



**NZ WOOL
CLASSER
ASSOCIATION**

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 3

DECEMBER 2007

**OBJECTS OF THE
SOCIETY:**

- **Organizational Structure**
- **Promotion & Development**
- **Recognition**
- **Skills**
- **Quality**
- **Education**
- **Standards**
- **Liaison**
- **Activities**
- **Strategies**
- **Focus**

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TRAINING REVIEW

The NZWCA recognizes that it has a role to play in the recruitment and the retention of personnel in the industry and in encouraging the up skilling of those already in the workforce to not only maintain New Zealand clip preparation standards but to ensure there are competent people to undertake the job in the future. Having both our wool handlers and classers recognized across the Tasman is seen as a key part of this.

Revamping the Certificate in Wool Technology

In December of last year a project was started with a view to modernize training and to encourage both wool handlers and Q stencil holders to take the next step within the industry.

With Tectra the NZWCA have been working through the training modules for the Certificate in Wool Technology and are in the process of making appropriate changes.

These include the introduction of a block course, and more practical components preceded by the relevant theory.

Details are due to be finalized early in 2008.

Trans Tasman Wool classer and Wool handler Recognition and Training

The possibility of having both our wool handlers and classers recognized across the Tasman is not to up skill New Zealand wool handlers and classers only to see them work in Australia with a recognised qualification. Rather it is to give them continuity of work, and thus build a bigger pool of qualified wool handlers and classer's for our own clip.

Once an agreement to progress the project was achieved with TAFE (Australia's

equivalent of TECTRA) the requisite training resources were swapped and the mapping of both country's resources was undertaken.

The outcome of this showed that the training content, academic level, quality and course durations between the two providers is very similar with the addition that overall there is a far greater time commitment for Australian students on site at the training establishment.

As a result TAFE and TECTRA along with the NZWCA have agreed to recognize the Certificate Wool Classer (Australia) and the Certificate in Wool Technology (NZ) in each country.

Each will now offer a cut down skill confirmation country specific course for people with these qualifications wishing to be registered trans Tasman.

Trial Course

To mark the NZ/Australian agreement to cross credit qualifications, the training organizations and NZWCA have agreed to a trial course / assessment being run in Australia in April.

The course is timed to coincide with availability of classing work in Australia. TAFE have agreed to assist students in finding classing work for 2-3 months.

BOARD NEWS

Chairman's report

For most of us our main part of the classing season is over and time for us to get "print outs" of clip results and compare them with other seasons.

The NZWCA Board met recently in Christchurch. Along with a full agenda it was great to approve a number of classes gaining further qualification in the clip categories. Congratulations to all who have made the step up.

Of interest the Board is seeking a training qualification to standardize with Australia and thus create an opportunity for New Zealand classers to get a longer season and a more professional income. Discussion is progressing between TAFE (Australian Classer Training Provider), TECTRA (NZ Training Provider) and the NZWCA.

To all our current financial members I would like you to make sure you encourage future classers to become members and along with any classers who may not be current members.

I invite members to make contact with Mike and Board members of any concerns or suggestions that you may like to promote to the Association.

Cheers

Graeme Bell A 223, Chairman NZWCA

Classing Awards 2007-2008

Nominations are now being called for the NZWCA classing Merit Awards for the 2007 – 2008 classing season. Nominations can both be made by an individual or from an industry participant (Broker/Exporter/Merchant) and should be supported by the following information:-

Classers Name	Stencil number
Breed	Clip name
Grower	Number of bales
Sales Company	When offered/sold

The Merit awards are presented for all breed categories – Merino, Mid Micron and Crossbred and there is a specific North Island Award that was initiated last season.

The criteria for Classer or Q stencil holder nominations are that they are a current financial member of the New Zealand Wool Classers Association.

Nominations can be sent by post or e-mail to the registrar.

Classer Recognition

Congratulations to the following members who have submitted clips to the registrar for inspection and have updated their classing status:-

Grant Cousins	A810	Ian Kofoed	A2086
Monique De Jong	D1792	Lavene Menzies	A2047
Mark Burdon	FX2099	Ringo Morrison	P2098
Una Booth	Q147	Amanda Brown	Q146

Use of Stencils

It is a timely reminder for all that the continued use of Kiwi or Q Stencils is subject to your current financial status and membership of the association.

If you are not a current financial member of NZWCA then you are not permitted to apply your stencil against the wool that you have classed.

Woolshed Posters

The NZWCA has recently been working with the Shearing Industry Health & Safety Committee whose membership includes the NZ Shearing Contractor's Association, M&WNZ, Federated Farmers, ACC and NZWCA, to develop a set of posters to highlight health & safety concerns in woolshed operations along with key points taken from the recently published Best Practice Guide Lines for Clip Preparation. The key points to be covered include:-

- Faults and contamination
- Consistency
- Communication
- General preparation standards

It is hoped that the posters will be available early in the New Year.

Cost : Benefit Analysis

Following an initial study, implemented by the NZWCA and wool exporters representative Malcolm Ching of NZWSI, that was presented at the classer refresher days conducted in both Dunedin and Napier in 2007; a full study on the cost : benefit analysis of preparation of NZ crossbred wool is to be undertaken through the Wool Industry Network (WIN).

The aim of the study is to analyse the value of preparation to the wool growers taking into account the costs linked to the ratio of wool handlers to shearers, the degree of preparation, costs of selling and the financial return.

**For all enquiries contact the
Executive officer/Registrar:**

**Mike Gourdie
NZWCA
PO Box 7327
Sydenham
Christchurch**

**info@woolclassers.org.nz
Phone: 03 353 9299 Mobile: 027 4352 339**

Classer Refresher Opportunities

The NZWCA regularly consults with industry partners on a range of issues which may affect the associations' membership.



In addition to the training review we have initiated the second of our industry consultation days where we will be meeting with a wide range of industry representatives to evaluate the standards of classing and preparation of NZ wool and discuss areas where we can concentrate on for future professional development of our membership.

To this end the NZWCA has established a set of standards against which approved classer refresher opportunities will be held for our members to retain continuing registration and therefore use of their Kiwi and Q Stencils.

Board Nominations and Elections

The Board of NZWCA currently consists of 8 members of which 6 are elected by the association membership. The rules of the association dictate that a member is elected for a 3 year term and that each year two members will retire by rotation. From the current board the two Directors that will be retiring are Graeme Bell and Brian Jephson both of whom are eligible to offer themselves for re-election.

Nominations are being called for two positions as Board Directors.

Nominations are required to be proposed and seconded by current financial members and require the signatures of proposer, seconder and nominee.

Nominations close January 31st 2008

Forms can be requested from the Executive Officer by ringing 03 353 9299. The completed nomination form should be accompanied by a resume of the nominee that will be sent to members for their consideration. The election will be by postal ballot. If you have any questions regarding the process please do not hesitate to contact the Executive Officer.

BROKER VIEW

Generally the presentation of wool for auction nationally has been good. The wool handlers, Q stencil holders and registered wool classers continue to do a good job under often difficult conditions. Any new applications for classer registration have demonstrated good skill levels with clear distinctions for style, micron, colour etc.

It has been a difficult wool growing season in many regions this year with summer and winter droughts, which continue in Eastern areas. The effect on wool quality has seen a lot of tender wool with increased coting, and inferior style fleeces. This has created more quality control work for the wool handlers and classers.

The market will, and is responding to good preparation and good quality wool. Every exporter/buyer is buying wools at auction to meet certain specifications. They need consistent lines to do this and will pay what premiums they can for well presented wools.

KEY MESSAGES FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE SEASON

Some areas of wool preparation that have been causing problems and will need to be watched as we move towards a busy crossbred period of shearing are:

Keep wool length in 2/S or fleece lines consistent. ie: 2-3", 3-4", 4-5" or 4-6". Too much variation affects the LAC (length after carding) result which hasn't been good this season.

Keep all tender wools separate for crossbred and definitely mid-micron. This also affects LAC result.

Remove cotted fleeces and cotted points as lines will be valued to the poorest wools present in the grab sample.

Remove any fleeces with poor colour as this has been a problem for the scourers. They have found poor coloured wool within otherwise good coloured blends

Bale weights particularly in some areas of the North Island have been too low. Crossbred bale weights of 135-150kgs are not efficient.

Bellies or pieces should be kept separate from crossbred lox and 2nds.

VM Levels. Try to keep vegetable matter content as low as possible for crossbred wool, ideally below 0.3%.

Check with your broker when classing mid-micron wool as very significant premiums are available, particularly at the finer end.

**Australian sheep numbers have halved and our national flock is decreasing.
Demand for good quality, well prepared wool will be strong.
It is important that good quality control is maintained by all.**

FINE WOOL MARKET UPDATE

Overall the season has seen a more stable price return for the grower, in fact remaining particularly firm from the very first sale to finish in December in a strong position.

This has no doubt been helped by what seems to be a perpetual drought in Australia causing a shortage of good styled sound wools available on the market.

The premiums for soundness, style, length and preparation have been on average about \$10/kg more at the same micron.

Smaller better spinners styled lines, as advocated pre-season, to optimise evenness, have proven to be preferred and profitable.

Vegetable matter levels have been very high this year as a result of the recent season dry conditions but this has not been to the detriment of the price including that of the oddment lines. Backs, necks, pieces and bellies have increased in value this season and in many cases on a par with fleece lines.

Prices have gone to the extremes in the very superfine end, with in shed testing proving very profitable in the identification of these wools for those with finer than 14.9 micron.

Preparation and classing skills need to be up to scratch especially with regard to evenness of lines with regard to length and strength, and the removal of the broader types from this end of the clip to get the top dollar. Very significant premiums have been paid recently.

Contracts

The contract requirements of ‘fit for purpose’ (removal of just sweaty pieces and VM greater than 2%) in contrast to more traditional preparation requirements has provided a little discontent among some classers and some wool harvesting interests and has also been described by one industry source as a ‘dumbing down’ of the classer skills.

For the foreseeable future it will continue for the particular contract wool so we will just have to learn to live and work with it. Classing skills are still required in assessing the remainder of the clip for style, micron, staple length, strength and colour.

Winner of the NZM award for ‘Up and coming classers’ Rose Barnett is pictured at work on the ‘Cluden’ clip recently.

Rose commented on the fact that her pre-lamb run was ‘a bit more relaxed second time around’, and she certainly gained a bit more respect from growers and staff since word of her award had been circulated. Good stuff Rose.

Rose has spent many years working for contractor Adrian Cox based in Pleasant Point South Canterbury, and learnt her classing under the watchful eyes of experienced classer. Colin Wallace (A 872).



CLASSER PROFILE: Angelique Gage (P2093)

By Adrienne Anderson

Angelique Gage (Te Arawa, Te Whanau Apanui) is a young woman motivated by passion – a passion for wool, for success and for life.

For the 25 year old the industry is in her blood. She’s third generation and spent her early years in shearing sheds around Gisborne where her grandparents had a run and her mother worked as a wool handler.

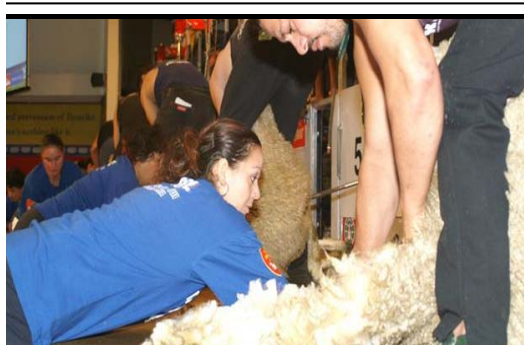
At the age of sixteen Angelique left home, believing that she would never work in the industry having grown up among the stereotypical shearing gang environment of that era – a world of drugs, alcohol, partying and abuse.

But by the age of eighteen she was already working as a head wool handler and at nineteen decided she was ready for a new challenge and applied for a Tectra scholarship to study for her Certificate in Wool Technology which she completed at twenty-one. She is a firm believer in the value of qualifications and says she would recommend the Certificate in Wool Technology to anyone.

“If I didn’t have qualifications I wouldn’t be able to leave the shed but there are so many opportunities out there when you are qualified.”

Right: Angelique competing in a recent Shearing Sport wool handling event.

Photo: Des Williams



As well as classing, the certificate in Wool Technology opens up opportunities in a number of related fields such as wool buying, wool broking, the wool store, science and technology and instructing which is one of Angelique's greatest loves. Working as a qualified wool classer also means you have the potential to earn more. Some qualified classers earn as much as three times more than those without the qualifications.

“It might have been bad in the past but now it’s a professional industry and we work hard for our money and make money for the farmer”

Angelique says having the qualification gives you a much greater understanding of the science behind the job and knowing the reasons why you do what you do is really important in driving you to do the job well.

There are a number of qualities Angelique believes successful wool classers need to have - an ability to relate to people, an understanding and empathy with the needs of your team, a good attitude and most importantly an understanding of wool handling.

Three years ago Angelique settled in Christchurch and has been working as a senior wool handler and classer for [contractor] Barry Pullin around the Canterbury region ever since. For the past two years she has also been working part time as an instructor for Tectra.

She loves motivating and helping young people, helping them find a purpose in life and educating them as to what the industry has to offer.

Angelique is hugely passionate for what the shearing industry has enabled her to achieve and believes it is a fantastic career option for anyone leaving school unsure of what it is they want to do with their lives.

There are still many people out there with a negative view on the industry which she believes is a hang over from the past.

“What other job allows you to travel the world, pays well and provides the opportunity to compete in shows for good prize money”

Wool Industry training.

Agriculture ITO industry training is designed to equip people of all levels of experience who are employed in the wool harvesting industry (shearing, wool handling and wool pressing) with the knowledge and skills they need to enhance productivity and profitability; improve health and safety in the workplace; and increase employee job satisfaction and staff retention.

1050 people on average have been participating in wool harvesting training during the first 9 months of 2007. Of these close to 100 are undertaking Modern Apprenticeship training. Close to 40% were involved in wool handling training.

In the second quarter alone 34 level 3 (confident to perform to a high standard and unsupervised) and level 4 (able to plan and supervise others) qualifications in wool handling were achieved. The level 4 qualifications is an ideal lead in toward gaining Classer status.

Whether readers are new to the wool harvesting industry, already have some experience, or are currently in, or progressing towards, a supervisory or management role, Agriculture ITO offers a range of nationally recognised qualifications. Training is developed in consultation with Meat & Wool New Zealand and the wool harvesting industry, and delivered by Tectra, Agriculture ITO's preferred training provider. For follow up please talk to your local Tectra Regional Training Manager - call 0800 35 00 35.

Trial Course

As noted earlier, a trial course/assessment is being run in Australia in April 2008 to mark the NZ/Australian agreement to cross credit qualifications.

The course will need a minimum of 6 participants and the timing of the course aligns with classing work in Australia. TAFE have agreed to assist students in finding classing work for 2-3 months. Course notes will be forwarded to those wishing to participate in this trial to reduce the risk of surprises.

Anyone interested in undertaking this course, should contact NZWCA registrar, Mike Gourdie, for more details.

Health Tip



Feeling tired and listless of late?

It may not be just the work or the weather- you might be dehydrated.

Our bodies are approximately 60% water, so any imbalance with the loss of essential water and salts affects normal body function. In order to perform at optimum and comfortable levels you need to consume fluid. For each per cent of body weight lost due to dehydration, your performance slips by 2%, and a meager 2% loss in weight can force your heart rate and body temperature to spiral upward, making strenuous exercise impossible to carry out.

The physical nature of wool harvesting, often in hot and at times stifling conditions at this time of year, combined with smoking, the intake of too much caffeine and or alcohol will result in dehydration if the body is not regularly topped up with fluid.

How do you know you are dehydrated? Hydrated skin is elastic and will return to its normal position after being pinched. A simple test is to pinch a fold of the skin on the back of your hand. If the skin is less elastic and slow to

return to its normal position there's every chance you are dehydrated to some degree. Another symptom is concentrated urine which appears dark yellow.

Many gut disorders are caused by dehydration, among a raft of other things, and a worst case scenario is painful kidney stones.

If you start the day hydrated, the frequent intake of small amounts of water, diluted sachet or commercial sports drink throughout the day should be enough to sustain hydration throughout each day. Avoid too much soft drink as they contain a lot of sugar.

Drink several glasses of water before work, at smoko and lunch breaks, and after work- preferably before consuming a well deserved 'cold one'.
Cheers.

HOT NEWS

The Wool Industry Network has just announced its strategy for the future of the strong wool industry.

For more information: www.woolnetwork.co.nz

Did you know wool fibre can be bent 15,000 times before it fractures, no other fibre can do this.

SHEARING SPORTS COMPETITIONS

Wool handling competitions continue in the New Year throughout the country and cater for all levels of experience. Basically the events are judges on a combination of skills, quality and speed that are used in the shed, so you can practice all day at work!

In addition these competitions are an ideal opportunity for any aspiring wool handlers, Q stencil holders and classers to rub shoulders with the worlds very best as they do their stuff throughout a range of wool categories- fine, lambs, crossbred, second shear- in NZ title events at Alexandra, Balclutha, Christchurch, Raglan, Golden Shears and Te Kuiti, and in numerous nationwide local competitions throughout the year.

If competing isn't your thing then you might like to become involved in the running and/or judging of these events. It's a great way of keeping in touch with the industry, market requirements and those who are responsible for ensuring these things happen in everyday work. Many of our top competitors are those who lead the work every day on the shed.

World Champs

With two places up for grabs to represent NZ at the World Champs to be held in Norway October 2008 competition will be keen in both Islands to initially win a place in the respective Island circuits in order to qualify for the competition for team selection at Golden Shears in Masterton in March 2008.

At the very least, if you haven't already, attend a local competition. It's well worth a look.



The wool harvesting industry has recently experienced a high and a low:

Congratulations to Emily Welch (27) who smashed Jill Angus-Burney's lamb shearing record which had stood for 18 years by a whopping 107. Well done!

Our **sympathies** are extended to Diane and to the Paewai whanau on the sudden death of Joseph Paewai. The cheeky faced 44 year old had claimed just his first NZ shearing title in October at the NZ Merino Shears.

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The Board of NZWCA wishes all of you a safe and happy Christmas and a rewarding year in 2008.