SOP No: ATT 082

SUBJECT: Crutching and shearing sheep

DATE: 18.02.2015

REASON FOR USE: Shearing and crutching procedures should be demonstrated in real life or by video before students are allowed to practice on animals. Because of the risk of injury to sheep and operators, inexperienced students must be closely supervised.

POLICY: Minimum number of one operator required for shearing (but a team of operators is usually required for collecting and classing the fleece, cleaning the shearing board, pressing wool and penning sheep). Demonstrator: competence in this procedure. Students: competence in handling sheep (see SOP ATT 081 Yarding, catching and handling sheep), familiarity with sheep anatomy.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Wear sturdy footwear, use sun protection when outside
- Sheep should be handled quietly before, during and after the procedure
- Sheep should not be overcrowded in yards
- Specific personal risk issues to be aware of include: using correct positions and handling to avoid back strain, using care to avoid cuts from the handpiece
- Be aware of the animal’s reaction to the procedure (crush injuries, kicking).
- Wash hands and exposed body parts thoroughly with soap and water after handling animals.

Specific issues to be aware of for this activity include:

- Using appropriate restraint for sheep to avoid injuries
- Using care to prevent lacerations to fingers, hands and other people
- Using back aid/harness to prevent back strain for board shearing
• Doing warm up exercises to prevent muscle strain
• Awareness of animal’s reaction to procedure to avoid crush or kick injuries
• Maintaining strict hygiene procedures to prevent infection from zoonotic diseases.

EQUIPMENT:
Yards, catching pen, shearing equipment.

PROCEDURE:

Prepare sheep:
1. Inspect them to make sure they do not have scabby mouth, cancer or any zoonotic disease. It is preferable to pen sheep for at least 4 hours before shearing or crutching so that their digestive tracts can empty to some extent. Make sure that the sheep’s wool is dry.
2. Prepare equipment: ensure that the shearing shed is fully equipped and clean with appropriate safety devices including worm drive connections, and safety cut-out switches. Disinfect and dry the shearing board prior to shearing. Sharpen combs and cutters, set the handpiece for the wool type and animals to be shorn or cruched, oil the down tube and handpiece. Prepare antiseptic and dressing to treat shearing cuts.
3. Pen the required number of sheep by confining a group in the catching pen. Avoid overcrowding.

Crutching:
1. Catch a sheep (SOP ATT 081 Yarding, catching and handling sheep) and move it on to the shearing board or into the mobile shearing cradle. Allow the sheep to settle. Put the handpiece into gear.
2. Carefully remove the wool from around the eyes, pizzle (when doing this avoid cutting the teats by placing fingers over them) and/or tail and anus and vulva (when doing this avoid cutting teats or the tip of the vulva – place your fingers over these organs when you are shearing in this region).
3. Remove enough wool from around the tail to remove all adhering faeces and urine stain,
leaving clean skin. The size of the crutched area depends on the enterprise requirements.

4. If the animal is cut, apply an appropriate treatment immediately.

5. Gently release the sheep down the chute or directly into a yard or paddock after counting them.

Shearing:

1. Catch and settle the sheep as described above. Shear the sheep as shown by your instructor, and generally as follows:

2. Shear between hind legs taking care not to damage the vulva or hamstrings (see above)

3. Shear the underline/belly region making sure that all wool is removed

4. Open the neck and shear down to the shoulder

5. Move the sheep into position for the long blow, i.e. shearing from the rump to the head

6. Shear around the back of the head and down the off side neck and front leg

7. Move the sheep into position for the last (whipping) side

8. Finish off on the off hind leg taking care not to cut the hamstring.

9. If the animal is cut, apply an appropriate treatment immediately.

10. Gently release the sheep down the chute or directly into a yard or paddock after counting them.

When a run is finished:

1. Clean the shearing gear and if necessary separate the wool according to the enterprise requirements and the Wool Classing Code of Practice.

2. On completion of the procedure observe the animal for signs of excessive distress and treat as required.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

REFERENCES