**Emily Irwin DRAFT**

Growing on a sheep and beef farm near Mataura in Southland, Emily Irwin was keen to pursue a career in the red meat sector beyond the farm gate. Gaining a Meat Industry Association (MIA) scholarship is helping her to achieve that ambition.

The MIA programme recruits high achievers who have the potential to become future leaders in the sector, providing a range of scholarships annually of $5,000pa for undergraduates and $10,000pa for post-graduate students.

Emily, aged, 18 is in the second year of studying for a Bachelor of Agribusiness and Food Marketing at Lincoln University.

“My family has a ram stud and my favourite part of the farm year was always when clients and agents came to visit and you’d show them round and see them leave with rams they were happy with,” she says. “I realised that I like working with livestock but I like the people side of farming more.

“I don’t know what part of the industry I want to go into yet. I’m thinking about pathways such as a livestock agent or marketing.

“I chose my degree because it’s very broad and gives me a lot of career options from the farm gate to plate. I am really enjoying learning about marketing and consumer preferences as well as primary industry production and commerce.

“The financial side of the scholarship is really helpful but I am really excited about the mentoring and learning provided and all the opportunities to network and talk to people in the industry and build contacts.”

Emily has been gaining first-hand experience with holiday work at the Stripped Jerky factory in Christchurch, which makes the only jerky made with Black Origin Wagyu.

“I work wherever I’m needed, from water blasting equipment to making marinades, lighting up the dryer or putting labels on boxes,” she says.

Emily is also an member of Young Farmers and of Handy Landys, a Lincoln University club, which provides volunteers to help in the rural sector.

“Farmstrong is kindly supporting us. We have done things like fundraising for communities impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle and we also went to Hawke’s Bay for a week to help with practical work on some of the smaller farms that were affected.

“It was good to be able to provide some hands-on help and do some of the jobs that would take a sole farmer a week. We were able to crack through them really quickly. It was a chance to experience farming in a different part of the country but the best part about it was sitting down at the end of the day with the farming family, having a yarn and seeing them relax with a little bit of the pressure had been taken off them.”

The MIA scholarship programme currently provides support for 18 students, including nine new participants for 2024, and nine returning scholars. All are undergraduate or post graduate tertiary students, studying a subject relevant to the red meat processing industry and planning a career in the sector beyond the farm gate.

**ENDS**