



Herd health with heart - Veterinary Science a road worth pursuing for Brendan Brieffies

By Jaime Newborn 02/12/2021



Dr Brendan Brieffies has a message for graduates - "don't think anything is impossible."

Every day looks different for leading regional Vet, Dr Brendan Brieffies. Working with cattle producers to improve herd health, preg testing, bull testing, managing nutrition, or even disease outbreak can all be in a week's work.

These days he can't imagine doing anything else – but it wasn't always like that.

"Mum and Dad ran a dairy farm when I was young and I'd loved animals from an early age on the farm. But when I was at school, vet wasn't really on my radar. I'm a hands-on, practical person and to be honest I didn't think I'd be academic enough to get the grades," Brendan says.

An Old Scholar and former boarder at Whitsunday Anglican School, he credits boarding in part to his success.

"Being at WAS and being at boarding really helped me get that edge I needed, when I look back.

"The support I needed to study and do the work was there - and that made a big difference.

“I did a bit of work experience, talked to Graham Stabler and he helped put me on that path at about the Year 11 mark.”

Brendan studied Veterinary Science at James Cook University. Since graduating in 2015 he has worked in the Clermont region, following a passion for cattle and livestock.

He worked for the Clermont Vet Surgery for five and a half years, reaching the level of Associate Vet, and now runs his own business.

“When I started out I was a general practitioner, doing a bit of everything. As time went on I really focused on extensive beef production. I look at improving efficiencies on-farm to give cattle producers the top dollar they can get, with the tools I have,” says Brendan.

Earlier this year he helped manage a localised vibrio infection outbreak, after routine preg testing showed a significantly low number of pregnant heifers. Tracking down the infection as a cause, Brendan helped implement a vaccination program and also advised on biosecurity (the disease is likely to have been introduced to the herd by unrelated cattle in a boundary paddock).

Moments like this make the profession worth it for Brendan.

“Being a vet... being able to have an impact on someone’s life or livelihood because of your work is pretty incredible.”

He says that holds true whether the animal is a beloved family pet, or part of a herd that a producer is relying on for income.

And while it’s not always an easy road, it is one he is glad to have pursued.

“There were times at Uni when I thought I’d give it up, but I’m glad I didn’t.

“I’m pretty in love with it as a profession!” he says.

He also has a tip for graduates considering vet, or any path.

“I would say don’t think anything is impossible. You really can be just about whatever you want to be.”



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