

## ***Safety in the WOOLSHED***

### **Access**

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Wet, slippery steps are a serious hazard in woolsheds. The problem may be overcome by fitting chicken netting over the steps.

Doors should be easily opened and closed. Big sliding doors can be a problem if they do not move easily.

Flooring and grating must be sound.

Non-slip surfaces are essential and the shearing board should not be varnished. Tongue and groove rimu makes a good floor. It is strong and slow wearing, provides good grip, and does not splinter. Chipboard, properly sealed is too slippery, even when dry, and if unsealed, may break up with wear.

Weighted gates should have weights enclosed so that the weights cannot freely swing about.

### **Machinery**

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The wool press must be in good working order. If electric, pay particular attention to the cables and connections.

It is advisable to bring the electric cable to the electric press up through the floor. Cable from the ceiling can get caught on the box or the presser. Cables should not trail over the floor.

A rope should be firmly fixed above the press for the presser to hold on to while tramping the press.

“No-tramp presses” should have guards and safety switches in good operating condition at all times. It may be preferable for the electric wiring on these machines to come in from above.

There should be a place to safely stow skewers when not in use.

Shearing plant should be securely fixed to the wall. It should be wired properly with no loose wires and serviced at least every two years. Elbow protectors on the droppers should be in place.

Grinders should have guards fitted, and be placed in an area as far as practical from other shed operations and passing traffic.

### **Shearing handpieces**

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In New Zealand the traditional connection of the shearer's handpiece onto the down-tube has been a pin drive.

This has been superseded in recent years by the spline drive (also called a “worm drive”). Both the national contractor organisation, and Shearing Sport NZ have made these compulsory.

The spline drive has an important safety benefit if the shearer hits an ear tag or piece of wire, or the handpiece locks up for some reason.

This is because a spline drive usually unlocks from the gut before any serious damage occurs. Usually disengagement takes place instantly so the shearer does not lose grip on the handpiece.

With a pin drive, a lockup will normally result in expensive breakages and possible loss of work through injury.

Although the spline drive disengages on impact in most cases, it cannot be guaranteed because of the wide variety of machines in use

with different drive systems. To be sure of a fit, shearers should carry their own short gut and fit it into the machine before they start.

A full conversion kit is available from manufacturers, and comprises a short gut and worm drive shaft for the handpiece.

It is also possible to convert by replacing the metal pin drive ends on the existing short guts with spline drive ends.

## **Working conditions in woolsheds**

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### *Ventilation*

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Sheds must have windows that open and shut without being draughty. Air movement keeps the shed cool and provides sufficient oxygen to reduce the level of ammonia created by sheep. Care should be taken to avoid diesel or petrol fumes entering the workplace.

### *Lighting*

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Good light is essential (with the correct daylight tubes over board and table) and can greatly improve the quality of wool handling.

### *Catching hazards*

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Protruding nails, screws, and bolts sticking out should be pulled out, screwed in or trimmed up.

## *Hazard of breast abscesses*

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Women working in woolsheds should protect themselves against breast abscesses.

The condition is caused by wool fibres, particularly short second cuts, penetrating the clothing and getting into the milk ducts and sebaceous glands, causing infections and abscess formation.

The problem has become more commonplace because of the tendency for young women to go without a bra when working in a hot physical environment such as a woolshed.

One solution is to wear the right sort of bra. A specially-designed bra made of a material that stops the wool fibres penetrating is available. Other commonly used preventative measures include putting plastic wrap down the bra, and placing sticking plasters across the nipples.

## **Meal areas**

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The presence of rodents in woolsheds can lead to people contracting leptospirosis. Therefore, meal tables and other eating surfaces should be cleaned thoroughly and often. Meal tables should be covered with cloth or paper.