



# YOUNG GUNS in agriculture

## Amy settles in to life on the farm

By **BOBBIE HINKLEY**

WHEN it comes to drenching, crutching, fencing, tractor driving and on-farm decision-making, 25-year-old Tambellup farmer Amy Schlueter can match the work of any bloke.

And don't let the curly hair fool you—she's no blonde stereotype either.

After finishing her early schooling years at Tambellup Primary School and a high school stint at St Brigid's College in Lesmurdie, Amy found her niche at the WA College of Agriculture, Narrogin, where she graduated in 2006 after representing the student body as head girl.

These days, she's hard at work, with her parents Ken and Beth, on the family farm located about 15 kilometres south west of town.

With about 2000 owned-hectares to contend with and a 520ha leased block, Amy is a key driver of the family's farm business which should see about 1600ha cropped this season, including 200ha of oats, 530ha of wheat, 245ha of canola, 47ha of lupins and the rest to pasture and clovers.

She is a keen contributor to the farm's 6000-strong livestock enterprise, in which 1700 Merino ewes are joined to Merino rams and 600 Merinos joined to Poll Dorsets each year.

The farm also has about 1200 weaners on the ground and 1000 wethers left on the farm from last season.

The family also runs 29 breeding cattle.

Paired with her full-time commitment to the farm, Amy is completing a certificate in occupational health and safety, and the training and assessment to prepare for a diploma of education which she plans to start next year.

Amy always wanted to come back to the farm once she had finished school.

She was keen to spend a year working overseas after finishing Year 12, but a sport-induced knee reconstruction spelled the end of that idea.

So, in a bid to "take it a bit easy over 12 months", she went home to help out with light farm duties while completing a Certificate III in horse breeding.

At the time Amy had no desire to study at a university level but thanks to her mum she was convinced to try it for a year.

The course structure allowed Amy to be at home for the harvest, before returning to Uni for three months, then be home for seeding before going back to Uni after the winter.

Amy chose to study topics which would benefit the long-term management of the family farm and fit with the future direction of farming, because she



□ The Schlueters will crop about 1600 hectares this season.

believed marketing would continue to play a bigger and bigger role in farming each year.

She also decided on equine studies, as it was already a serious hobby.

After enjoying a three-year stint (2008-2010) at Muresk where she stud-

ied agribusiness, majoring in marketing and equine studies, she found herself with a job at CBH.

She was able to work there full-time in 2001, because her younger brother Zac was at the farm.

Amy's role was based at the Cranbrook, Katanning, Wagin, Woodanilling and Kojonup delivery sites where she helped to handle internal grain transfers and out-loading logistics.

After completing the 2011/12 harvest with CBH she did a three-month stint with Elders in Midland.

But city life wasn't for her and she went home to Tambellup and worked for a local shearing contractor for a few months.

Amy has been on the farm full-time since the start of last year and credited her decision to the lifestyle and the sense of satisfaction achieved when hard work paid off.

"There's something to be said for primary industries in WA, and I always wanted to work within the industry at a grass-roots level," she said.

"There's a perception there aren't many females rolling up their sleeves and getting stuck into it, but I think that perception is slowly starting to change because in fact there are a lot of us filling roles that were once reserved for men."

Amy is certainly doing that.

"I take a lot of pride in our wool clip," she said.

"We have our clip within some fairly tight specifications and our flock is extremely even, we're very picky.

"I'm most looking forward to seeding and lambing this year."

The Schlueter family run Pooginook-blood rams over their Merino ewe flock.

Amy and her dad travelled to New South Wales last year to buy their rams.

"I got in trouble because I bought a top-priced ram when I was only supposed to be buying mid-range flock rams at the sale," Amy laughed.

"When we got home we called him Doghouse because that's where I went after I blew the budget.

"Seeing his progeny will be very exciting because we're trying hard to build his attributes into our flock."

Calving and harvest are Amy's favourite times of year because she thrives on the hectic nature of it all.

Amy said cattle prices were good for the first time in a long time and wool and lamb prices continued to fluctuate depending on the time of year and influences of overseas markets.

"Grain markets are where we need to be concentrating because input costs are climbing at an astronomical rate," she said.



□ Young gun Amy Schlueter, Tambellup, is a keen contributor to the farm's livestock enterprise which sees about 1700 Merino ewes joined to Merino rams and 600 Merinos joined to Poll Dorsets each year.