



SHEEP SHEET

by Dr. Lyle G. McNeal, Executive Director, Sheep & Wool Specialist

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Clip preparation is an acquired skill; but not beyond ability of most wool growers. No matter how well grown the wool is, bad management and sloppy practices at shearing can knock dollars off the wool check. The buyer is the person who puts the price on the wool and as such must be convinced of the quality of the clip. A carefully prepared clip can mean extra cents per pound and extra dollars in the grower's pocket. Increased wool returns can be attained by following these simple rules:

GATHERING:

- Dust can spoil the brightness of good colored wools, thus lowering their prices. Avoid herding sheep over very dusty trails or roads prior to shearing. Whenever possible avoid keeping sheep in dusty holding yards.

DIRTY SHEEP:

- Taggy sheep contaminate other fleeces and are a nuisance in the shearing shed or trailer. They contribute greatly to the loss of efficiency in shearing and wool handling. Taggy sheep should be cleaned up before being penned for shearing.

CORRAL AND PEN STAINS:

- Wool contaminated with dung lowers the style and class and the price paid for it. Sheep penned overnight must have the opportunity to empty out beforehand. Be sure to hold them off feed and water at least 12 hours prior to shearing.

DRYNESS OF THE FLEECE:

- There is not great difficulty in deciding when a fleece is dry and it should be in this condition when it is shorn and packed or pressed in a bale. Wool shorn wet or damp will discolor. A good rule of thumb

Preparation of Sheep for Shearing

Sheepdex W-6

in deciding whether to proceed with shearing is that wool shorn damp will become cold very quickly. Dry fleeces will remain warm for hours, or even days.

DRAFTING OR SORTING:

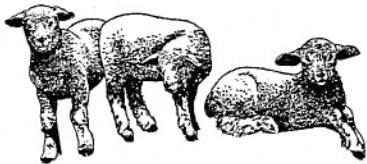
- Sheep need to be separated by breeds, i.e. *Rambouillet* versus *Navajo-Churro*.....or at least separated into 'blackface' and 'whiteface' lots. The wool had different end uses and as such should not be sacked or baled together. Producers who purchase part of their flock on an annual basis and from different sources, or have sheep with different wool lengths are strongly advised to sort their sheep back into these groups prior to shearing. This assists the woolhandling crew to keep separate, wools of different length groups or from different breeds. A line of wool with mixed lengths and from different breeds is discounted in price.



PRE-SHEARING CHECK LIST FOR SHED PREPARATION BY GROWER:

1. **ADEQUATE LABOR** - rule of thumb is one helper per 175-200 sheep shorn per day.
2. **ADEQUATE SPACE** - shearing floor should be at least 8 feet wide, preferably 10 feet wide with 5 feet or more between shearers.
3. **CLEAN FACILITY** - the shearing area should be clean and all contaminants are removed (straw, shavings, burrs, twine, etc.).
4. **SHED** - if a shed is used for a shearing space, make sure adequate light, flooring, and ventilation are provided.

5. **EQUIPMENT** - provide sacking stand, skirting table(s), wool bags, brooms and tarps.
6. **PLANNING** - contact your shearer or shearing contractor frequently to set dates and discuss what material he will supply or what you are expected to provide.
7. **CLASSER/GRADER** - if a classer or grader is to be used, provide him/her with full information prior to shearing. This would include:
 - A. New sheep brought onto property since last shearing.
 - B. Descriptions of all the sorted groups and whether stained wooled has been removed (tagging).
 - C. Order of groups to be shorn, and any changes as they may occur during shearing.
 - D. Any special requirements for preparation of clip.



*For more information write:
The Navajo Sheep Project;
Serving People, Preserving Cultures®,
P.O. Box 4454,
Logan, UT 84323-4454.
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