

MACHINE SHEARING

Designed by Agri Connect (Pty) Ltd

Shearing is a science, but it does not take a scientist to master it! The most important secret of successful shearing is to be able to hold and move the sheep in such a way that it remains relaxed. Correct placement of feet are vital to keep the sheep comfortable and balanced.

Take care to handle and release the sheep carefully and calmly before, during and after shearing.

*"Blow" is the official term for shearing strokes, which means "a single sweeping cut of fleece".

1 BELLY

Removing the belly wool is one of the most important parts of shearing, as it sets up the neck, long blow*, and the last side. If not removed completely, there will be more work on other areas.

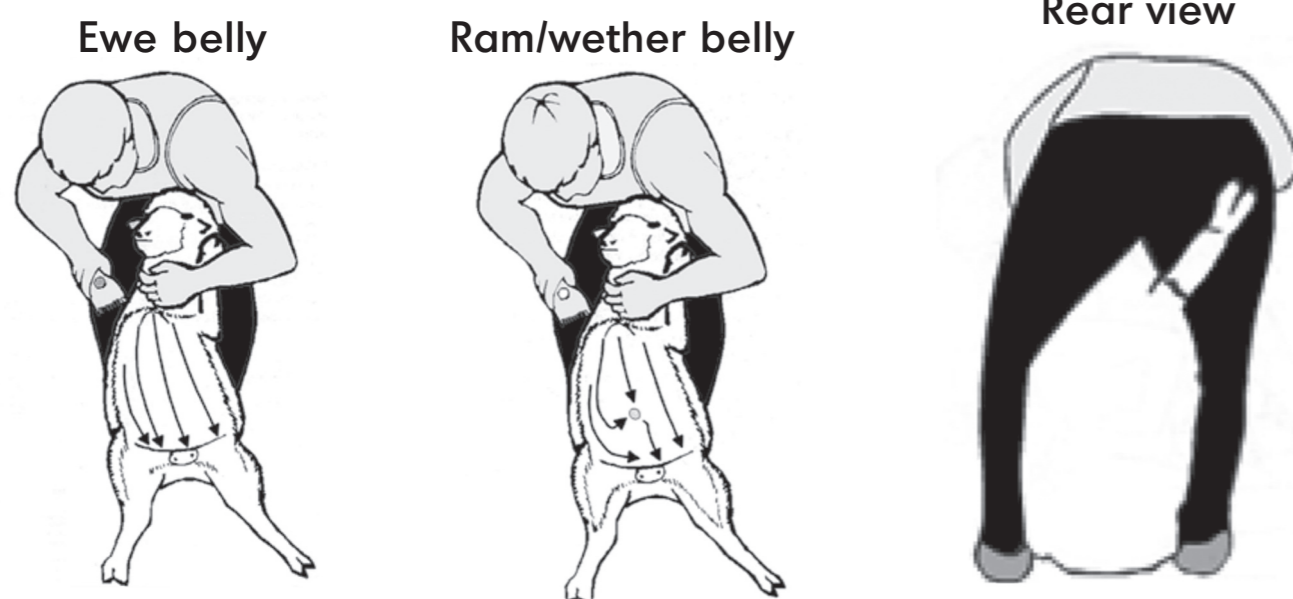
Take particular care not to cut or injure the animal, especially the teats/udders/vulva of female sheep and the sheath and scrotum of rams/wethers.

Objectives

- To remove all brisket wool
- To remove all belly wool flank to flank

Key points

- Sheep's tail approximately 20 cm forward and out from the down tube
- Sheep to lay on inside hip
- Outside foot forward of inside foot
- Sheep's inside foreleg behind your inside leg
- If necessary, shear outside front hock first
- Use forearm to hold outside front leg
- Start high on the brisket
- Enter with the comb flat on the skin
- Use free hand to manipulate skin
- Turn inside foot away from sheep to clear inside of brisket
- Always shear the pizzle from the side



2 CROTCH

When removing wool from the crotch area, take care near the teats, hamstrings, and the top of the hocks.

Objectives

- To remove all wool from the inside and top of the back legs and allow easy starting on the first back leg

Key points

- Enter with the comb flat and pressure on the bottom tooth
- Inside foot forward of outside foot
- Use free hand to manipulate skin, cover teats, and in the flank if necessary, to straighten the back legs



3 FIRST BACK LEG

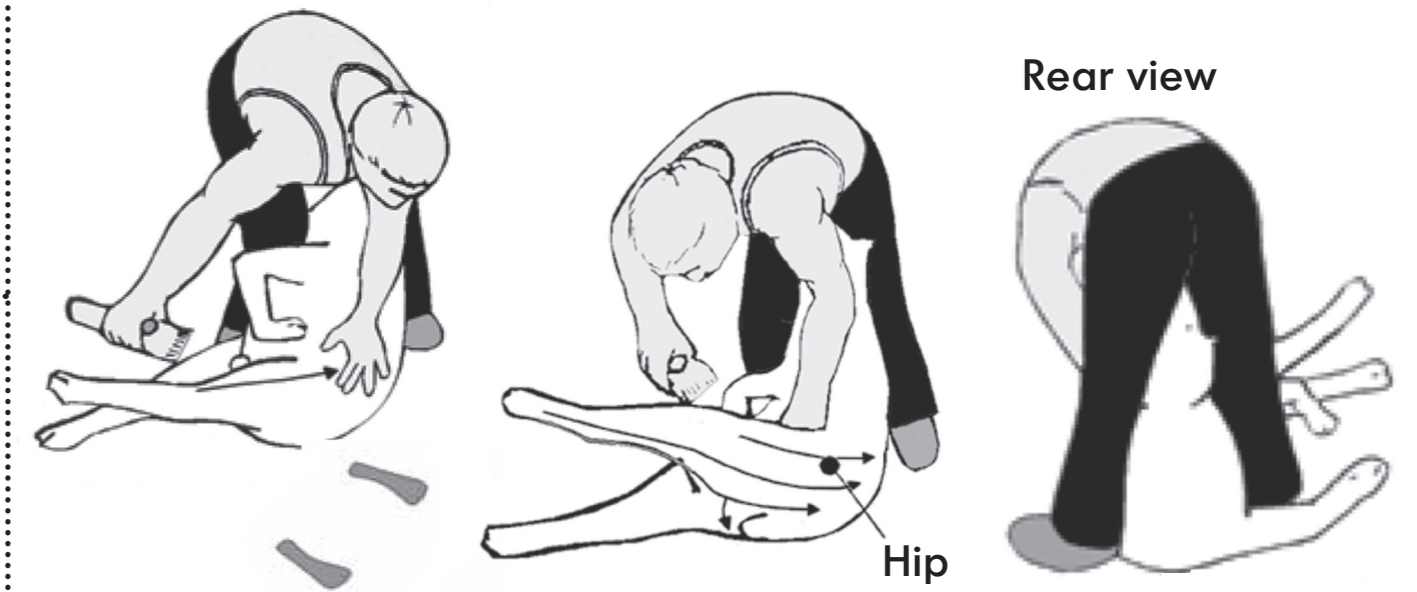
Ensure blows* follow the leg line, keep the comb flat and clear well under the tail.

Objectives

- To clear wool from the flank area
- To follow the leg line
- To shear all wool from under the tail

Key points

- Move outside foot close to sheep's shoulder
- Turn toes of outside foot away from sheep
- Turn heel of inside foot away from sheep
- Use inside knee in the brisket
- Enter at the leg joint and hock with a few teeth
- Use free hand in flank to stretch the skin
- Ensure blows* follow leg line and turn away from tail
- Concentrate on keeping the comb flat, especially near the hip area
- Let the brisket fall behind your inside leg
- Move inside foot back to rotate the sheep towards down tube
- Clear well under the tail without lifting the sheep by its tail



6 NECK

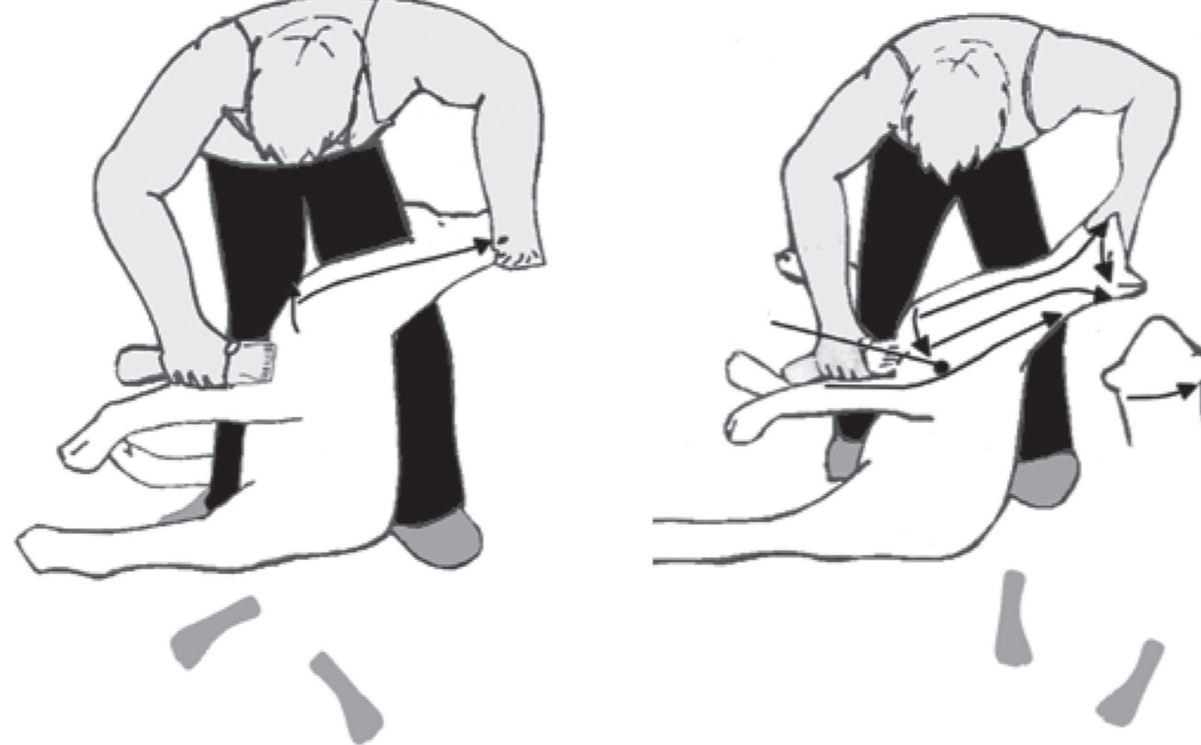
The neck is one of the hardest parts of the sheep to master, especially if it has large pleats.

Objectives

- To shear the neck cleanly and efficiently
- To remove wool from the side of the face
- To remove all wool from the top of the head
- To clear to the last side ear

Key points

- Face straight up the board
- Balance sheep high with its brisket above its left teat for right-handed shearers
- Outside foot forward of inside foot
- Keep outside knee in front of sheep's shoulder point
- Turn inside foot parallel with sheep's back legs
- Use free hand in brisket area to help comb entry
- Ensure combs starts on skin above the main pleat
- Lead with the top tooth and keep it on the skin
- Use free hand to manipulate skin
- After each blow*, shift inside foot back slightly



7 FIRST SHOULDER

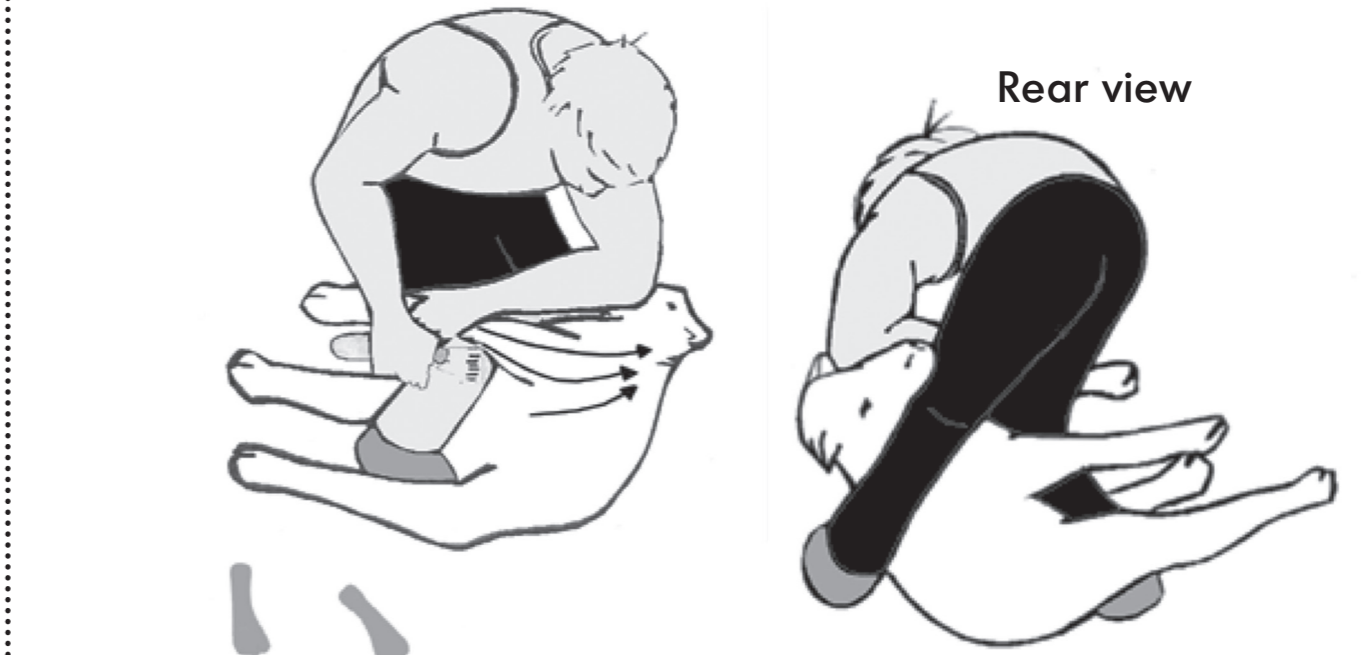
Removing a lot of wool from the first shoulder will help eliminate skin cuts on the long blow* and makes shearing easier on the back of the neck.

Objectives

- To prepare the shoulder and front leg for the long blow*

Key Points

- Turn sheep towards down tube
- Clear wool behind sheep's ears including last side ear
- Release sheep's outside shoulder from your outside leg
- Roll sheep onto its backbone
- Hold sheep's inside front leg flat straight out and close to its body
- Bend your back leg to keep inside knee in contact near the outside of the sheep's brisket without applying excessive pressure on the sheep
- Transfer weight to inside leg and lean back on it
- Take care near the leg joint



4 UNDERMINE

Correct foot position is vital to be able to shear wool easily from around the tail, up the back, and a blow* each side of the backbone.

Objectives

- To shear wool a blow* each side of the backbone
- To shear all wool from around the tail

Key points

- Use freehand to manipulate the sheep and skin
- Move inside foot back to roll the sheep's back end towards you
- Keep toes of inside foot under sheep as much as possible
- Use inside knee to control sheep's head



5 TOPKNOT

The topknot will vary according to the type of sheep.

Objectives

- To shear the topknot and clear the wool in front of ears and/or horns

Key points

- Use inside leg to control head
- Use free hand to manipulate wool and/or skin
- Ensure comb starts on the skin
- Aim first blow* from outside of face to inside ear



9 FACE AND LAST SHOULDER

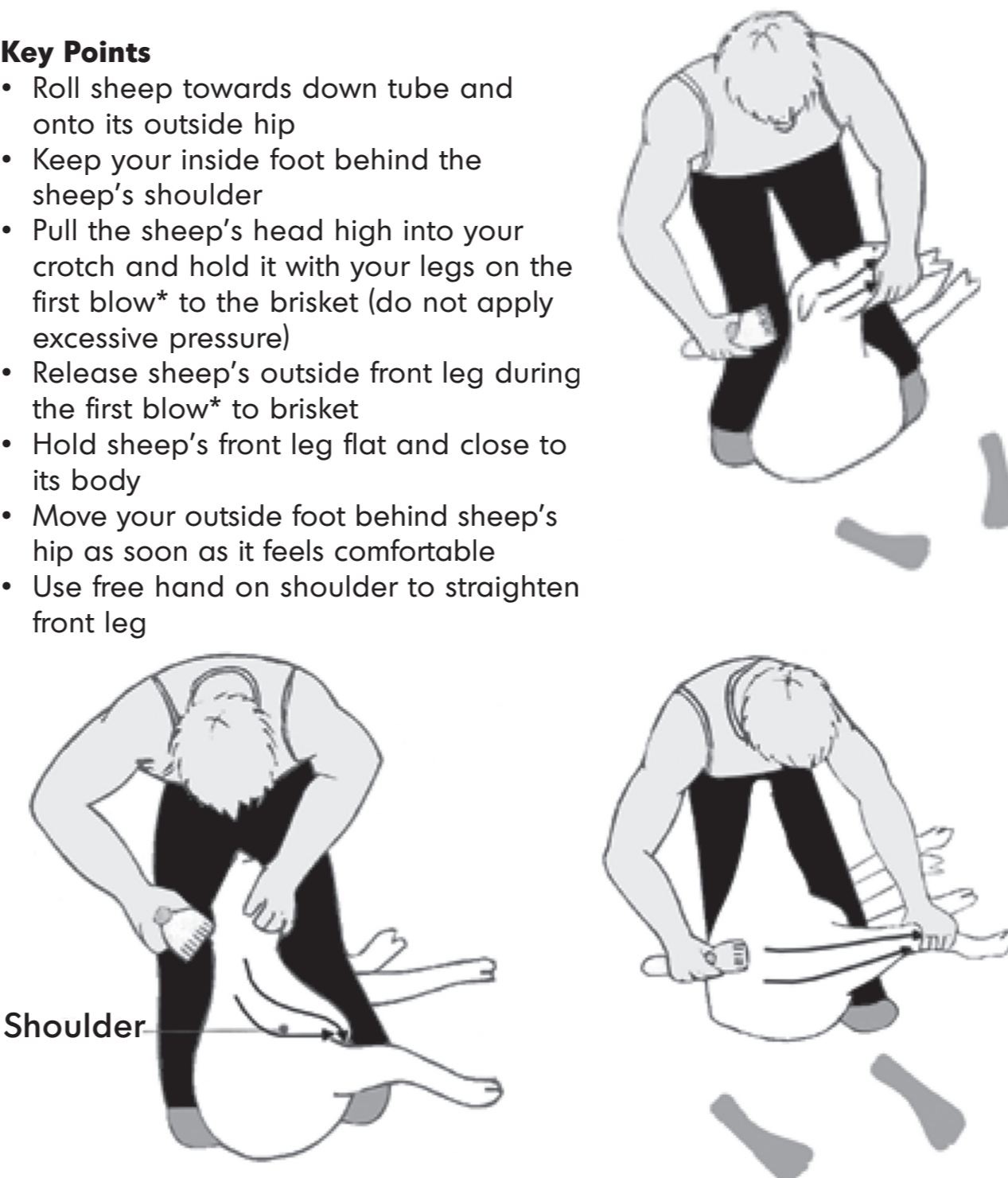
The side of the face and last shoulder will be easier to do if the pattern on previous parts of the sheep have been followed.

Objectives

- To shear the face, last shoulder, and front leg

Key Points

- Roll sheep towards down tube and onto its outside hip
- Keep your inside foot behind the sheep's shoulder
- Pull the sheep's head high into your crotch and hold it with your legs on the first blow* to the brisket (do not apply excessive pressure)
- Release sheep's outside front leg during the first blow* to brisket
- Hold sheep's front leg flat and close to its body
- Move your outside foot behind sheep's hip as soon as it feels comfortable
- Use free hand on shoulder to straighten front leg



10 CLEARING UNDER LAST FRONT LEG

Keep the head high and start each blow* flat and with a full comb.

Objectives

- To remove all the wool from the last front leg, and clear all the wool to the last flank

Key Points

- Use free hand on shoulder to straighten front leg
- Use fingers to manipulate skin and wool from under front leg
- Turn handpiece under front leg using only a few teeth
- Keep first blow* to flank flat and full



8 LONG BLOW*

The long blow* is one of the easiest parts of the sheep to shear, but hard to perfect.

Objectives

- To shear to the backbone and at least one blow* over

Key Points

- Start blows* full and aim down slightly
- Lay sheep on front foot
- Keep front foot under brisket, and contain sheep's both front legs
- Step over when comfortable and a blow* to the head is finished
- Keep back foot forward of the tail and near the inside hip
- Keep sheep's head down until near backbone
- When blows* are near the sheep's backbone, transfer more weight onto your back foot
- Keep sheep's head high and near outside knee when shearing over backbone



11 THE FLANK AND LAST LEG

The flank and the last leg should now be easy to finish.

Objectives

- To shear this section quickly, cleanly, and easily, while keeping the head high and off the floor

Key Points

- Start blows* full
- Keep sheep's back leg in opposite direction to belly starting position
- Keep sheep upright
- Keep toes under sheep as much as possible
- Shuffle feet back slightly only as needed
- Keep legs straight
- Use only as much pressure as is needed with your legs and hand
- Take care near leg joints and hamstrings
- Keep heels close together to keep sheep's head off the floor

