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The biggest problem by far facing the wool industry is the wool harvesting process. The shearing industry is well over 100 years out of date. While Shearer and Wool Handler training programs have been of benefit much more needs to be done to drag the process into the current century. As with wool classers, comprehensive training for all shearers needs to be made mandatory and when they meet a required standard of quality clean work(not speed) and ethical sheep handling they are issued with a shearers certificate. Pay rates for qualified and unqualified shearers need to reflect the difference . The hip pocket nerve is the only way to solve this problem. Once qualified a Shearer needs to maintain his/her standard or lose his/her certificate.

Many years ago I trialled a streamlined method of shearing with great success

1) belly wool 2) hindlegs and crutch 3) front legs 4) topknot - all swept into their respective categories.

Then shear the rest ending up with a fleece that needs no skirting. In properly classed flocks these fleeces could be transferred straight from the board to the woolpress via vacuum tubing. The processing industry needs to emerge from the dark ages and handle wool harvested in this fashion. The cost savings on shed labour and the consistent cleanliness of the product are significant. Work practices and productivity in the shearing industry are currently a joke with people knocking off at all hours of the day to suit themselves and in many cases shearers ripping and tearing through sheep for an hour in an attempt to get a tally before an early knock off. When compared to modern grain and hay harvesting procedures the wool harvesting industry needs a huge shakeup and the sooner the better!!!!!!.

The bureaucratic overkill and red tape imposed on the industry, and in particular wool classers, by AWEX needs to be eliminated. The code of practice has basically become recycling material. Excessive time-consuming bale branding needs scrapping. A full Merino clip is a Merino clip!!!!, kindergarten stuff, you don't need to waste time branding each bale with an M.

These clips make up the majority of the Australian wool clip. Any bale containing wool that is not Merino can be branded accordingly and the problem is solved. These will be in the minority.

Currently AWEX blames the classer for everything when in many cases the problem is created long before the wool reaches the classers hands.

This nonsense needs to be rectified. AWEX needs to have its staff levels trimmed significantly, and deal with necessary core issues only, with a resultant cost saving to industry.

The age old system of selling wool by auction has its problems.

Electronic wool selling using systems such as Wooltrade are a step forward as they allow a grower to have a clip for sale 24/7. A system needs to be developed where wools can be placed on show for buyer appraisal as soon as they are in store and tested. Buyers can then record their appraisals as reference for when the wool is offered on an electronic auction system which would allow growers to offer wool for sale in a much shorter time frame than it currently takes to get a clip into a catalogue for physical auction. It should be possible to have an electronic auction system basically running continuously using the above methodology. At the click of a mouse growers could have their wool up for auction without delay.

Regional dumping, containerisation and rail movement all need to be looked at as potential cost saving methods in the wool supply chain.