

Cotton classing from Bellata to Lubbock

Australian Classing Services (ACS) trainee cotton classer Michael Howard hails from Bellata and has just returned from a three month cotton classing work tour of the US as part of his comprehensive training schedule.

Working in Lubbock, Texas and Memphis, Tennessee has been a valuable experience as the US cotton qualities over the past two seasons have been a far cry from the traditional Australian high grades.

“When ACS offered me a chance travel to America to work with Ecom in Memphis and Lubbock, I jumped at the opportunity,” he said. “My only reservation was that I’d be arriving at the start of a cold winter, but the positives outweighed the negatives 10 to one.

“After arriving in Memphis on October 31 and classing for close to two weeks I was sent to Lubbock, Texas to help set up a classing room and teach the staff how to class cotton, as Ecom had recently opened a new office.

“As I stepped off the plane I was not surprised at all to

be greeted by a 6 ft 4 inch Texan wearing high top riding boots and chewing what I thought was tobacco, but turned out to be sunflower seeds (everybody in Lubbock chews sunflower seeds).

After a month of meeting a bunch of down to earth people and seeing a wide

range of Texan cotton qualities — ranging from 11-4s to 64-6s — Michael returned to Memphis to work for another month and a half, making up shipments to be sent to mills and reclassing USDA classed cotton for the export market — something he would never have been able to experience if it wasn’t for ACS.

Michael’s career as a cotton classer began three years ago when he signed on as a casual hand with Namoi Cotton (the former tenant of the now ACS facility). Michael’s eye for detail and enthusiastic manner was recognised early and he was selected as a trainee cotton classer. The traineeship includes working in an operating ginning facility, working in all aspects of a classing facility and international classing exposure.

This was a far cry from the family business of dryland cropping and part time opal mining at Lightning Ridge.

Michael has passed his USDA cotton classing exam and is fully certified.



Michael Howard.

