

Clip Preparation – Best Practice Guideline

NEW ZEALAND WOOL CLASSERS ASSOCIATION
www.woolclassers.org.nz

Introduction

This document has been produced as a result of consultation between a range of industry groups, and describes the minimum practices necessary to ensure successful technical preparation of the wool clip through structured communication between the various parties involved in the process, as well as that necessary to ensure the welfare of both sheep and workforce.

The guideline is designed to define best practices to ensure the following three basic principles for wool preparation are achieved, namely: -

- Production of uniform, fit for purpose lines designed to meet the diverse expectations and needs of the wool processors, that will maximize buyer competition
- Contamination is eliminated from the wool
- Accurate and complete identification and documentation of wool on-farm to support its subsequent passage into the marketplace.

The Guideline contains *minimum requirements* for clip preparation, therefore specific industry quality control systems may have more rigorous standards. Where other quality control or accreditation systems do not define practices described in this document, or refer to this Guideline, then the recommendations described in this document should be followed.

This document should be displayed in woolsheds so that it can be referred to when necessary. However, it is also vital that all parties in the process of shearing and presenting wool should have read this Guide *before* shearing time, and be aware of his or her responsibilities, and the aims of this document.

Other industry documents that should also be read and understood prior to shearing commencing are: Best practice guidelines for the N Z shearing industry also Fasting of Sheep Prior to Shearing (available at <https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/agriculture/working-with-animals/working-with-sheep/fasting-of-sheep-prior-to-shearing-gpg>)

Code of recommendations and minimum Standards for the Welfare of Sheep (available at <https://beeflambnz.com/your-levies-at-work/welfare-sheep-and-beef-cattle>)

A. Individual's Responsibilities

1. FARMER

- To ensure that the working conditions of contracting staff are adequate**
 - a sufficient, clean and tidy working area
 - a sufficient, clean and tidy eating area
 - clean/hygienic toilet facilities with provision for hot and cold water
- To ensure the shed is properly prepared for shearing. This means: -**
 - adequate constant light over work areas
 - the woolshed and equipment meet Work Safe regulations - steps and landing, board, gates, press, machines
 - sufficient packs, clips, vivids, branding inks and stencils
 - adequate bins, fadge holders, and containers for dags, urine stain, black wool skin and rubbish
 - recording book/s
- To ensure any shearing contractor or open shed shearers, leading wool handler and classer are fully aware of: -**
 - details of numbers and classes of sheep to be shorn
 - wool handling requirements including wool handler numbers
 - age and sex of each mob
 - size of each mob and variations between mobs if any
 - previous season's specifications and test results

d) To present sheep for shearing as follows: -

- dry: damp or wet sheep should not be shorn
- daggged: at least seven days prior to shearing
- empty: yarded and off food and water in accordance with the Fasting sheep prior to shearing Guidelines (see summary table in Appendix 1).
- drafted to separate:
 - breeds
 - black fibred sheep
 - ages (i.e., lambs, hoggets, and mature)
 - wool lengths (i.e., sheep shorn at different times)
 - any other significant differences.

e) To ensure bales comply with Export Packaging Standards in respect to:

- woolpacks used are new or approved recycled
- clipping, labeling, branding inks and stencils
- bale weights do not exceed 200kg and a minimum of 100kg

2. CONTRACTOR OR EMPLOYER

a) Arrange and provide:

- the agreed number of certified or competent shearers
- the agreed number of wool handlers including at least one leading wool handler capable of assuming a training role (e.g., Registered classer/grader with NZ Wool Classers Association)
- a presser capable of pressing to the NZ Code of Practice for Wool Packaging and
- recording bale details and pen up as required.

b) To ensure:

- that a consistent standard of staff is maintained
- that key wool handling personnel do not change
- continued liaison with the contractor or grower.

b) Specifications

ensure that the classer/grader neatly and accurately records bale contents in press book and if required prepares the specification form covering each consignment leaving the shed.

3. CLASSER

a) Qualifications

- Hold a current Classers registration with NZ Wool Classers Association and therefore up to date with all relevant market preparation. To check on current registered wool classers go to; <https://woolclassers.org.nz/member-profiles/?wpv-membership-role=full>

b) Management & Supervision

- of the shed and all aspects of clip preparation including wool handling, **pressing** and recording of bales
- of classing the clip
- of the handling of the clip to ensure maximisation of its value
- with leading wool handler, of the arrangement of shed equipment to ensure the best possible work-flow consistent with meeting market requirements.

c) Before Commencement

- discuss the clip and the grower's requirements
- enquire as to whether the clip or part thereof is subject to a contract and any special conditions necessary to be complied with
- consider previous years' lines and measurements details
- if not known enquire as to last years shearing re - number of sheep, mob composition, and differences in mobs
- discuss current market trends.

d) During Shearing

- set up and class the minimum number of lines required to best present the clip for sale
- ensure that agreed, proper wool handling procedures are followed
- ensure that wool is classed according to standards appropriate to the particular clip
- ensure the presser records bale numbers and contents correctly and that
- branding is accurate and clear
- ensure that there are no “bottlenecks” or holdups due to overload on himself or the wool press.
- Completes documentation to be forwarded to selling agent

4. PRESSER

a) Prior to shearing:

- read and understand the requirements of this Best practice guideline for the NZ shearing industry and know standard industry bale descriptions for common wool types.
- know minimum (100kg) and maximum (200kg) industry agreed bale weights
- know how to cap off bales correctly and maintain accurate records of bale numbers and descriptions for pressed bales in tally book
- be aware of the need for careful individual fleece packing for bin and reclass fleece lines, and for **paper divisions between layers in bin bales**
- ensure a tidy area around the press
- assist the leading shed hand to set up the wool shed to ensure that placement of the press in relation to bins maximizes the efficiency of the operation
- study the wool press and ensure familiarity with its operation
- where appropriate, talk to the grower about changes that could be made to improve the efficiency of shearing in the future

b) At shearing

- maintain a tidy area around the press
- quickly master the safe and efficient operation of the wool press

- continually press to required weights
- organize the pressing of fleece and oddments to avoid unnecessary mixed bin bales
- take responsibility for and ensure the security for the press and its contents so that no foreign matter gets into the bale
- limit the number of people with access to the press to minimize the possibility of foreign matter entering bales and for safety reasons
- bales numbers and contents are recorded accurately
- brand is accurate and clear

5. LEADING WOOL HANDLER

a) Chain of command

- answerable to either the grower or classer
- may be asked by either grower or classer for advice on wool preparation and/or organisation of shed.

b) To ensure (in the absence of a classer)

- that shed equipment is arranged to suit all parties and to give the best **possible** work flow
- that agreed wool handling procedures are followed by the wool handling team
- that the wool is graded consistently by the wool handling team
- that the branding of bales is carried out accurately and clearly
- that the presser properly enters bale details in the bale book
- that the presser is guided when necessary.

6. Q STENCIL HOLDERS

a) Qualifications

- Hold a current Q Stencil and registration with NZWCA. To check on current wool graders go to; <https://woolclassers.org.nz/member-profiles/?wpv-membership-role=q-grader>

b) Prior to shearing

- ensure familiarity with the responsibilities noted under “Leading Wool Handlers Responsibilities” above
- consult with the grower and be familiar with his requirements
- be familiar with and adhere to all the standards set out in this Code

c) At shearing

- oversee clip preparation when a classer is not considered necessary
- use a check list

- separate permanently discoloured belly wool and/or fribs
- keep dags and stained wools separate
- separate locks and second cuts from body wool when the fleece is thrown
- handle short wools on the board as sheep are shorn

7. WOOL HANDLERS

a) Wool handlers must:

- (with the exception of learners) be competent to pick up and throw each fleece to ensure it is evenly spread over the table allowing for easy identification and separation of processing faults
- be competent to identify the different wool categories
- keep the board clear of short crutch wool and second cuts

8. SHEARERS

- have had sufficient training and practice to be able to competently shear a sheep cleanly, minimizing skin and second cuts
- shearers will call “black wool” if present and raddle sheep if required
- any sheep that is badly cut will be attended to and raddled
- will leave the fleece in a condition that can be easily picked up and thrown by wool handlers

B. Preparation

1. AIMS

- to produce lines of wool which have uniform colour, length, fault, and fibre diameter and keep basic breeds separate
- to keep different categories, separate such as:

dags	mud or earth contaminated
urine stain	non-scourable stains (e.g., canary yellow)
clumps of vegetable matter	mixed fibre diameter
skin pieces	rubbish
cotted portions	pen stain clumps
pigmented fibres	mixed lengths
eye clips	

2. FULL LENGTH FLEECES

a) Classing Full Fleece Fine Wools

- Classed for fineness-fine, medium, and strong.
- Secondary off-type lines will be of different length, colour or significant faults
- The following descriptions should be used but generally only two or three main lines will be required for fineness.

Merino/Polwarth		Corriedale/Half-bred	
<i>Description</i>	<i>Micron range</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Micron range</i>
Super fine	≤ 16	Extra fine	≤ 25
Extra fine	17-18	Fine	26-27
Fine	19-20	Medium	28-29
Medium	21-22	Strong	30-31
Strong	23-24	Extra Strong	≥ 32

The following must be separated from the main fineness lines:

Good Colour	Average Colour	Poor Colour
Fleeces not matching bulk	Fleeces not matching bulk	No grading except for fineness in merino
Cotted	Cotted	
Yellow/discoloured	Very discoloured	
Short/very long	Short/very long	
Tender	Very tender	
Contains VM		

b) Sorting and Grading Lambs and Second Shear wools

- Length and colour are the important aspects in grading these wools.
- When sorting these body wool types which do not hold together, they are best handled on the board, then taken to a stack on the wool room floor for blending and checking before pressing. Urine stained and dags, shorter and discoloured wool, should be removed from the main body wool as it comes off the sheep.
- Lamb and second shears can generally be divided into two lines:
 - body wool
 - shorter and discoloured wools from belly, legs and crutch (known as “bellies and pieces”)
- Lambs wool: breed types, very strong, lustrous, or shorter body wool should be kept separate
- Urine stained and dags, shorter and discoloured wool, should be removed from the main body wool as it comes off the sheep.

The following must be removed:

Good Colour	Average Colour	Inferior Colour
Permanently & heavily discoloured	Permanently & heavily discoloured	Heavily discoloured
Dags	Dags	Dags
Pen stain	Pen stain	Urine stain
Very short	Very short	

c) Grading full fleece crossbred wool

- Need not be divided into fineness brackets depending on the age of the sheep, micron range and price differentials. High bulk wools should be kept separate and off-type fleeces and faults removed from the main line as follows:

Good & Better	Average	Poor
Off-type fleeces	Off-type fleeces	
Cotted	Cotted	Cotted
Yellow or discoloured	Very discoloured	
VM over 0.3	Very heavy VM	
Short or very long	Very short or long	
33 microns & finer		
Very hairy		

d) Crutchings and Eye Clips

- **Full** - wool removed from around back legs, crutch around and over tail and should be sorted for length, colour and dags.
- **Ring and fly** – normally short and urine stained. Stains and dags should be separated from good coloured wool
- **Eye Clips**- usually short and medullated

e) General summary of guidelines for removal from each fleece according to colour:

Good Colour	Average Colour	Poor Colour
Neck collars with VM	Neck collars with VM	Bellies
Permanently & heavily discoloured	Permanently & heavily discoloured	Locks, second pieces
Bellies	Bellies	Stains
Backs with VM	Clumps of VM	Dags
Pieces with VM	Urine stained	
Urine stained	Pen stained	
Pen stained	Locks, second pieces	
Locks, second pieces	Dags	
Dags		

This Best Practice Guideline for Clip Preparation was compiled with the assistance of the following organizations, and has their endorsement:

- *New Zealand Woolclassers Association*
- *NZ Shearing Contractors Association*
- *Meat and lamb New Zealand*
- *New Zealand Wool brokers Association*
- *New Zealand Council of Wool Exporters Inc.*
- *Federation of New Zealand Wool Merchants Inc.*

Appendix 1 Fasting Guidelines

The following summary table gives the recommendations for emptying out sheep prior to shearing. They are given in the worksafe published document Health and Safety Recommendations for Fasting of Sheep Prior to Shearing

(<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/agriculture/working-with-animals/working-with-sheep/fasting-of-sheep-prior-to-shearing-gpg#lf-doc-21784>),

which in turn complies with the Code of Recommendations and Minimum Standards for the Welfare of Sheep.

Fasting of Sheep Prior to Shearing - Health and Safety Recommendations for - The Full Facts

	<p>Fasting of sheep prior to shearing benefits both farmers and shearers. Sheep that are adequately emptied out cause fewer back injuries, strains and ACC claims, as well as reduced disease risk for those working in wool sheds, and reduce the incidence of pen stain in wool, resulting in improved product performance.</p> <p>This document aims to make practical recommendations to reduce the incidence of full sheep being presented for shearing while ensuring that the welfare and performance of sheep is not adversely affected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time off feed includes the time sheep spend mobbed up during mustering, when feed intake is minimal. • Care must be taken to ensure that no sheep shorn exceeds the recommended number of hours without feed or water. This is particularly important when a full day's shearing is mustered the previous day, as sheep shorn late in the day will be off feed 10 – 12 hours longer than those shorn early in the morning • Extra care must be taken when handling pregnant sheep.
<p>TEAM EFFORT</p>	<p>Good communication, careful planning and the fostering of strong working relationships are the key ingredients that will make these recommendations effective. Both farmer and shearing contractor must recognise the variable conditions each party faces and recognise the importance of good planning and communication.</p>
<p>SHEDDING UP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheep should be put in the woolshed as late as is practical on the day before shearing begins. Catching pens should be clean and dry at the beginning of shearing — this may require catching pens remaining empty overnight. • Care must be taken when handling ewes and hoggets with lambs at foot. Where practical, lambs should remain with their mothers until the ewes/hoggets are put in the woolshed.

HEALTH AND WELFARE	Exceeding the recommended maximums off feed or water may induce metabolic problems and/or precipitate clinical diseases. Farmers are advised not to vaccinate empty sheep against Salmonella or Campylobacter.
	The complete Health and Safety Recommendations for Fasting of Sheep Prior to Shearing is available at https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/agriculture/working-with-animals/working-with-sheep/fasting-of-sheep-prior-to-shearing-gpg

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPTYING OUT SHEEP PRIOR TO SHEARING

Recommended Minimum and Maximum Number of Hours Without Feed and Water Prior to Shearing for Any Individual Sheep*					
	Hours Without Feed		Hours Without Water		Special considerations
	Min	Max	Min	Max	
Ewes (and adult male sheep)					
Non-pregnant, non-lactating	18	32	12	24	Exceeding these maximums may induce metabolic problems and/or precipitate clinical diseases.
Early to mid-pregnancy	18	30	12	24	
Late pregnancy and lactation	12	24	8	20	Exceeding these maximums may induce metabolic problems and/or precipitate clinical diseases. Where practical, unweaned lambs should remain with their mothers until ewes enter the woolshed.
Hoggets					
Non-pregnant, non-lactating	18	30	12	24	Use special care when handling pregnant hoggets. Exceeding these maximums may induce metabolic problems and/or precipitate clinical diseases. Where practical, unweaned lambs should remain with their mothers until hoggets enter the woolshed.
Pregnancy and lactation	12	24	8	20	
Lambs					
Pre-weaning	6	24	6	20	Exceeding these maximums may precipitate clinical diseases.