



Shearing

Shearing usually takes place once a year and most wool producers employ specialist shearing teams, who 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 wool handlers and shed hands, and a wool classer.

The penner-up

During shearing, sheep are brought in from the paddocks to the yards around the shed, ready for penning up.

The penner-up is responsible for keeping the pens (yards) 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 treated to prevent diseases before being taken back to the paddocks.

The shearer

Each shearer has their own stand, electrically-driven machine handpiece and small pen

Fast facts

- A professional shearer can shear about 140 sheep a day.
- After shearing off the wool from the belly, legs and face, the rest of the fleece is removed in a single piece.
- Fleeces are sorted at shearing according to their quality.

of sheep, called a catching pen.

Shearers take a sheep from their catching pen and position it at their stand for shearing.

Shearers remove the fleece with a number of long strokes (blows) with the handpiece. After the **belly**, legs and face wool has been removed and collected, the body of the **fleece** comes off as one piece.

The wool handler

As soon as the fleece has been shorn, the wool handler gathers up the fleece and throws it across a large table.

The wool handlers skirt the fleece. Skirting removes the lower-quality edges of the fleece. This can include **necks and pieces**, and soiled wool.

The remaining fleece is rolled and given to the wool classer.

The wool classer

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

Fleeces are also sorted into lines (groups) according to their micron.

The classed wool is placed in nylon bags and compressed in the woolpress to make bales. All the bales are sealed and marked with brand that identifies the producer, the classer and the type (breed and fleece or pieces) and quality of wool inside.



Shearing handpiece: shearers use a specially-designed electric handpiece to remove the fleece.



Skilled professionals: shearers are highly skilled professionals who undergo intensive training in order to be able to shear safely and efficiently.



Crutching: removal of the wool from around the sheep's bottom helping to prevent flystrike and staining of the fleece wool.



Wiggging: removal of the wool from around the eyes to ensure sheep can see clearly.

Crutching and wiggging

Crutching and wiggging is similar to shearing, but usually takes place well before shearing and is carried out for a different reason.

Shearers use the electric handpiece to remove wool from around the sheep's bottom (crutching) and face (wiggging).

Wool producers crutch their sheep to reduce the amount of wet manure and urine that sticks to the wool around sheep's bottom.

This wetness can attract blow flies, which lay their eggs, leading to **flystrike**.

Wiggging is done at the same time as crutching and removes any wool around the face that could stop the sheep from seeing.

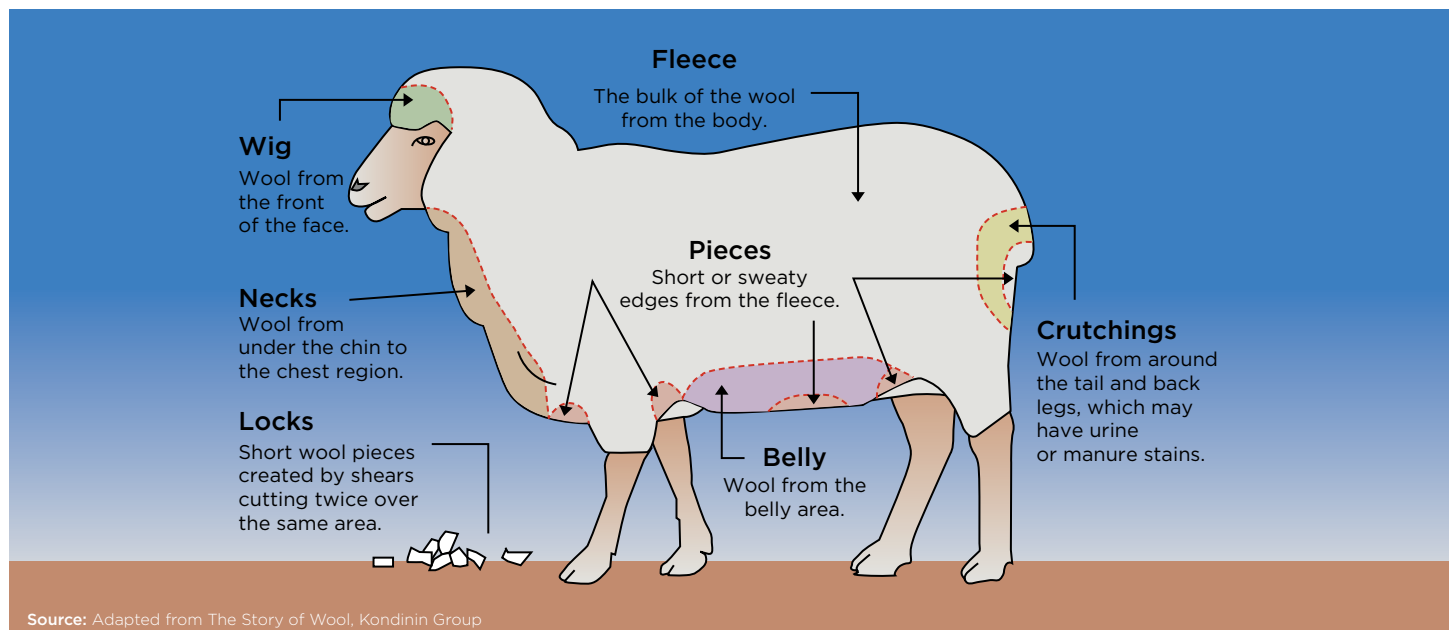
Glossary

Belly wool — short wool underneath the stomach of the sheep. This wool is kept separate from the fleece as it is less valuable and is processed differently.

Fleece — the main wool covering the sheep's body. The fleece usually comes off in one large piece, which is thrown across the wool table for skirting.

Flystrike — a condition in sheep where blowflies lay their eggs into soiled wool. Fly larvae hatch and burrow into the flesh of the sheep. In severe cases sheep can die from flystrike.

Necks and pieces — short lengths of wool shorn from around the neck and legs of the sheep.



Source: Adapted from The Story of Wool, Kondinin Group

Parts of the fleece

More information

For more information about wool, go to:

- The Workboot Series: The Story of Wool
- www.wool.com

- AWI Wool Production YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/AWIWoolProduction
- The USB that came with the LEARN ABOUT WOOL kit.



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