



Green (and other coloured) bacteria wool – can I put it in with the raddle?

One of our classer members asked this excellent question recently so I put it out to brokers, wool exporters and the wool scour company WoolWorks. Here is a summary of their responses:

- Green (and other colours but green being most common) bacteria stain is considered a worse fault than “average” raddle, so don’t put the two together.
- Heavy green bacteria does not scour out – “scour wise it is no different from pizzle wool”
- NEVER leave in the fleece, even if the fleece is going in the hard yellow colour bin

All the rain this year in many parts of NZ means it’s a fair assumption there will be more of it, so keep an extra eye out yourselves and make sure the wool handlers in your sheds do too.

Plea from a wool exporter – “don’t skip on the wool prep” – with figures to back his call

Leading wool exporter Steve Finnie of G Schneider NZ wants to remind everyone how important maintaining preparation standards in the wool shed is.

“While understanding that crossbred wool prices are very low, the fact remains that the difference between poorly prepared and yellow fleece lines and a line of good white wool is significant,” Steve says.

“Based on the auction last week and being more specific the difference as of last week’s sale between B/C yellow wool and B grade good colour is closer to 115c/kg and for the super colour BB/B its up to 175c/kg. That’s a substantial amount at the moment knowing the pre-lamb fleeces can be devastated with poor shed preparation.

“Some of these beautiful fleece lines that we know are well grown, if well prepared cash in. A farm with say 1500 head could increase the revenue by up to 16k based on those figures. Anyone wanting to maximise their return shouldn’t be skimping on the preparation”.

The exporter also points out that in addition to the farmer not getting the most they can for their wool, poorly prepared wool damages NZ’s hard-earned reputation internationally.

Job in the wool trade

The NZ arm of the international firm The Schneider Group, G Schneider NZ Ltd, is looking for a new member for their team of people passionate about wool. Here’s their job advertisement:

<https://www.trademe.co.nz/a/jobs/other/canterbury/christchurch-city/full-time/listing/4208928788>

How much should I be charging as a classer?

Another excellent question asked recently by one of our NZWCA members, but unfortunately not one I could answer for a number of reasons. For example, setting classer rates is definitely not an area the NZWCA sees itself as having a role in, and, there are always variables which affect pricing – for example, accommodation, fleece numbers per day.

As a classer myself I appreciate rates charged is a private matter between a classer and client. However, I’m thinking it may be helpful to make available a range of what is being charged for classing and if possible give a sense of where the majority sit, not just the extremes. Do others agree, is this information you as classers would like to have? Are there any classers out there willing to disclose confidentially (to me only) by email? Or if I set up an online survey which you could contribute to completely anonymously, would you take part? Email me reg@woolclassers.org.nz

To get the ball rolling I can tell you that the range of classing rates that I have heard being charged this season is from \$40 an hour to \$1 per fleece!

Spread the word about Associate membership as you go about your season

Classers and Graders, if your wool grower client appreciates your work, your valid stencil on their bales and the value of an enduring New Zealand wool classer registration system, have a think about drawing NZWCA Associate membership to their attention.

Associate membership is in most cases tax deductible for a farmer. Joining is easy, just give them our website link, there’s a “Join” tab on the homepage <https://woolclassers.org.nz/>

Associate membership is a category that covers farmers, sponsors, shearing contractors, retired wool classers or anyone who wishes to support NZWCA and our roles and objectives. Associate members pay an annual fee and are entitled to attend free all activities and events run by NZWCA. Associate members receive our newsletters and other communications and as with other members have the choice of opting in or out of being visible as members on our website.

Anyone can make a Classer validity check on the NZWCA website

The use of a classing or grading stencil on bales and in wool specifications if it is not valid reflects poorly on the offending classer/grader, the farmer's wool clip and our NZ wool industry. With the evolution of quality assurance programmes (such as ZQ and NZFAP) there are clear values and expectations around such things as Content Claim Standard, Chain of Custody, Credibility, Purchase Assurance, Traceability and Origin.

Putting invalid classer/grader stencils on bales and in bale specifications undermines the integrity of the NZ registration system and, we believe, the quality assurance programmes. Your association is working hard to raise this issue but as always a collective response is strongest. If you see it call it! Anyone can check if a stencil is valid by using the search facility we now have the NZWCA website home page <https://woolclassers.org.nz/>

Keeping your NZWCA membership current is considered a professional obligation for NZ classers and graders. The letter prefix and number which together make the one-off combination that is a registered "Kiwi stencil" is unique and may be used only by the person it was issued to.

Next NZWCA North Island Industry Day set for October in Whanganui

Planning is underway for a NZ Wool Classers Association North Island day of upskilling and connecting for anyone with an interest in wool. The date is still to be confirmed but it will be in October, in Whanganui.

We run our Industry Days primarily for professional development for our NZWCA classers, graders and members, but the content of the days are planned to be accessible to anyone who works with or has a passion for wool. Members attend free and there will be a small charge for non-members.

As with the North Island Industry Day in Napier in October last year, the day is being jointly organised by NZWCA North Island Board member Sonya Johansen, and myself, Marg Forde, Registrar. The day's programme will include hands-on wool exercises, speakers, a visit to the Elco wool store and a tour of the Bremworth Carpet's yarn spinning plant at Castlecliff, Whanganui.

Once the date is set we will be getting the word out via our website www.woolclassers.org.nz Facebook and email. It's been quite a while since a NZWCA day has been held in this part of the country so we are looking forward to welcoming all the keen central North Island woollies.

Positive podcast on NZ wool

MPI has just released a podcast about efforts underway to help turn around fortunes for strong-wool. Cosmetics made of the finest wool powder, soft popcorn-like wool buds for stuffing, and acoustic wool panels for schools are all innovations their creators hope will reinvigorate New Zealand's struggling strong-wool sector. The goal is to double, if not treble, wool returns to farmers.

<https://shows.acast.com/primary-matters/episodes/primary-matters-the-wonders-of-wool>

Making wool part of the equation in Government buildings

Following on from the widespread dismay at an American-made synthetic carpet tile winning a tender for NZ school installation over a tender using NZ wool: Great work is being done by bodies like Wool Impact and Campaign for Wool NZ to bring wool to the Government procurement policy table. Meantime a new petition, similar to Amy Blaikie's one that got 15,000 signatures several years ago, is in circulation. If you'd like to read about it and consider signing, here is the link <https://www.change.org/p/stop-plastic-flooring-in-our-government-owned-buildings-use-nz-made-wool-carpets>

Noho ora mai, nā Marg Forde - NZWCA Registrar on 27.07.2023