



Meat: Jessica Tunnage

LABORATORY MANAGER AND
MICROBIOLOGIST,
NORTHERN CO-OPERATIVE MEAT
COMPANY (NSW)

As the Australian red meat industry continues to grow, there is a wealth of opportunity and career diversity for those who are ready to take the leap, says Northern Co-operative Meat Company's (NMC) Laboratory Manager and Microbiologist, Jessica Tunnage.

"There is so much more that goes into the meat processing industry than what is commonly perceived," says Jessica. "There is an ever increasing need for the right people to fill many and varied roles."

Jessica believes that now is a great time to get involved in an industry that she has found to have no limitations to the job opportunities available. "It's about your potential, and how you can use that potential to help the industry grow," she says.

"No matter what industry you're in, if you work hard, you will be rewarded. Having drive and commitment will take you places. In the red meat processing industry, if you give a genuine effort, I've found that you get a lot in return."

When Jessica finished high school in Casino, NSW, she wanted to take a gap year to gain work experience before she went on to university to study science. Jessica applied for a job with NMC, her hometown's largest employer. She has now been with the company for eight years, and is grateful for the opportunities provided, that resulted in her current role as Laboratory Manager.

She is currently studying for her Masters in Microbiology, a feat that is made possible by the ongoing support provided to her by NMC.

"If I've ever had to be off-site for external study commitments, my employer has been completely supportive and understanding. It's been mutually beneficial, as I can apply the knowledge from my further education to continue to improve the business and the industry overall."

Working for a large company within an even larger industry, there is always something new to learn, investigate, research, and build knowledge on. Jessica finds being a Microbiologist in the red meat processing industry is fast-paced, challenging, engaging, and above all – rewarding.

Jessica's work at NMC is both in the daily operations of the laboratory, including food safety and quality control aspects of the meat production processes and more broadly within other operations of the company.

"As we move forward as a company and improve not only our product lines and our work efficiencies, but also our knowledge of our products, and how they behave in terms of factors such as shelf life and temperature changes; we are building a solid, sound future that I intend to be part of and continue to contribute to."

Acknowledgement from Jessica's colleagues also contributes to her job satisfaction. As a scientist she and her lab team have great pride in sharing their enthusiasm for scientific-based findings or solutions,

which benefit not just the company but the wider industry too.

Jessica says the potential for growth and career progression that can result from an entry level role in the meat processing industry can be unlimited. She has found that, in her experience, hard work and achievement are recognised by both the individual workplaces and within the industry as a whole. The ripple effect of having the recognition of your peers and industry, as well as career progression has seen Jessica grow as an individual too.

“I was quite shy but now I’m at a point in my life and career that I have the confidence to speak more easily to friends, family or anyone in my environment.”

For those considering their future or looking at a career change, Jessica believes that the meat processing industry is a viable option.

“Why not consider the red meat processing industry? There is an incredible amount of opportunity. The industry isn’t just about meat processing; there are the information technology systems, the science, animal welfare, human resources. It is all part of a larger, successful industry. There is so much that goes into it. Just ask the right questions and talk to the right people, and you’ll see the potential we have to offer.”

Whether you’re 18 or 60, Jessica has seen resources being made available to help enthusiastic people who are keen to reach their potential and become skilled in a role that fits them best.

As for Jessica’s future, she is focusing on science and microbiology, and hopes to move up in research, innovation and food safety, staying one step ahead of the changing demands from domestic and international consumers.

The next time you eat red meat, have a think about the variety of people who helped it onto your plate. It’s thanks to people in all sorts of roles – from HR managers, boners and slicers or IT professionals to engineers, apprentices and microbiologists. It could be the result of Jessica’s handiwork.

www.ampc.com.au/resources/careers

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#Meatyourpartners #Meatyourindustry

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