

Stud Breeders fund Wool Handler Training

8 April 2007

The NSW Stud Merino Breeders' Association (SMBA) has commenced a programme that is aimed at increasing wool returns, both immediately and into the future, by improved wool handling skills and clip preparation.

Through training conducted by TAFE NSW Western Institute, the SMBA's Trust is providing funds for in-shed training of wool handlers to an accredited level. Commercial and stud Merino breeders are invited to participate in this programme.

Jim Murray, one of TAFE's registered professional trainers who is assisting in delivery of the programme said, "the better prepared the wool is when it hits the show floor, the more confidence that processors and buyers will have in taking our product."

The improvements that woolgrower participants can expect from Wool Handler Training include;

- Improved wool handler skills
- Better preparation of oddment lines (locks, pieces and bellies)
- Removal of short and possibly stained crutch wool
- Effective skirting to maximise wool remaining in fleece lines
- Reduced chance of injury through improved work techniques and awareness of OH&S issues

This training programme has been made available as a result of an AWI-funded program that evaluated current training techniques and delivery and examined the options for meeting the future needs of the industry.

Jim Murray believes that the nature of the industry has changed with "the industry working life of shearers now around 15 years, after which they leave the industry and buy their own business or farm, having used shearing as a career to set themselves up.

"The wool handler on the other hand is looking at a five-year lifespan in that side of the industry. This means that there is a need for ongoing maintenance of an accepted standard of clip preparation with continual training of wool handlers to give that confidence back to the market that the high standard of clip preparation brings."

Training takes place "on the job" in a grower's shed during shearing and there is no limit to the number of handlers who can be enrolled. Coaching time will depend on the number of enrolments per shed, e.g. 1 shedhand = 1 day of training, 2 = 2 days and so on.

Jim Murray also said that it does not matter how much experience a wool handler has had - all benefit from this specialised and up-to-date training.

At the conclusion of the pilot programme, all stakeholders will undertake an evaluation prior to the programme progressing to a national level.

Merino woolgrowers who would like to participate in this program are invited to contact Jim Murray on 0427 460 007 or Jim or David Crean at TAFE's Wellington office on (02) 6845 1844.