; the first term begins late in February and ends early in July and the second term commences in August and concludes at Christmas.

Students have the advantages of a residential college and facilities are provided for sports. General recreation committees are elected for the control of cricket, football, tennis, swimming, athletics, rifle shooting, gymnastics, etc. The annual sports meeting is held just before the Royal Show and a swimming carnival is held annually in the attractive College pool.

For indoor recreation there are two reading rooms, piano, radios, and table tennis outfits. A technical and fiction library provides literature to meet the needs of the students.

Hobbies such as photography are encouraged and facilities are provided. The College has a cinematograph with a sound track, and films are shown frequently.

The new amenities block—The building houses the bank, tuck shop, book room, sports room and camera room.
The recently-completed modern milking shed. The College's pedigree Guernsey herd is recognised as one of the finest of the breed in Australia.

The College conducts its own savings bank agency, book store, tuck shop and post office.

Most of the students are farmers' sons who return to the family farms but there are many other avenues of employment open to Muresk graduates. Those with good academic qualifications may proceed to the University in order to study for the degree in agriculture, or in veterinary science.

The College is a sub-department of the Department of Agriculture and copies of the College prospectus may be secured from the Principal, Muresk Agricultural College, Muresk, W.A., or the Department of Agriculture, Jarrah Road, South Perth.

FARMERS' WINTER COURSES

During the winter vacation (four weeks in July-August) two short courses for farmers are conducted. The subjects of the courses vary from year to year and details are announced in the Press and on the radio.

Students go into residence at the College for three or four days and the chosen topics are thoroughly discussed and illustrated by demonstrators, the showing of suitable films and slides together with lectures and practical field work.

Intending applicants are advised to apply early as accommodation at the College is limited and each year many applicants have to be refused admission on this account. A nominal fee is charged.

COPPER SULPHATE IN SHEEP DIPS

Where commercial dips containing Diazinon are used, copper or mercurial compounds should not be incorporated in the dip to prevent infections such as those causing "post dipping lameness" in sheep. It is recommended that antiseptic compounds such as "Pegasol" or "Steracide" should be used, at the rate of one pint in 300 gallons of dip.

In many of the more recent dip formulations, bacteriostats are being included in sufficient quantities to protect sheep from such infections. If however, dip washes are left undisturbed for periods of 24 to 48 hours, the addition of antiseptics is recommended as a safeguard.
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