

FACTSHEET

Guide to managing shearing cuts

This factsheet complements the *Sheep shearing wound protocol* poster developed by Beef + Lamb New Zealand, the New Zealand Veterinary Association, the New Zealand Shearing Contractors Association and New Zealand Merino.

While shearing wounds are a rare occurrence, even the most experienced shearers occasionally have to deal with sheep that have been cut or injured.

It's important that both the farmer and the shearing gang are clear about:

- who takes responsibility for treating shearing-related injuries,
- where medications and treatments are stored, and
- where injured animals should be kept.

The *Sheep shearing wound protocol* poster should be displayed prominently in the shearing shed and used to inform decision-making about the management of injured animals. You should complete the details at the bottom of the poster where space has been provided.

Before shearing starts, farmers need to talk to their shearing contractor and shearers about what processes to follow in the unlikely event of sheep being cut or injured while being shorn.

Before shearing

Farmers should talk to their veterinarian about what medications and treatments to have on-hand to treat cuts or injuries and how to use them.

Medications and treatments should be stored appropriately and checked before each shearing to ensure they are within their expiry dates.

At shearing

Before shearing starts, the shearing contractor, the farmer and shearers need to have a conversation about who to notify in the unlikely event of cuts or injuries occurring at shearing and what processes to follow.

These processes are outlined in the *Sheep shearing wound protocol* poster and in this factsheet.

Mitigating the risk

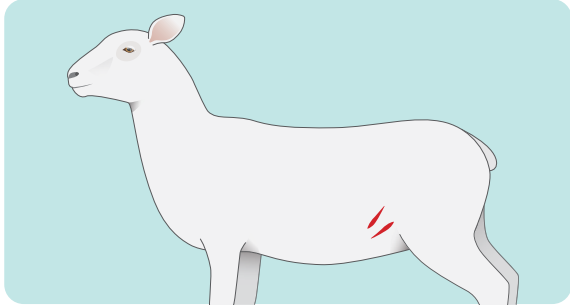
Management factors to help mitigate risk include:

- correctly preparing sheep for shearing – emptying out sheep for the appropriate time (no more than 12 hours for pregnant ewes, pregnant hoggets and weaned lambs and no more than 18 hours for dry sheep) will make them easier and safer to handle
- ensuring cutters and combs are changed regularly
- identifying at-risk sheep (frail or particularly stressed animals) and ensuring they are handled accordingly
- ensuring shearers take regular breaks and novice shearers are well-supported and not pressured to increase tallies.

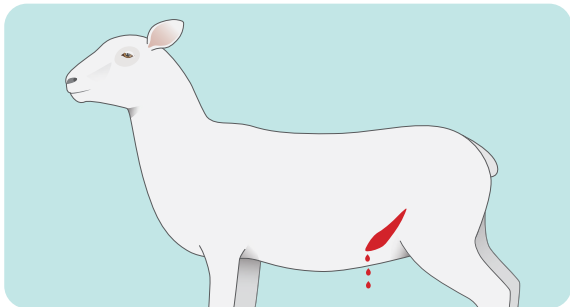
Identifying injured animals

Injured and treated animals need to be identified in some way. Ideally, a different mark could be used for injuries of different severity.

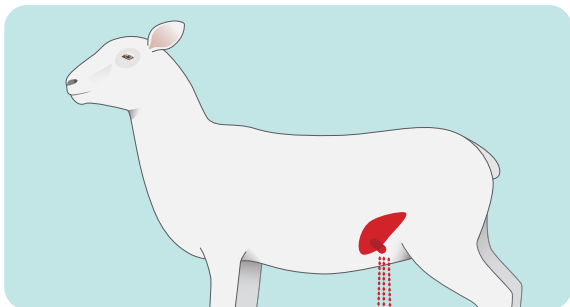
- ▶ **Minor wounds** – such as facial and ear nicks, grazes, superficial cuts under 5cm in length and minor bleeding. These wounds should be cleaned, antiseptic applied and pain relief considered.



- ▶ **Moderate wounds** – these include pizzle, udder, scrotum and vulva cuts, cuts that extend deeper into tissue or are over 5cm in length and contaminated wounds. The sheep should be placed in a hospital pen and treated with wound spray, pain relief and veterinary advice sought where necessary.



- ▶ **Major wounds** – these include cut tendons, deep cuts, excessive bleeding and deep abdominal injuries. The farmer should be notified immediately and the animal either given pain relief and the bleeding stemmed or the sheep euthanised. Veterinary advice should be sought where necessary.



Injured sheep should be kept in a safe area, preferably with another sheep, until they have been assessed and treated. **Farmers must keep a record of all treatments used.**

Medications

There are several options for providing pain relief and/or antibiotic treatment to sheep. These include injectable, oral and topical medications. These are only available from a veterinarian.

Different medications may have different meat or milk withholding periods.

A veterinarian will provide guidance on what medication is appropriate to use in different classes of sheep.

Antiseptic solutions and flystrike prevention treatments are commonly available over the counter at a vet clinic or farm supply store.

Transport to slaughter

Injured animals must not be transported to slaughter until wounds have healed and the withholding period of any medications has expired.

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