

A skills drought

Agriculture is suffering a new kind of drought – skill shortages. But David Gibson stands up. *Smart Start* reports.



David, 18, comes from Sydney's western suburbs, but his farming is in his blood. In fact, he was so sure about his career that he left St Paul's Grammar School after he'd completed Year 10 to study at TAFE NSW's Richmond campus, which has specialised rural skills facilities.

He started off studying horticulture, but he decided that agriculture was a better fit.

"Horticulture was OK, but I wanted to do farming – animals and tractors seemed more interesting than horticulture."

David didn't start from square-one with animals.

"I've volunteered for Riding for the Disabled Association's Nepean centre basically every Saturday for the past eight years, and was recently given the new position of volunteer representative. It's a very large part of my life."

He's learnt horse-riding/handling skills plus respect, communication and responsibility – crucial skills of a life on the land.

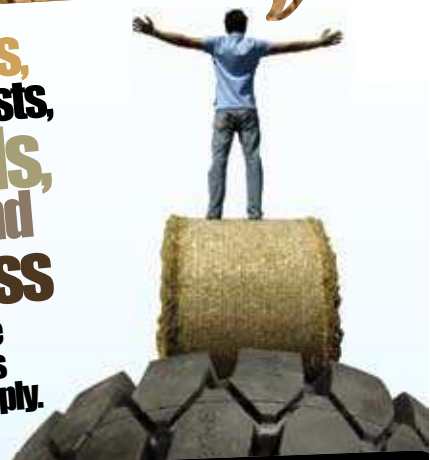
David's on a positive path, but he knows it's useful to get as many skills as possible: "I have done a forklift course to improve my skills and to access more machinery such as the forklift, if needed at a certain job."

David reckons the opportunities will be out west where farmers have struggled through the drought and turned to mining. He hopes to manage a property one day and I looks forward giving back to the country.

Next Gen Farmers

Next Gen Farmers offers support for young people in primary industries. If you're a young and keen in projects that are environmentally sustainable, check out <http://daff.gov.au> or call 02 6272 3933.

**Wool classers,
organic specialists,
farm hands,
managers and
agribusiness**
are just some of the
agriculture careers
currently in short supply.



Riding for the Disabled?

Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) provides opportunities for anyone with a disability to enjoy healthy, therapeutic, horse-related activities.

Volunteers do everything from side walking, horse training, care and coaching, to office support. So you don't even have to know anything about horses!

Call 03 9731 7388 or visit www.rda.org.au