

Produzioni Animali: Exploring Animal Production in Italy  
By Carley VanNorman

On July 21<sup>st</sup>, I left on the trip of a lifetime. I joined a group of other students from the College of Agriculture and left for a two-week study abroad trip to Italy. The purpose of the trip was to study animal agriculture and Italian culture itself. Not only was this my first trip abroad and by myself, but it was one of the most amazing experiences I have ever had. I was able to learn so much and I got a taste of the Italian culture through the cities I toured and food I ate.



Because the main focus of the trip was to learn about animal agriculture, I went to many different farms to see how they differ from American farms. Since the dairy industry is so large in Italy and the group could easily follow the biosecurity measures, the dairy farms were what we primarily toured. From what I saw, the dairy farms were very comparable to American farms.

The main difference was the size; our farms are much larger than what I was able to see in Italy. My group was also able to tour a sheep farm that was up in the Alps. The farm set up was interesting because the sheep were free range and could roam the mountains. All of the farm tours were a great learning experience for me because I am not as familiar with the sheep and dairy industries here in America.

Along with learning about livestock, my group learned about animal bi-products like cheese and other specialty crops grown like grapes. I was able to visit two different cheese producers and tour their facilities. The best part was sampling all of the cheese. I also learned how balsamic vinegar is made, as well as how a winery operates. My group was able to sample the wine and vinegar that we learned about, and to say the least, it was a really unique experience.

Although the primary focus of the trip was in agriculture, I was able to learn about the culture and history of different cities. My favorite cities that we toured were Florence, the older part of

Bergamo, and Verona. All of the cities had beautiful buildings, but each one had something I thought was unique to only that city. Florence was filled with amazing sculptures and breathtaking cathedrals. Bergamo was what I had pictured Italy to be like; with narrow cobblestone streets and an old world feel to it. Verona was beautiful with the various bridges going over the Adige river. Each city was beautiful, and I would love to visit them again someday.

Last of all, the food was absolutely amazing! I do not think there was a dish I didn't like. The best part about all of the food was that it was always made with fresh ingredients. For example, the restaurants always used fresh marinara sauce for their pizza and pastas. My favorite foods that I had were the different pizzas and risottos. Not only did they taste fresh, but they were extremely simple, which I thought made the food more delicious.



Italy was simply amazing! I was able to learn a lot about agriculture with a great group of people. This is going to be a trip I will remember for the rest of my life. Like Eleanor Roosevelt said, "The purpose of life is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience."