

Fostering and supporting quality education, harvesting and presentation standards in the wool industry.

A home for all involved in wool growing, handling, grading, and classing.



NZWCA December 2022 Newsletter

Greetings to our valued NZWCA members and supporters



Illustration attributed to Deb Hinde <https://www.deborahhinde.co.nz/>

We hope you take the time to enjoy this newsletter and find the information in it helpful. Thank you to those who have contributed to it in many ways, including those who, mostly reluctantly, allowed their photo to be taken while they worked or learnt!

Please feel free to pass this on to anyone you think may be interested.

If you are reading this because someone has passed it on to you, and you'd like to get on the mailing list to receive our newsletter in future, please contact Marg Forde reg@woolclassers.org.nz

Since our last newsletter in May, a new body has come into being. Wool Impact Inc was established after two years of work and investigation by the Strong Wool Action Group. Welcome to the block Wool Impact! We look forward to working with you and note the resumption of the Q Course Grading Certificate last month is as a direct result of you seeing the value of this wool education for experienced wool handlers. (See the Q Course article in this newsletter, and the introductory piece by Ross McIsaac of Wool Impact).

We want to make a special mention of the businesses and organisations that sponsor NZWCA. Your support and shared passion for New Zealand wool is truly appreciated, thank you. All those groups are listed at underneath this article and on the home page of our website www.woolclassers.org.nz

As this newsletter goes out, we are at the back end of another pre-lamb season and the beginning of another mainshear. We are also coming into summer, and the festive and holiday season.

So, we close with warmest Seasons Greetings to you all and those you care about. We hope all our fellow hard working wool industry members can take some time out for a break to enjoy the season.

Meri Kirihimete, ngā mihi o te Tau Hou.

Be safe out there!

from NZWCA Chairman Bill Dowle and Registrar Marg Forde and the NZWCA Board

Proudly supported by:



NZWTA



WoolResearch

**BJ Mahony
Shearing**

**Peter Lyon
Shearing**
SHEAR QUALITY



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MERINO

WoolWORKS



Bremworth

PGG Wrightson

[Home - Wool Classers Association](http://www.woolclassers.org.nz)

[NZ Wool Classers Association | Facebook](#)



NZWCA Dates for Your Diary

If you are going to the next Wanaka A & P Show on 10-11 March 2023, come and say hi to us!

NZWCA has been generously gifted a stand space beside the Wool Impact and Devold stands, situated between the fleece and sheep competition areas.

This will be a first for NZWCA, we will be aiming to connect with our members, to remind everyone that we are an industry good organisation, a quality assurance body with a strong record of advocacy for wool education and training; and talk to wool growers about how they can use our website to check if their classer is using a valid stencil or to join NZWCA as Farmer Classers or Associate members.

The 2023 NZWCA AGM/Industry Professional Development Day date has been set for

Tuesday 9th May in Christchurch.

Venue and further details will be confirmed on our website

www.woolclassers.org.nz

nearer the time, but format will be similar to last year:

Wool exercises first up, speakers, AGM just before lunch and more speakers and activities after lunch. All are welcome, no cost to members, non-members \$25 and student rate available on enquiry



Registrar Marg Forde A1260 on a shed visit with Charlotte Stuart P2222



SHOCK TACTIC

on bale contamination hits the mark

A ute load containing six weeks' worth of wool bale contamination delivered a hard-hitting message at the NZ Wool Classers Assn North Island Industry Day in Napier in October.



Andy Coleman, of WoolWorks (NZ's only wool scouring company) chose to illustrate his speaking slot at the NZWCA day by loading the things found in bales that weren't wool, during just the previous six weeks, in the back of his work ute which he parked just outside the door of the room being used for the Industry Day at the PGGW wool store in Napier.

The problem of contamination in wool bales is costly and risked NZ wool's reputation overseas. It is an issue in both the North and South Islands said Andy, however statistics collected in recent years proved it was much more of a problem with wool baled in the North Island than the South.

Andy's summary, and plea: "All I can really say is that, in the wool shed only wool needs to be on the floor, all clothing needs to be hung up and all the rubbish is in the bin." As for the huge number of press bars- a note for pressers: "If you press a bale with four bars and then there are only three when you press the next bale... there is one missing and it's in that bale.... so, try find it in the side of the bale or just write on that bale **press bar in here**," said Andy.



STENCIL NEWS AND INFORMATION

Changes since the last newsletter – well done and/or welcome to the following

Professional classer stencil prefix upgrades:

August

Te Moore P to H 2188

September

Rebecca Braddick-Tohiariki P to M 2103

October

Will Gibson P to M 2134

Sarah Lewis P to M 2176

Rochelle Price B to A 2175

Farmer classers inspected and confirmed:

Emma O'Sullivan FM 2187

Fiona Ramsden FX 2153

Provisional stencil applications approved:

Charlotte Stuart P 2222

Halley Gerrard P2223

Amber Poihipi P 2224

Jeanine O'Neill P 2226

Provisional Grader application approved:

Mary Comer QP 2225

Some stencil information:

The "Q" prefix grading registration is valid for Mid-Micron hogget's and all Crossbred wool. It is not valid for Mid-Micron adult wool or Merino wool.

The "A" wool classing prefix denotes full registration which is recognised competence in Crossbred, Mid Micron and Merino wool types

The "D" wool classing prefix is for Merino and Mid Micron. The "B" prefix is for Crossbred and Mid Micron. The "X" is for Crossbred. The "C" is for Merino and Crossbred

The "P" prefix is Provisional registration. It does not imply any of NZWCA's practical standards have been met; a P wool classing prefix denotes the holder has achieved their Certificate in Wool Technology and has applied and been granted Provisional NZWCA registration. The next step to becoming a fully qualified and recognised classer is to pass the prescribed practical assessments of shed management and wool clip inspections. Provisional classers are encouraged to progress off the P prefix within three years.

Full explanation here:

<https://woolclassers.org.nz/members-area/membership-information/>

Stencil Product Information

[NZWCA Stencil Products - Wool Classers Association](#)



NZWCA December 2022 Newsletter

Classers-at-work Pre-lamb 2022



At Maungatiro in the Haka Valley
Cassie Johnston H2182



At Earnscleugh Station near Alexandra,
Rebecca Braddick-Tohiariki M2103



At Moutere Station near
Alexandra, PGGW wool rep
Graeme Bell A223 and
Classer Rose Barnett A1565



At Cairnmuir near Cromwell
Pru Heaney P2158



At Carrickmore, Patearoa
Lucas Broughton-
Siemonek P2205



NZWCA December 2022 Newsletter

Successful NZWCA North Island Industry Day

In October the first NZWCA North Island Industry Day since 2019 was held, based at the PGGW wool store in Napier.



Pulled together by NZWCA vice-chair Sonya Johansen (pictured left) and Registrar Marg Forde, both North Island-based, the day was attended by just over 40 people, a small but noticeably engaged and enthusiastic group.

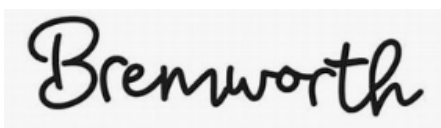
There were a wide range of industry people attending including Southern Institute of Technology tutors Laurie Boniface and Richard Gavigan (thanks for your help Richard, Laurie and Laurie's wife

Judy); staff from companies including PGGW, Wools of NZ, NZ Merino Co, WoolWorks; farmers; a small number of NZWCA members; and a group of 10 wool handlers sent by Colin Watson-Paul of Shearing NZ contractors – the only staff sent to the day by a shearing contractor.

But, as explained by Colin Watson-Paul after the event, he had no regrets giving his 10 staff the day off to attend. Colin wrote:

"As for the course it was the best thing for our girls old and young. Wool may not be selling that well but better prepared wool sells, it is the only product we harvest so we need to do it as best we can, and these types of courses are a great way to show the harvesters what is the right way. Would be great to see a few more as the staff are still talking about it to each other 2 months later. Our growers are very happy with the results. We have been told a few times that we have topped the sales and that is a direct result of knowledge from the course and any new girls coming in are being shown as well. We have doubled the number of wool handlers since the course with a lot of young people coming on board, so it is great to see the knowledge being shown. It is the best natural product in the world to work with. Many Thanks. Colin"

And one of Colin's wool handlers who attended finished the day with more than expanded wool knowledge. At the end of the day all attendees' names were put into a (wool) beanie and Heaven Paku's name was drawn out by Bremworth representative Emma Karaitiana. Heaven's prize? A \$1500 quality wool Bremworth rug of her choice!



Thanks Bremworth <https://bremworth.co.nz/> for your support and generous donation.

[Home - Wool Classers Association](#)

[NZ Wool Classers Association | Facebook](#)





1. Carmen Smith of WOMO Life and Leonora Smith of Smith Contracting having a go at the wool exercises
2. SIT wool tutors Laurie Boniface and Richard Gavigan on hand to assist with the wool exercises
3. PGGW speaker Rosie Moore pondering the wool exercises

NZWCA North Island Industry Day Wool Exercise top score certificates were awarded as follows:

Combined highest score, wool trade: Daryn Pedersen

Combined highest score, student or wool handler: Lennox Taylor

Exercise A Oddment identification (wool trade excluded)

Wool handlers: Maera Tahau, Leah Paki, Te Ariki Te Hau

Students: Annabel Busby, Liam Bradbury, Tia Halcrow, Lennox Taylor

Exercise B Classing (Merino and ¼ BD)

Wool trade: Scott Small

Student or wool handler: Heaven Paku

Exercise C Micron estimate

Wool trade: Daryn Pedersen

Student or wool handler: Lennox Taylor, Annabel Busby

Exercise D Grading

Wool trade: Scott Small

Student or wool handler: Lennox Taylor



Wool exercise winners from Wools of NZ
L to R Liam Bradbury, Lennox Taylor, Scott Small and Tia Halcrow

Wool exercise winning Shearing NZ staff
L to R Shania Mackey, Heaven Paku, Maera Tahau, Leah Paki, Te Ariki Te Hau



Huge thanks to all the staff at the PGGW Napier wool store, to NZ Wool Testing Authority for the guided tour of their facility and excellent speakers on the day:

Derelee Potroz-Smith

<https://woolchemy.com/>

Andy Coleman

<https://woolworks.co.nz/>

Rosie Moore

<https://www.pggwrightson.co.nz/our-services/wool>

Ross McIsaac of Wool Impact Ltd

<https://www.farmersweekly.co.nz/group-has-plans-for-wools-impact/>

Richard Gavigan (wool tutor/wool grower) and

Tom O'Sullivan of Campaign for Wool NZ

<https://www.nzwool.co.nz/>



Tara Marshall QX2220
and Leah Paki



Speaker Derelee Potroz-Smith of
Woolchemy



Tom O'Sullivan, Campaign for
Wool NZ

"Hands down the best water bottle ever" – that's what Sarah Lewis M2176 reckons about the engraved bottle she received for her commendation in the NZWCA Classer Awards for 2021 season, presented at the NZWCA AGM this year. Sarah, who holds NZ and Australia wool classer registration and works in both countries each year says she's a "water bottle expert" and values her bottle both for its function and the accolade it represents.



Wool Impact presentation to the NZ Wool Classers Association's North Island Industry Day



Key Messages

Wool Impact started in July 2022 with the aim of generating more value across the value chain for NZ strong wool while delivering the sector services that are needed. It is jointly funded by industry (WoolWorks and the major meat processing companies) and the Ministry for Primary Industries for the next three years.

There is three-person team behind Wool Impact – Andy Caughey (Chief Executive Officer), Gretchen Foster (Sector Executive) and Ross McIsaac (Sector Executive), who bring together a mix of experience and skills from within and outside the wool sector. Oversight is provided by an independently appointed board.

Ross McIsaac attended the North Island Industry Day and presented to attendees on the purpose of Wool Impact, the key pieces of work planned and underway, and how they are operating.

“Our purpose is to create new demand and value for New Zealand strong wool through brands, products and services that meet sustainability led consumer needs. We are not transacting wool, but we are commercially focused with the work that we are doing.”

The work programme for Wool Impact targets the demand and supply for strong wool and Ross spoke to some specific examples of currently underway:

- Developing the value proposition for strong wool that is consumer-led and able to be adapted and used for different companies and brands that are existing or potential users of strong wool. This will be developed and connected to local and international brands that have the ability and scale to have a significant impact on the demand and value for strong wool.
- Generating value from on-farm assurance and certification through the NZ Farm Assurance Programme (NZFAP) and private certifications. Wool Impact has picked up the funding for NZFAP and is taking an active role in providing the tools needed for wool exporters to promote and generate value from NZFAP.

Ross noted the importance of collaboration and partnership for the sector.

“Collaborating and working in partnership across the value chain to support existing and new work for the sector is a key part of how we will work. We acknowledge that there is already a lot of good work underway across the sector. We want to deliver new pieces of work but also build on what is already being done to avoid duplication. We are working closely with the NZ Wool Classers Association, National Council for New Zealand Wool Interests and the Campaign for Wool.”

As part of their early work, Wool Impact has heard about the importance of wool handling and classing.



“Through our engagement with commercial organisations, we are hearing about the importance of wool handling and preparation in delivering quality wool. To add value, we need quality wool and the job that gets done in the woolshed is vitally important. We know there are a number of factors creating pressure in the woolshed, and on wool harvesting and handling, to focus on efficiency and cost reduction rather than quality. We want to support practical and effective training that is going to attract people to the sector and enable improvements in wool quality through better wool harvesting and handling.”

In recognition of the importance of wool handling and preparation, Wool Impact announced that they had committed funding for the delivery of several of the Q-Course training events, with dates to be announced soon. We are also working together on what the long-term funding options are for the ongoing delivery of practical training.

Ross finished by talking about the positivity encountered across the sector.

“I’d like to finish noting that the engagement that we have undertaken across the sector since starting has been really positive, with a lot of enthusiasm and excitement about the opportunities despite the challenges. It’s a challenging but exciting time and we look forward to working with you more and updating you on our progress.”



New era, new sheep supplier, new wool classer

After 60 years with Earnscleugh Station supplying the sheep for the NZ Merino Shears in Alexandra, a new era began at the 2022 show with Northburn Station stepping up as sheep suppliers. This meant a new wool classer at the show, Northburn’s regular classer NZWCA member Anne-Marie Parcell M1465, pictured here hard at work during the “Alex Show” in early October.

**Photo: Barbara Newton
A723**





**NZWCA is an associate member of the Council.
Here are some items from Council Chairman Rosstan Mazey's
latest update to members**

Meeting with the IWTO team at their office in Brussels: 3 October

I was fortunate enough to be able to dedicate a day on recent WoolWorks funded work related travel to Europe to meet with the IWTO team. This was the first time that I had met them in person. It was a great opportunity to provide them with an overview of the New Zealand wool sector and update them on developments that are underway.

The recently formed IWTO Wool Interiors Working Group represents a significant opportunity for New Zealand as this group is focused on products that are essentially strong wool related. Understandably we have a high level of representation in this group given our heavily weighted strong wool clip profile and the significant government and industry investment and activity currently in place to stimulate demand.

This working group is a significant development as it brings together key strong wool supply origins, manufacturers, and market development groups for the first time in such a focused global forum. For us, there is lots of potential to amplify the efforts and outcomes of this working group across the IWTO global membership to increase interest, demand, and utilisation of strong wool.

Another important point to bring to your attention is the activity that the IWTO is focused on with trying to level the playing fields in terms of standards and claims for wool products vs synthetics. There has been substantial effort applied to lobbying and campaigns initially in the EU, then cascading out to other markets/ jurisdictions with the 'Make the Label Count' IWTO campaign bringing all this activity together.

Wool Research Organisation New Zealand (WRONZ) AGM: 26 October Christchurch

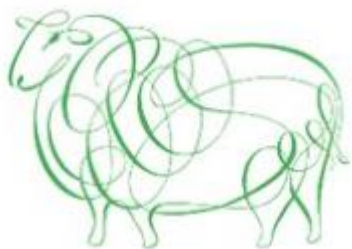
It was great to see some of you and other industry participants at the WRONZ AGM. Attendees were given an update on the New Uses programme by Tom Hooper CEO of Woolsource, noting the progress made with commercial partner engagement. This represents an exciting stage for us all. Questions from the floor centred around the ability for the programme to be accelerated and to bring forward outcomes, acknowledging the real challenges that are facing sheep farmers, particularly with the economics around strong wool production and harvesting.

Tony Cunningham did not seek re-election after 12 years serving on the WRONZ Board. His commitment and service to WRONZ was acknowledged by the Board and all in attendance. Andy Fox, chairman of WRONZ spoke of Tony's commercial acumen and guidance through significant periods in the ongoing development of WRONZ including the establishment of the New Uses programme.

Mike Allen stood unopposed and took the vacant WRONZ Director seat. Mike is the Chairman of Wool Impact so his appointment to the WRONZ Board will provide some strong linkage between these two important industry organisations.



Wool education, promotion and advocacy ramped up by The Campaign for Wool NZ



THE CAMPAIGN FOR WOOL

Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales

The Campaign for Wool NZ Trust has just released a Strategy 2023-2025 document which is described as “instrumental in clarifying the trust’s vision move into a new phase of growth and establishing New Zealand wool as a premium product across the globe and shifting buying preferences”.

Alongside the launch of the strategy, the trust has appointed Ryan Cosgrove as its new chair and created two pivotal executive roles. On December 1st, the chair for the past three years, Tom O’Sullivan, moved into the role of General Manager – Advocacy and former strategic consultant, Kara Biggs took on General Manager – Strategy.

CFWNZ wrote in their announcement: “Three core strategic pillars frame up the strategy - education, promotion and advocacy. Our education and promotional pillars will be led by Kara, delivering advancement of our Wool in Schools programme into secondary and tertiary settings and a new digital partner portal as well as progressing our Wool in Architecture programme and communications platforms. Tom will focus fully on the market and industry, advocating for wool in public buildings, strengthening brand partnerships, delivering funding growth and forming industry ties.”

To see the full strategy document [CFW_3YearStrategy_Nov22_Final.pdf \(nzwool.co.nz\)](https://nzwool.co.nz/CFW_3YearStrategy_Nov22_Final.pdf)



2022 NZWCA Associate Member
Halfway Bay, Lake Wakatipu

Karen Scott of Loch Linnhe Station - 2022NZWCA Associate Member



NZWCA December 2022 Newsletter

RESUMPTION OF “Q COURSE” GRADING CERTIFICATE LEARNING A GAIN RIGHT ACROSS THE NZ WOOL INDUSTRY

By Marg Forde NZWCA Registrar

Get behind the Q Course!

Known as the Q Course (Q for Quality and Q is the prefix for the NZWCA Grading stencil), two of these courses were held in November after more than a year off due to lack of funding. I firmly believe, and have experienced when wool classing, that the benefits of wool handlers achieving their Q Course Grading Certificate reach right across the NZ wool industry. That's why in my role as NZWCA Registrar I have spent so much time this year advocating for the resumption of the course.



Q Course Grading Certificate students at work on wool exercises at Taumarunui

Because the Q course is for experienced wool handlers the increase in knowledge, confidence and job satisfaction naturally filters throughout the wool shed - no matter what type of wool being shorn - thus magnifying the effect. This, and the leadership gained can't help but have a positive influence on the quality of work at the coal face of wool harvesting.

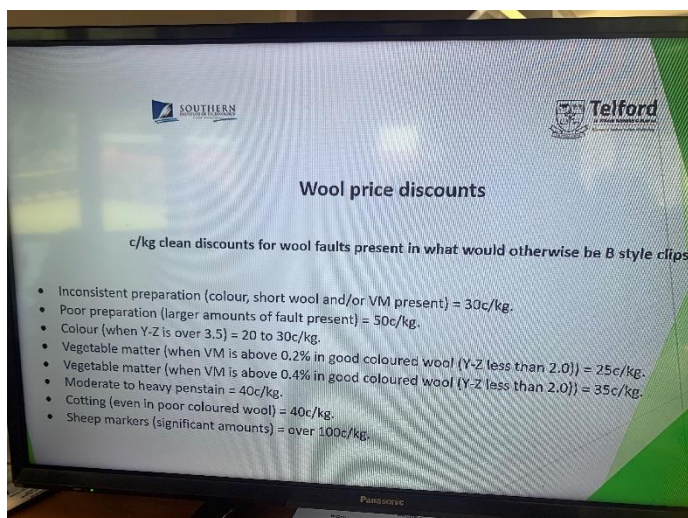
And all of the above is in addition to the (optional) ability of a Q Course graduate to earn their Grading stencil via registration with NZWCA. The Q stencil is valid on Mid Micron hogget wool and all Crossbred wool, an extra layer of quality control for wool suffering from a prolonged slump in price.

Wool growers and shearing contractors should be well pleased, right? I know as a classer I am. I've experienced first-hand the lift in wool handlers after undertaking the Grading course back when Bruce Abbott (my predecessor) first conceived and began running the Grading courses via Telford/Southern Institute of Technology. Unfortunately, lack of funding and support meant those courses stopped in 2021 although the qualification remained with SIT in the capable hands of wool tutors Laurie Boniface and Richard Gavigan.

Through this year I have spoken with many people in the wool industry and there is a common theme. Be they wool buyers, wool exporters, manufacturers who use wool in their product, or wool handlers, all are concerned at the drop in the standard of Crossbred wool preparation.

It seems many Crossbred wool farmers, given the low return for their wool, believe the less spent on their wool preparation the better.





Q Course Grading Certificate quality wool preparation information for students

As a former wool handler, I get how vital job satisfaction is, and how it could push you away from the job hearing Crossbred farmers say they don't care, "just put it all together". At a time many shearing contractors are crying out for experienced, reliable, enthusiastic wool handlers this idea from wool growers, while understandable with low wool returns, has to be a concern.

There are messages coming from the wool trade around the value and importance long term for NZ wool of upholding its quality reputation.

Numbers are telling the same story. Recently one of our members, a Farmer Classer with an FX stencil prefix, classed out a fine line from their Crossbred hoggets which topped

the North Island sale. Check out Richard Gavigan's figures in his piece in this newsletter. Another speaker at the NZWCA North Island Industry Day, PGGW's Rosie Moore summed up: "There is value in shed hands and classers taking the extra time to remove stained skirts, mud and VM such as thistle and bathhurst burr. Even in today's market where wool prices are so low, there are still price premiums for well prepared wool that is free of faults."

So we in the wool industry have a problem. And I do believe that no matter what the wool price is, running Q Courses can address at least part of the problem.

The running of the two courses recently, and the promise of more after mainshear, is because a few others can now see this too. Support from Wool Impact and several wool industry businesses, and strong advocacy from NZWCA and Southern Institute of Technology wool tutors has allowed the resumption, in a small way, of this wool education.

This is a two-day block course with some online input before and after. Participants who pass earn 10 NZQA credits and are eligible to apply for NZWCA Wool Grading registration (Q stencil) if they wish.

One of the courses last month was held in Taumarunui, historic for being the first ever in the North Island. It was hosted by Mackintosh Shearing. The South Island course last month was hosted in Winton by McConachie Shearing (Jamie and Raelene McConachie) who like Mackintosh Shearing also had multiple wool handlers attending. But each course had room for more participants. If you are a contractor or experienced wool handler and you'd like to know more about having a Q Course in your area once mainshear is done and dusted, contact: **Southern Institute of Technology wool tutor Richard Gavigan ph. 06 3766599 or**

email richard.gavigan@sit.ac.nz



Q Course Grading Certificate learning at the hands of SIT/Telford tutor Richard Gavigan





Reminder

Invitation to all Registered Wool Classers

National Fine Wool Supreme Fleece Competition

Wanaka Show Grounds

10 & 11 March 2023

Wanaka A & P Show is to hold annually "The National Fine Wool Supreme Fleece Competition" in conjunction with the Show. The Competition to be run by the Wanaka Show Wool Committee under the Wanaka Shows Rules and Regulations, as per its Schedule. Web site www.wanakashow.co.nz

Classers Award - \$150 Cash for a Registered Classer exhibiting highest scoring Flock Fleece classes only - Merino, Polwarth, Quarterbred, Halfbred, or Corriedale fleece, under Owners entry, Classers Name, Registration Number, and email address to be on Entry Form: entries@wanakashow.co.nz

Also to be won - Champion Stud \$500. Champion Flock \$500. Supreme Fleece \$500.

Trophies, Cups, Ribbons, Rosettes, Special Prizes, Cash prizes to \$6,000.

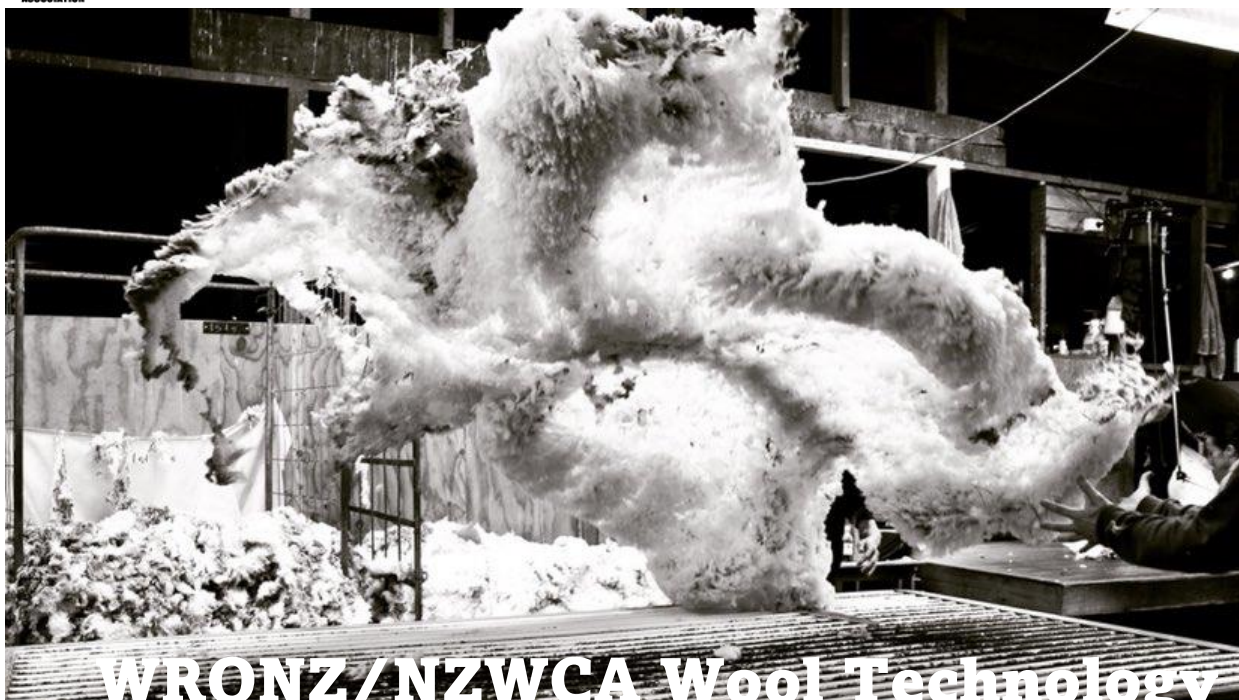
Convenor, Martin Paterson ph. 0212247511 email: matakanui@extra.co.nz

Entries close March 7 - Fleeces in by 7 March or delivered before 8 March - Judging 9 March.

Entry form link:

<https://www.wanakashow.co.nz/assets/competitors/forms/2023/fleece.pdf>





WRONZ/NZWCA Wool Technology

2022/2023 Scholarship Funded by



“The New Zealand Wool Industry is seeking new talent and ideas to capture the opportunities within our industry”

SUPPORTING TRAINING FOR THE FUTURE OF THE NZ WOOL INDUSTRY

WRONZ is sponsoring \$1000 to five students to assist interested students to undertake the two-year Certificate course in Wool Technology via distance learning at the Southern Institute of Technology.

Applicants will receive funding in four payments over the period of study subject to completion of the course requirements.

- Wool Language
- Wool Properties
- Wool Assessment/Grading
- Wool Testing
- Wool preparation
- Processing Systems
- By-products
- Fleece Faults & Mitigation
- Work Health & Safety
- Team Management
- Professional Ethics

For more information, or to apply for a scholarship, applicants should contact Marg Forde, Registrar of the NZWCA or email to reg@woolclassers.org.nz

<https://woolclassers.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/WRONZ-Scholarship-application-form.docx>

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Richard Gavigan presents some compelling reasons to uphold quality crossbred wool preparation, and makes a case for the Q Course (Grading Certificate)

***This is the presentation made by Richard to the
NZWCA North Island Industry Day***

It's a long time since I've had the chance to talk to a group like this on a wool-related topic – over 20 years in fact. But during that time, I've never lost my passion for and interest in wool, so it's really great to be back!

I'm a farmer – a crossbred wool producer - as well as a wool teacher, and like all my farmer colleagues I've found the wool part of our farming system very tough going in recent years.

We farm 320ha of medium to steeper hill country just south of Pahiatua and we typically mate around 2,100 ewes and run R2 steers and heifers. We shear the ewes twice a year, in late January and late June, and we time our shearing to:

- fit around weaning and scanning
- take advantage of the mid-pregnancy shearing lamb birthweight effect that Massey University found can help lamb survival
- reduce the number of ewes that get cast around lambing time
- make ewes easier to manage and work with
- make it easier to get sheep dry for shearing, and
- optimise wool quality

Rightly or wrongly these reasons, I guess, are listed in order of importance to me as a farmer of crossbred sheep. As you can see, there's no mention of wool until we get to the last point – something that as a strong supporter of wool I sometimes feel a bit guilty about. But this is the way it is for most crossbred wool producers.

Luckily, shearing twice a year at those times of the year in our typically summer-wet environment helps us out in terms of wool quality by giving us better colour, very little VM and no other faults that can be associated with full fleece wools.

But it's understandable why a lot of farmers might not even have the last point – optimising wool quality – on their list at all.

You've possibly heard or seen the following figures before, but I think it's important to revisit them to put crossbred wool and its quality and the need to work really hard for some change in the industry in context.



When we finally got our ewes shorn in June – it was a nightmare weather-wise this winter and we would have struggled to get them shorn if they hadn't been short second shear – we ended up getting 182c/kg greasy in the shed for the wool. To give you some idea of how farmer morale has slipped, I felt quite good about the price – it was nice to have cracked \$1.80!

Each ewe clipped about 2kg of fleece wool, giving us around \$3.70 wool income per ewe if you add a little extra for the B/P. It cost us around \$5 per ewe to get the sheep shorn and the wool prepared for sale.

So, it's easy to see why crossbred wool producers have become disheartened and are looking to reduce harvesting costs and "cut corners" in other wool-related areas. Unfortunately, this approach has also rubbed off on woolshed staff – more about that later.

But "here's the thing". Farmers, and the rest of the crossbred wool industry, are not in a position to cut any corners. It will reduce prices further, remove the advantage in wool quality that we have over other wool producing countries, and ultimately kill off our industry.

Shearing contractors have come under pressure from farmers to reduce the number of wool handlers to keep a lid on the cost of shearing. Employing one wool handler per shearer used to be standard practice, but it's certainly not anymore.

A lot of sheds harvesting second shear wool are now often working with only two wool handlers for four shearers, while full-wool sheds using a wool table are now operating with three at best. Removing one wool handler from a woolshed saves a farmer around 20 cents/sheep – remember that figure. The shearers aren't shearing any less sheep in a day so, in the words of one Southern North Island shearing contractor, "it's pretty much impossible to do anything like a decent job with the wool."

And, unfortunately, the shearing contractor is right. Back in the 1980's, when a lot of good wool stuff was done, time-in-motion observations made by New Zealand Wool Board staff showed that in a closed-board woolshed, around 50% of a wool handling team's time was spent simply moving wool rather than preparing it.

So, looking at the effect of reducing shed staff, we can do some calculations:

- 4 shearers, 1000 sheep shorn per day
- 4 wool handlers x 8 hours worked = 32 total wool handler hours
- 50% x 32 hours = 16 hours moving wool (+ 16 hours optimising wool quality)
- 2 wool handlers x 8 hours = 16 total wool handler hours
- Daily wool volume does not change; hours available to optimise wool quality = 0

In better-designed open-board woolsheds less time is spent simply moving wool so more time is available for clip preparation. In these sheds, wool quality is less sensitive to changes in staff ratios, but can still be affected if we don't get the staff ratios right for the particular job.

So, what financial impact can the quality of clip preparation have on wool prices and how does this relate to the cost savings we might make by reducing wool handling staff? Earlier in the year I wrote a story for Country-Wide magazine on wool quality. I spoke to a number of the wool trade and we came up with some indicative price discounts for faults present in what would otherwise be good quality wool clips. We've updated those discounts, and while they can vary a bit during and between seasons, this is where we think they sit:

- Inconsistent preparation (discoloured wool, short wool and/or wool containing vegetable matter present) = 30 c/kg clean discount.
- Poor preparation (larger amounts of fault present) = 50 c/kg clean discount.
- Colour = 20-30 c/kg clean when Y-Z is over 3.5.
- Vegetable matter (VM) = 25 c/kg clean discount when VM is above 0.2% in good coloured wools (Y-Z less than 2.0); 35 c/kg clean discount when VM is 0.4% or greater.
- Penstain = 40 c/kg clean when moderate to heavy.
- Cotting = 40 c/kg clean when present, even in very poor coloured wool.
- Sheep markers = over 100c/kg clean discount when present in significant amounts.



Given that even second shorn ewes will likely clip at least 1.8kg of clean fleece wool at shearing time, the potential discount for sub-standard clip preparation typically ranges from around 40 – 90 cents/sheep, depending on how poor the job is.

This is a lot more than the cost saving for a wool handler of 20 cents/sheep, so we've got to be very careful. As farmers, we can quite easily end up "shooting ourselves in the foot", so to speak, while also having an effect on wool processing and New Zealand's reputation as a wool producer.

I think we need to work hard to get this message out to farmers and shearing contractors, and we all have a role to play here.

I'd also like to say a few words about wool industry training – something I've been involved with over the last couple of years, working alongside long-time wool teacher Laurie Boniface who I'm sure you all know.

Putting my farmer's hat on again, I've noticed a real drop-off in the level of understanding of wool handlers of what they should be trying to achieve in the woolshed. A lot of them can "move a broom", but not as many understand the "why" of clip preparation and what they need to do in a particular woolshed to maximise the farmer's returns and, at the same time, optimise the value of that wool to a processor.

Now it's not the fault of our wool handlers – we simply have not provided them with the training opportunities in recent years. WOMO Life and Elite Wool Industry Training have been doing some really good stuff in the last couple of years introducing new people to the industry and teaching the "how" of wool handling, but we also need to be teaching the experienced wool handlers the "why" of what they're doing so that they can go into a shed, look at an individual wool clip, decide what needs to be done and manage the wool harvesting team to get the best results for the farmer and the rest of the industry outside the farm gate.

We used to do this type of training – back in the days of the New Zealand Wool Board and WoolPro when we had the old "Leading Shedhands Courses" – but there has been none of that sort of thing for some years – and we're paying the price now. We badly need it to give our woolshed staff a quality focus again.

Now, with the help of the New Zealand Wool Classers Association, through the Southern Institute of Technology soon to be known as Te Pukenga, we actually have a course all ready to go. We're calling it the Q-Course – and it's already been approved by the NZ Qualifications Authority. We have a two-day Block Course programme and study material all ready to go, and have just received some funding from Wool Impact to run some courses this November.

This is what a Q-Course currently looks like – run out in the regions, working in with shearing contractors and their staff:

DAY 1		DAY 2	
8.30am	Registration and Morning Tea	8.30am	Day 1 Review
9am	Welcome and Introduction, Thanks to Sponsors, Course Outline	9am	Wool Grading: Demonstration and Assessment
9.30am	Welcome and Introduction, Thanks to Sponsors, Course Outline	11am	Practical Wool handling Assessment and Wool Pressing (in woolshed)
11am	Sheep Breeds: Demonstration and Assessment	12 noon	Lunch
12 noon	Lunch	12.30pm	Practical Wool handling Assessment and Wool Pressing (in woolshed)
1pm	Oddment Recognition: Demonstration and Assessment	2.30pm	Afternoon Tea
2pm	Tahi Ngātahi Introduction and Registration	3pm	Industry Speakers and Discussion
3pm	Afternoon Tea	3.45pm	Future Opportunities
3.30pm	Clip Preparation Best Practice: Discussion and Assessment	4pm	Finish
5pm	Finish		



Richard Gavigan's presentation, continued

We'd like to work with all sectors of the wool industry to get cracking with these Q-Courses because, I believe, they can have a huge impact on the future viability our industry.

So those are some of my thoughts, as a farmer and a wool teacher, on where things are at with a couple of aspects of quality and training.

We've got a lot of work to do and we need to get on with it because I don't think we have a lot of time. Every time I go to a field day or a discussion group these days someone mentions Wiltshires or, lately, "hair sheep". Our own ram breeder is bringing in hair sheep genetics from the northern coast of Scotland. So, I think we all need to work hard to make a difference and ask ourselves every day "what did I do today that will make our industry more profitable and more sustainable?"

Once again, thank you very much for the opportunity to talk to you today. I'd really welcome your questions and your input and would be keen to talk later on if you'd like to.

Shearing contractor involvement is vital and valued for training initiatives like the Q Course Grading Certificate. There are multiple strands of support including venue, staff encouraged to take part and that perennial, tucker. Charlie Burton of Mackintosh Shearing, Taumarunui, ticked all the boxes and here's photographic proof!

A Q Course was also held in Southland in November, shout-out to Jamie and Raelene of McConachie Shearing, Winton, for ticking all the same boxes as Charlie. Acknowledgement also to other contractors who answered the call to send experienced wool handler staff to the two courses in November: Mark Barrowcliffe (Pio Pio), Marty Smith (Spain and Smith, Invercargill) and Andrew and Carolyn Clegg (Te Anau Shearing)



From the desk of the NZWCA Secretary

We would love to get more Bio's and
Photos onto the website

If you would like to upload but don't know how to get access send me an email
or alternatively send them to me and I will upload for you

Take a look at our Registrars

[Marg Forde - Wool Classers Association](#)

Don't forget you can also tick you available for work



Merry Christmas from the NZWCA Board

