



Communication and preparation are key

Remember, a fleece's quality and value can be significantly increased or diminished on shearing day.



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Preparing for Shearing



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2-5 MONTHS BEFORE SHEARING

- Schedule shearers
- Schedule extra labor as needed
 - Sheep handlers
 - Wool handlers/classer
- Order supplies
 - Wool packs/bags, clips and markers
 - Veterinary supplies including antiseptic spray, antibiotic medication, fly ointment
 - Other supplies such as disinfectant, insecticides, wormers, vaccines, hoof trimmers, branding fluid
- Reduce wool contaminants throughout the year (such as poly, paint, hair, colored fibers, vegetable matter, burrs, etc.)

5-30 DAYS BEFORE SHEARING

- Prepare holding pens
 - Clean from all contaminants such as twine, brush, weeds, shavings, straw
- Prepare shearing area
 - Shearing Board/Floor- A solid, clean shearing floor is essential, such as a raised board or a solid wood floor on the ground (such as 2 4'x8' sheets of plywood) . Never use tarps or carpet.

The floor should be:

- Flat, non-sloping
- Solid
- Smooth, but not slick or rough
- Easy to sweep and keep clean
- Large enough for each shearer to have ample space to shear
- Covered to provide protection from the elements
- Clean
- Overhead Machine mounting site, if needed by shearer
- Electrical outlets within 6' of the shearing area
- Lighting as needed
- Prepare wool handling and packaging equipment
 - Clean the area from any debris and contaminants
 - Setup equipment as needed (skirting tables, sorting bins/racks, packing equipment)
- Prepare wool storage area
 - Ensure the area is empty, and will remain dry (ideally, not directly on concrete)
- Prepare restrooms, potable water, handwashing station and other amenities as needed

1-5 DAYS BEFORE SHEARING

- Keep sheep dry- wet or damp wool should not be shorn
- Pen sheep
 - Sort into groups as needed (consider breed, wool color, age, sex, sick/diseased)
 - Shear white sheep first
 - Shear colored or wool with medullated fiber (hair) next
 - Shear sick or diseased sheep last
- Fast sheep
 - To ensure sheep safety and comfort as well as shearer safety and wool quality, fasting is critical
 - Sheep should be fasted from ALL feed and hydration sources
 - Fast sheep according to their stage of production, keeping in mind the time the first and the last sheep will be shorn.

RECOMMENDED MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM NUMBER OF HOURS WITHOUT FEED AND WATER PRIOR TO SHEARING

	Minimum number of hours without feed	Maximum number of hours without feed	Minimum number of hours without water	Maximum number of hours without water	Special considerations
Ewes (and adult male sheep)					
Non-pregnant, non-lactating	20	32	12	24	Exceeding these maximums may induce metabolic problems and/or clinical diseases.
Early – mid pregnancy	18	30	12	24	Exceeding these maximums may induce metabolic problems and/or clinical diseases.
Late – pregnancy and lactation	12	24	8	20	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 clinical diseases.
Pregnancy and lactation	12	24	8	20	Where practical, unweaned lambs should remain with their mothers until hoggets enter the woolshed.
Lambs					
Pre-weaning	6	24	6	20	Exceeding these maximums may precipitate clinical diseases.
Weaned	12	24	8	20	

Source: Worksafe New Zealand Fasting of Sheep Prior to Shearing Guide <https://worksafe.govt.nz/dmsdocument/278-fasting-of-sheep-prior-to-shearing>

SHEARING DAY

BEFORE SHEARING

- Ensure supplies are ready (wool packaging, veterinary supplies, other supplies)
- Have a morning meeting
 - Ensure outside equipment is disinfected
 - Point out facilities/amenities
 - Reiterate who is doing what tasks
 - Discuss animal handling and animal welfare expectations

- Discuss protocols for when:
 - Injuries occur to sheep or workers
 - Health issues are found
 - Black or contaminated wool is found

- Move sheep into pens/ramps close to shearer

DURING SHEARING

- An owner/manager should be present at all times
 - Identify sheep with any diseases or issues
 - Provide support and guidance as needed
- Provide water for workers
- Ensure sheep are close and easy to catch for the shearer
- Shear sheep
 - Shear white sheep first
 - Shear colored or wool with medullated fiber (hair) next
 - Shear sick or diseased sheep last
- Wool handling- sort and prepare wool only as it will add value to your wool
 - Remove belly wool during shearing
 - Remove topknots and excess tags and package with floor sweepings
 - Remove area of high contamination and place with belly wool or floor sweepings
 - Remove foreign contamination such as poly twine, areas with hair, colored fibers in white fleeces
 - Separate weak (tender or broken) fleeces from strong fleeces
 - Fully skirt wool
 - Class wool
 - Fold fleece into thirds and roll the fleece with flesh side out
- Package wool
 - Package into clean packs/bags
 - Label bales/bags with producer, bag number and contents
 - Keep a record of bales/bags including bag number and contents
- Provide water and feed to sheep immediately after shearing

AFTER SHEARING

- Provide shelter for sheep when inclement weather is expected
- Pay shearer and other labor. Provide snacks and meals as helpful.
- Store wool in a clean, dry place