

SHEARING



Shearing



Shearing usually happens once a year on a wool property. Professional **shearing** teams travel across Australia **shearing** sheep for a living.

Depending on the number of sheep, a **shearing** team can include two or more shearers, one or two woolhandlers and shed hands, a wool classer and a wool presser.

The penner-up

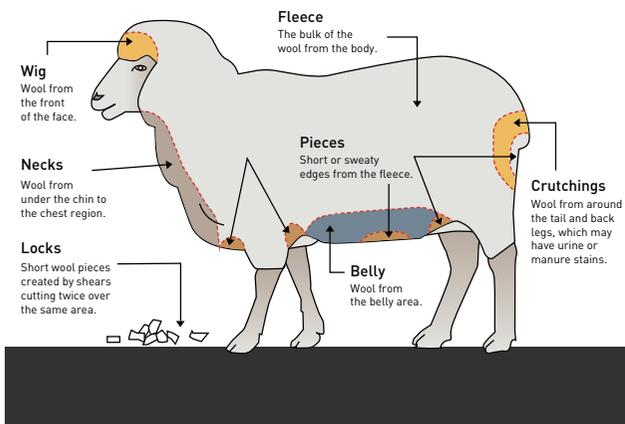
The penner-up brings the sheep in from the paddocks to the sheep yards, ready for penning up. They keep the **catching pens** in the **shearing** shed full of sheep, ready for the shearers.

When the sheep have been shorn, they leave the shed, are counted and may be **drenched** or treated for lice before being taken back to the paddocks.

The shearer

Each shearer has a stand, electrically-driven machine handpiece and a **catching pen**. Shearers catch a sheep from their **catching pen** and drag it to their stand, where they shear the fleece using the handpiece.

First they shear the belly and then the body, which comes off as one piece of fleece.



Parts of the fleece

Did you know?

- A professional shearer can shear a sheep every 3–4 minutes. That's about 140 sheep a day.
- The world record for blade (hand) **shearing** is held by Jackie Howe. In 1892, at Alice Downs near Blackall, Queensland, he shored 321 sheep in seven hours and forty minutes using a pair of hand shears.
- Every bale of wool contains a brand that identifies the property the wool has come from and also a brand that indicates the quality of the fleece.



Branding a wool bale

The woolhandlers

The woolhandlers pick up the fleece and throw it across a large table for **skirting**.

The wool classer

The wool classer sorts the **skirted** fleeces and wool pieces into five main categories — fleeces, necks, pieces, bellies and locks.

Fleeces are also sorted into lines (groups) according to their **fibre diameter** (quality). The fleeces are placed in nylon bags and pressed in a woolpress to make **bales**. The **bales** are sealed and branded, ready for sale.

- The fastest shearer in the shed is called the 'gun' shearer.
- It takes about 35–40 **skirted** fleeces to fill a wool bale.
- Once pressed, each **bale** must weigh a minimum of 110kg and a maximum of 204kg. Most wool **bales** weigh in the range of 170 to 190kg.

FUN
FACTS
ABOUT
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Glossary

Bales — bags of wool that have been pressed and ready for sale.

Catching pens — small yards in a shearing shed, which hold enough sheep for each shearer.

Drenching — wool producers give sheep medicine to protect them from worms.

Fibre diameter — the thickness of a single wool fibre, measured in microns.

Shearing — removing the wool from the sheep using specially-designed handpieces.

Skirting — removing inferior pieces from the fleece.

More information

To find out more about shearing, take a look at:

- learnaboutwool.com

