

ANNABELLE COPPIN:

A love of **life on the land**

If ever the gals from television's McLeod's Daughters were in need of a little real-life inspiration, they need look no further than Western Australia's own Annabelle Coppin.

Annabelle is a dynamic and accomplished beef cattle producer. She manages a 2300 hectare property at Badgingarra, has her pilot's licence, is a skilled horse rider and has a swag of certificates and qualifications to her name.

And she is only 21 years of age.

Annabelle begins work each day when the sun rises – sometimes long before then – and doesn't finish until well after the sun goes down. And she wouldn't have it any other way.

"Agriculture is something that just burns inside me," said Annabelle. "If you ever get the privilege to experience it, you'll realise that the sky's the limit – there are so many endless opportunities."

Annabelle was born into a life on the land. Her parents Lang and Ann were both raised in the Pilbara region, in fact on adjoining properties.

Lang and Ann operate a 500,000 hectare property near Marble Bar in the east Pilbara, where Annabelle and her brother Lance grew up and where the family currently run 5000 breeders, mainly Shorthorn-Brahman crossbreds.

Annabelle's parents purchased the Badgingarra property some 10 years ago to enable the family to finish cattle bred on their pastoral land. At Badgingarra, Annabelle and her assistant Lisa Jakel are responsible for just about every facet of the farm's operation.

Their days are consumed with the cattle, which at times number around 3500. When stock arrive from the north they must be weighed, tagged and sorted, depending on weight and other specifications.

Annabelle and Lisa are constantly occupied ensuring that the cattle are well fed and watered. Then there's maintaining and improving the property's fencing and yards, water points, pasture base and infrastructure.

Much of Annabelle's passion for farming stems from her love of animals, including the cattle she works with and cares for every day of her life and the many horses and dogs who are both companions and work-mates.

Naturally, the welfare of the animals in her care is a priority of the highest order.

"I love animals and I'm proud to be involved in the

livestock industry, and in particular the live export trade," Annabelle enthused.

"The people I work with in the live export industry are very innovative and are always working hard to improve every aspect of the trade.

"Having high animal welfare standards goes hand in hand with being involved in this industry. Animals are our life, so without these standards our animals would not perform and the whole activity of animal production just wouldn't be worthwhile."

Attacks on the live export trade by animal rights groups worry Annabelle who is concerned about the amount of misinformation generated by those extremist groups in the public arena.

"It just makes me want to ensure that everyday Australians don't get brainwashed by the small number of extremists in this country. Without the support of the majority of Australians we would be unable to get on with our job."

Around 90 per cent of the Coppins' cattle are each year shipped to destinations such as South-East Asia, the Middle East, Israel and Palestine – markets for which their stock are specifically bred and prepared.

"I'm really satisfied to be exporting our cattle to these countries. The meat our cattle provide is appreciated by a lot of hungry people. And I like the idea that I'm sending off a product that I have put a lot of time and effort into.

"There is no way I would be sending my cattle overseas if I was not confident that my industry counterparts would care for them and treat them well."

Annabelle said that without Australia's involvement in the live export trade, animal welfare standards in overseas countries would take a retrograde step.

"We are the proven leaders in the industry and in keeping animal welfare standards high. The Australian industry is spending a lot of money in educating stockmen from overseas and improving feedlots and abattoirs. No-one else who is exporting livestock into these countries is doing that.

"So we have to make sure that the Australian public can see what our industry is doing and what it is achieving – that's the challenge.

"The live export industry means so much to Western Australia, so it's important that we get to tell our story and let people know how respectable, honest and resourceful our industry is.

"If some girl my age in the city read or heard something negative about the live export trade, I would hope her intelligence would inspire her to go beyond this brainwashing front and to look into matter a bit further.

"If she made the effort to do this, I'm sure she'd discover the other side of the story which is an industry that is not only sincere and special, but it's also my entire life – my history, my family, my friends and my future."

■ Left: Animal welfare is high on Annabelle's list of priorities.



■ A passion for farming ... Annabelle Coppin, pictured with father Lang.

did you know?

- Since the mid-1970s, the live export trade has developed from an ad hoc supply of livestock to a few overseas markets, to a sophisticated industry making a major contribution to Australian agriculture and the national economy.
- The Australian live export industry has pioneered quality assurance and best practice improvements and is the recognised world leader in the humane handling and management of livestock in the export industry.
- Exporters are paid on total live weight or total number of animals discharged from a vessel at port of destination. It is therefore in the exporters' interests to ensure that all stock paid for prior to embarkation in Australia are in the same if not better condition when delivered to overseas customers.
- Livestock exporters fund a substantial proportion of the industry's extensive research and development program involving projects to improve management and handling practices. The program is the largest of its kind anywhere in the world, with an annual budget in excess of \$1 million.

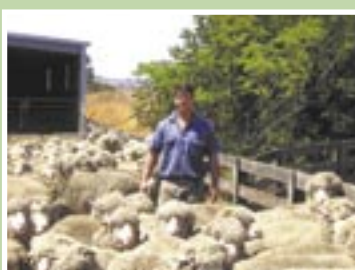
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