

Encouragingly, and in line with requests from AgForce and others, last November Minister Joyce announced further funding through to mid-2015 for social support programs, adding to Queensland-Government-funded mental health programs that include \$1.43 million for more one-on-one services delivered by the RFDS in 2015.

Minister Joyce followed this up in December by announcing a Drought Recovery Concessional Loans Scheme for planting and restocking, with \$50 million for Queensland until mid-2015 unless fully allocated. As requested by AgForce, the term (10 years) and concession on interest rates (initially 3.21pc) under this scheme are both greater than that of past schemes. However, more work is still needed from the government in reviewing the existing loan packages, streamlining access to income assistance for those in need and developing exit assistance options.

In 2015 AgForce will investigate options to progress the delivery of professional business assessment, debt-mediation services and higher order business skills for broadacre agriculture within the state. AgForce's longer term policy solutions for achieving sustained profitability within industry have been put to Minister Joyce and will be progressed through the Federal Government's Agricultural Competitiveness white paper process.

Any response to non-performing debt must be rational about the business while also being compassionate about the needs of those faced with a forced exit or significant restructure. AgForce supported the initial outcomes of the forum and will continue to lobby for government policies that actively support industry viability.

HARD WORK PAYS OFF FOR RISING YOUNG INDUSTRY STAR



“WE NEED TO ENCOURAGE EVERY PRIMARY PRODUCER TO WORK TOGETHER TO ERADICATE THE NUMBER OF WILD DOGS IN ORDER TO BUILD UP SHEEP NUMBERS AGAIN”



By MADELINE COOPER
AgForce Communications Officer

FOR as long as she can remember, Mitchell merino stud breeder Felicity Brumpton has had a passion for the sheep and wool industry.

Inspired by the success of her parents Nigel and Rosemary Brumpton of Mt Ascot Merinos, in 2007 Felicity and her two younger brothers established their own Poll Merino stud, Jolly Jumbuck, when they saw an opening to breed a dual purpose poll merino.

Felicity is involved in all aspects of the everyday management of the stud at 'Baynham', Mitchell, including animal husbandry, lamb marking, classing, artificial insemination, ram sales, promoting stud to the public and caring and preparing sheep for the show ring.

It didn't take long for her hard work and talent to pay off, with Jolly Jumbuck winning a string of prestigious titles and awards very early on, including Queensland Ram of the Year in 2011.

“We started showing sheep as soon as we registered the stud and have been competing in as many shows as we can get to between school and other commitments,” Felicity said.

“These awards indicate that we are achieving our goals of breeding a dual purpose poll merino and we are moving in the right direction. It also allows us to benchmark our sheep against others in the industry.”

Last year Felicity also became Australia's best young judge of a sheep at the National Junior Merino Sheep Judging titles and has been selected as an associate judge at the Queensland State Sheep Show to be held in Goondiwindi later this year.

Felicity is humble about her success and believes the best reward has been the advice, ideas and communication skills she has learnt from others in the show ring.

Not afraid of hard work, upon finishing high school in 2013 Felicity headed across to the Northern Territory to spend a year working as a Jillaroo on Waterloo station, two hours south-east of Kununurra.

“I had always been fascinated with the stories I'd heard from older friends that have taken a gap year and headed 'north' on remote cattle stations,” Felicity said.

“I was given the opportunity to experience all areas of station life from fencing, living out on stock camps, mustering, preparing cattle for live export, horsemanship, cattle husbandry, and appreciating the scenic east Kimberley country.”

This experience not only helped Felicity develop good cattle handling skills, it also gave her a better appreciation of the importance of good team work, which she said was great for character building.

This year Felicity has returned to the family property and will continue to operate Jolly Jumbuck while studying a Bachelor of Animal Science at the University of New England.

Felicity is passionate about working through some of the key issues facing the industry including drought, wild dogs and labour.

“We need to encourage every primary producer to work together to eradicate the number of wild dogs in order to build up sheep numbers again,” Felicity said.

“We need to breed an easy care sheep, as skilled labor is very hard to find now, particularly through the younger generations, as well as promoting our beautiful natural fibre internationally.”

Felicity is also determined to see more women involved in the sheep and wool industry.

“I believe women have more than the capacity to contribute to the future of this industry in all practical and technical aspects.”