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# NEWSLETTER

February 2014

## Chairman's Comments

Now that we are into another year it is time to start looking ahead. Planning has been going on for a while to have two courses run by the association this year (see page 3). Both will be focusing on the stronger end of the clip as we are given to understand that the Merino Company are having a fibre select day this year. This year we will have a vacancy created on the board as Graeme Bell has decided not to stand for re-election. Graeme has served Wool Classers for a long time in New Zealand; he was a member of the old CRAIG committee under the umbrella of the old Wool Board and the inaugural Association Chairman. He has seen us progress from a funded organisation from the wool levies that all producers paid when they sold wool to what we now have which is an organisation that is trying to do the same job without using up all the funds that were saved as the levy funding wound down plus our registration fees. At last year's AGM we passed a motion to have a small increase in the fees, reducible by prompt payment. Having all classers paying a registration fee would help us all by generating more unity (hopefully) as well as an increase in income. Another board member who has served for many years Alistair Eckhoff is also due to retire by rotation but hopefully will be standing again. It would be good however to have more nominations than vacancies. Put your name down and influence YOUR organisation. Nomination forms are on your website, [www.woolclassers.co.nz](http://www.woolclassers.co.nz)

We have done well to have kept our fees as low as we have. We hear complaints that we don't do a lot and we cost a lot more than our Trans-Tasman neighbours. What isn't remembered is that they still have a levy system that funds them, and that our fees are very little more than they were when we did have a levy. The better funding and size also gives them more ability to police the system. We have people classing and putting a stencil number on clips that should not be as they are not currently registered. If you know of this happening tell us, we cannot afford police but our members should be doing the job as it is helping themselves as well as the organisation, it may also help keep the standards up for the industry. Hopefully we will see a good turnout for our industry refresher days and the AGM this year. There are things we can do if we all work together. Let's all get together and help the wool industry, many seem to have a death wish for the whole industry; it is too good to lose. If the push for more quality control continues to grow we should see more demand for registered classers as I see no other way of giving buyers an assurance that the clip has been handled and presented under the supervision of a person that has training and an understanding of what is required as well as consistency. This has to be good for us as a group and as an organisation.

**Bill Dowle**  
*Chairman NZWCA*

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Please note that articles and opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the New Zealand Wool Classers Association, but those of the author or outside contributors.



# Pre lamb - Contractors and Classers

– Barry Pullin / Peter Lyon, Shearing Contractors

Pre lamb is a condensed, pressurised period of the shearing calendar where the demand for shed staff is at a minimum of 25% more than normal. In today's times you cannot go to the nearest bridge, toot your horn and magically expect shed staff to appear. The way that contractors get through this period is by planning and structuring their resource i.e. staff, in a way that they think will meet the need.

There are five main issues that are common in our years of contracting.

**1. The extra shed hand** – has this been discussed with the farmer, the contractor and the classer before shearing commences? Is there the need for the extra shed hand or is it just to make things easier? From a contractors business perspective a shed hand has a daily cost of \$275-\$300 a day which includes not only the cost of the wage but the hidden cost of employing that person. On a shed shearing 800 sheep that's \$34/100 and on 1000 that's \$27.50/100. This cost must be borne by somebody.

## **2. The operating shed has a structure.**

The contractor has invested in their people with leading shed hands, gangers (team leaders). These people have been chosen and up skilled by the business so that they can deal with the issues that arise every day. Classers must understand this hierarchy of control and use it.

**3. The press and the presser** – as a classer you must have a clearly understood system that you want the presser to follow while doing his bales. Preferably this should be written down and clear for everyone to understand. A laminated sheet would be a good idea with tasks and areas of responsibility. I.E fadges - leading shed hand. Pack branding – who writes on it and when is it written on. Before, after pressing? The branding is a mine field and the problem is that there is not a common system that everyone uses.

**4. Loyalty** – loyalty to the farmer, to the crew and to the contractor. Loyalty is built on trust. The relationship between the classer and the team has to be underpinned by that loyalty where none of the parties will go away bad



mouthed the others. If there is a problem, sort it at the time because often loyalty and trust is built on effective problem solving.

**5. Time is always smart in the shed** – use it wisely! Mainlines\Oddments – when under pressure don't get bogged down with the little things when the main valve is in preparing the fleece wool accurately and properly whether it is to contract or auction demand.

**6. The NZ Wool Classers Association (NZWCA)** – as contractors we support it. As classers you must also, as it is your national body and your voice.

In summary, all the above issues can be covered under one word...**Communication**. If people have clear lines of understanding and systems which are easy to follow these become the principles of good shed operation.

## Summer Shearing

– PGG Wrightson Wool

### **Lambswool**

Draft off any down-cross lambs from the crossbreds and any short, late lambs from the main mob. Sort out when too short, or conversely when overgrown. The latter will suffer an inferior washing colour and have higher vegetable matter (VM) content. Sort into tree types; first lambs or body wool, second lambs or bellies and pieces, lambs eye clips or wigs and face pieces. The bellies and seconds may go together but keep the wigs separate. Plastic clothes baskets can be a tidy way of carrying wools in a long side-board shed.

### **Spring and Early Summer Second Shear**

To avoid discounting, please check that the staple length is not less than 75mm and shear two tooth ewes separately from mixed aged ewes. The stress of lambing, winter climate and consequent heavier condition does not make spring and early summer second shear very attractive. Due to even length it is unlikely that there will be many off-sorts to remove. Keep the bellies separate from the pieces as these can be stained, webby or muddy.

### **Ewe Fleece**

Shirt fleeces to required standards. Grade in the shed to one bulk line, removing as off-sorts only those fleeces (if any) that are obviously different such as cotted, very short or highly discoloured. Please pay close attention to your branding, oddment descriptions and bale weights.





## Sort Cots

### – Elders Primary Wool Limited

We recommend that you shear full wool ewes as early as possible this season and take particular care to remove cotted wool from free grown wool.

Despite the good winter and spring, last autumn's drought will have given rise to coting and our advice is to shear full wool ewes early. With fewer ewes on the ground and firmer prices for crossbred wool – it makes sense to maximise the saleability of your wool clip.

Cots are caused when wool fibres stop growing due to stress and are then shed from the follicle and migrate into the fleece. The longer the fleece remains on the sheep the more likely it is that cots will appear and increase in severity.

The wool industry is equipped to deal with straight lines of cotted wool as they are fed

through a mechanical “opening” process. Once “Opened” the wool exposes a huge range of wool lengths and will most often be spun through the woollen processing systems. Cotted fleeces do not need to be skirted but they do attract a discount.

**Where cots do cause a problem** is when random cotted fleeces or segments of cotted wool appear in lines of otherwise free grown wool. They then need to be removed at the scour before scouring and incur additional costs in the process.

Good wool handling is vital – remove individual cots and cotted portions from free grown fleeces to enhance the sale of your clip.

Nothing looks worse than a piece of cotted wool sitting on top of a line of otherwise free grown wool in the sample boxes pre-sale.

## Newsflash

### Classer Refresher Days /AGM

*Pencil this into your diary*

#### South Island 6<sup>th</sup> May Bruce Woollen Mill, Milton

See and hear what is happening at this iconic mill. Combined with the AGM.

#### North Island 7<sup>th</sup> May Elders, Napier

An interesting day assured. I have asked the people up there to organise a day around the pertinent issues that they are facing.

## The Cost of Contamination

### What is dark medullated fibre contamination?

Urine stain develops when wool is in contact with urine, changing from yellow to black over time. Pigmentation is due to the production of melanin in the wool follicle and skin, with the colour passing into the fibre itself. A urine stained or pigmented fibre in white or pastel fabric shows as a thin dark line or as a dark smudge. Note: dark fibre contamination is not due to staining by water, parasite infestation, dag or yolk, as the colours are usually not dark enough.

Medullated fibres are very coarse in diameter and hollow, or partially hollow, in the middle. The hollow sections of fibre do not absorb dyes resulting in a different, often whiter, appearance in a dark coloured fabric.

### What happens when wool is contaminated?

Dark and/or medullated fibre contamination is often not found until after weaving or dyeing. Removal at this stage involves the very costly manual removal (picking) of the individual contaminant fibres.

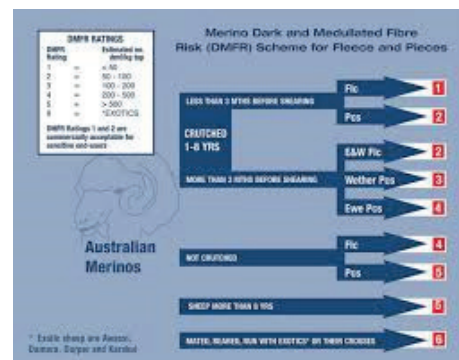
Contaminated in a fabric can result in a claim for compensation for picking or downgrading of the value of the product from the weaver, to the spinner and to the topmaker. Unfortunately, the topmaker invariably “wears” the claim because the identity of the contaminating bale(s) was lost when the wool was tipped into the scour. Such claims are very costly to the industry and disadvantage wool against competing fibres.

### The cost of contamination

In one example of the impact of medullated fibre contamination provided by the Macquarie Textile Group, the value of the product at different stages of processing was:

- Wool (10,000 kg 24 microns) \$120,000
- Yarn (20,000 kg wool/poly blend) \$350,000
- Fabric (38,000 metres) \$500,000
- Suits (10,000) \$2,500,000

In this case, the contamination was not found until the fabric stage. It only needed 10 grams in the original 10,000 kg to create the problem!



[Woolproducers.com.au](http://Woolproducers.com.au)

Wool Producers News





## Registrars Ramblings

Much has been made of Primary ITO'S decision regarding training with in the wool industry, however be assured that the way that training is carried will carry on the way that it is currently. Your sign up and administration may well be carried out directly by the ITO, however the people on the ground will remain the same.

Congratulations to PGG/Wrightson for the pro-active stand that they are taking regarding wool quality. They are paying the registration fees of the classers that are employed by them and have also come out with a QA scheme that puts the onus back on the classer. All we need is to make sure that the stencil numbers remain in the catalogue – **only** if they are current!

The Strong Wool Refresher Day will be held at the Bruce Woollen Mill in Milton this year. This icon has been given a new lease of life after being basically a cottage industry for years so it will be great to visit and get a feel for the issues that they face. We are all in this industry together so even if we can help in a small way it makes a difference. The mill is capable of doing fine merino as well so will be interesting to see what the future holds. Working with wool at that level is no different to what is done throughout the chain – it keeps coming back to the passion and professionalism of every link in the chain.

There needs to be at least one further Board member nominated following the retirement

of Graeme Bell . Alistair Eckhoff comes up for re-election as well, so remember that this is **your** Board - download a voting from our website form and twist someone's arm or maybe you think you would like to be part of the board.

Finally went too 'Champion for Wool Meeting' on the 23 January. These guys are doing a great job promoting wool around the world and they are doing it for nothing just as part of your involvement with wool so please support them wherever you can.

**Dave Carr**  
*Registrar NZWCA*

