

Ambassador award a double act

By JULIAN LUKE Queensland Country Life
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Ian McConnel has followed in the footsteps of his twin, Bruce, after he took out the 2011 Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies (QCAS) Marsh Rural Ambassador in Brisbane on Saturday night.

The sibling rivalry has not finished yet – Bruce, who was the 2008 Queensland Rural Ambassador, also went on to win the national title in 2009.

Ian, 29, admitted there was a little bit of extra pressure to do as well as his brother.

“Although he has only offered support, there is always a bit of competition between twins,” Ian laughed.

“I’ve still got one hurdle (winning the 2012 national final) ... and he won’t let me forget it.”

Ian was picked from a stellar field of nine finalists on Saturday night. He currently works as a grazing extension officer for the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), based in Buderim, and represented the Near North Coast sub-chamber.

Ian and his brother Bruce grew up on 4000-hectare Mt Brisbane, Esk, where their family runs the Mt Brisbane Droughtmaster Stud and about 2000 head of cattle.

Ian is passionate about rural Queensland and has previous experience as an ambassador – in 2002 he travelled the world as the Murray Grey Beef Cattle Society youth ambassador.

He has also lived and worked in Scotland, developing sheep ear

tags, and attended the World Brahma Summit in America in 2002.

Before his current position with DEEDI, Ian worked as a sheep extension officer in Longreach with the former Department of Primary Industries.

Ian has paraded and judged stud cattle since he was 10 and is still heavily involved in that side of shows – he was one of the judges for the Queensland Country Life QCAS Stud Beef Young Judges Competition at this year’s Royal Queensland Show.

As the 2011 QCAS Rural Ambassador, he will attend the 25th Commonwealth Agricultural Conference in Zambia in June 2012 and will also compete in the national finals, to be held in Darwin next year.

The QCAS Rural Ambassador has been run since 2003, and in that time Queensland has produced four national winners – in 2004, 2007, 2009 and 2010.

2010 QCAS Rural Ambassador Wade Timms will be hoping to make it three in a row when he competes in Adelaide later in the year.

Finch Hatton cane farmer Christopher Peoples was named the runner-up Rural Ambassador, while Aidan Bligh, Burnett sub-chamber, took out the Next Generation Community Spirit Award.



Christopher said being named runner-up was “unbelievable”.

“The other eight contestants ... any one of them could have been the winner,” he said.

Christopher is immensely proud of his local show – the Pioneer Valley Show – which he reckons is the best one-day show in Queensland.

He said while at first he was “pretty much told to enter” the Rural Ambassador program, he was glad he took the plunge.

Christopher said the Rural Ambassador competition has also helped with his public speaking.

“There’s been great support the whole way through, right from the local show society to the sub-chamber and now down here,” he said.