



WOOL  
HARVESTING  
NOTE

NO: 1.031

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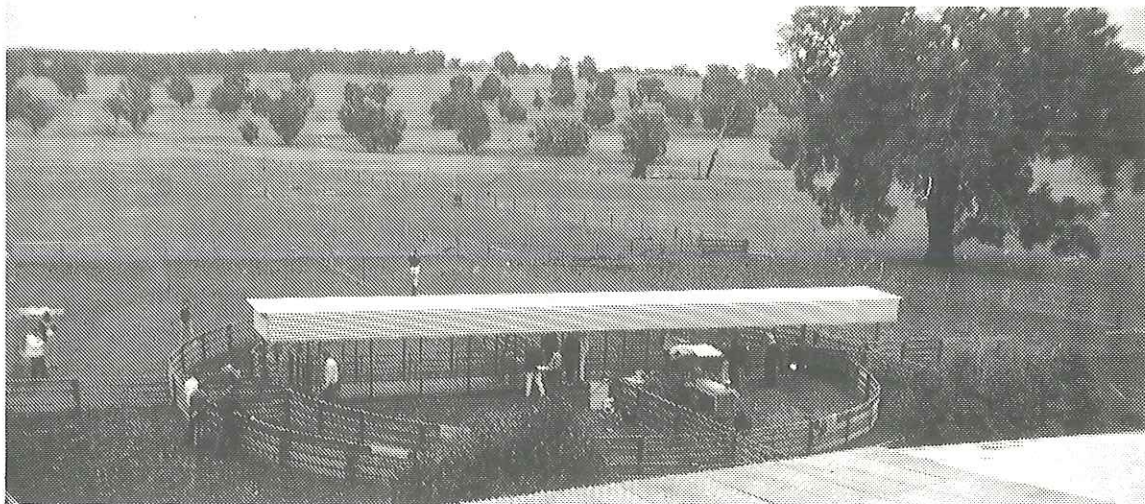
### CIRCULAR YARDS

These sheep yards are based on a circle design and are an alternative to traditional rectangular yards. They have created interest because the layout is believed to make sheep movement and handling easier and more efficient than for rectangular sheep yards. They are believed to facilitate the flow of sheep, and offer more control over sheep being presented to the working area.

The full circle and "dee" (or half circle) yards have similar design features and working principles. The full circle yards have been generally preferred to the dee yards on properties where larger yards are required. Depending on such factors as mob size, the dee yards are thought to be limited to use on properties with less than, say, 6,000 sheep.

The type of circular yards which has found most acceptance originated in Western Australia. The layout features a circular laneway (with the working race across the diameter of the circle) and a series of small holding paddocks around the outside of the circle.

Other types of circular yards are outlined in Wool Harvesting Note No: 1.032.



**Photo 1.** Circular sheep yards showing storage area, sheep pathways, and covered drafting and working race



**Photo 2.** Approach to the drafting and working race showing storage paddocks to the right, and the bugle entry to the draft.



**Photo 3.** End of the working race showing the circular laneway connecting the holding areas with the working area. Note also the large gates available to direct the flow of sheep.

## FEATURES OF CIRCULAR YARDS

The yards consist of holding and handling areas linked by a circular laneway that delivers (or returns) sheep to the drafting race, handling race, shearing shed and dip.

The size and number of holding paddocks around the outside of the yards depend on the number of sheep to be handled. Each is usually large enough to hold the normal mob on the property. Because the sheep densities are kept low in these mini-paddocks, the construction need not be as substantial as that for the inner yards. However, additional strength is required around gates where increased pressure is likely to occur.

The circular laneway connecting the storage area to the working facilities must be wide enough to encourage sheep to run, yet not so wide that a man and/or dog finds it difficult to stop any sheep that try to turn back. Maximum width is of the order of 3 metres, while a width of about 2.4 metres is common.

The sheep move from the circular laneway into a bugle-shaped entry to the draft. The inside of the bugle turn is close boarded or sheeted for a distance of 5 metres or so (depending on design) to prevent sheep from seeing the operator at the drafting or working race.

The working race is end on to the drafting race, which means that all working facilities are in the one area without need for duplication.

The gate system at the end of the working race allows sheep to be drafted, as well as allowing the transfer of sheep to different areas around the yards.

A mob of sheep can be moved from one area to another without involving other sheep in the yards. Access to the shearing shed, dip or loading race can be fitted readily into the design because of the circular laneway.

## ADVANTAGES

Sheep movement is improved by having them always travel through the yards in the same direction. The same forcing area is used to deliver the sheep into the drafting race, working race, dip or shearing shed.

The circular design delivers the sheep back to the area from which they entered the yard. The flow is improved by the sheep moving towards what they recognise as "home", namely the paddock.

The operator wastes little time and effort moving about the yards. The location of the laneway and the bugle entry into the drafting and working race allows the operator to be close to the sheep at all times.

Movement of sheep about the yard is simplified. The circular laneway connects all areas and minimises the number of corners. Large gateways are also used to further encourage sheep movement.

The laneway makes any of the holding areas directly accessible after the sheep have been treated.

Material costs are less than for other types of yards of similar sheep holding capacity and quality of construction. This is achieved by having only one forcing zone, a relatively small working area, and holding paddocks of cheaper construction.

## DISADVANTAGES

Circular yards require more planning and setting out than rectangular yards.

Operators require time to become accustomed to using them.

Where extra labour is available and sheep are worked through the yards at a very high rate, some operators have found the filling of the working race via the drafting race a restriction.

## SUGGESTED DATA

### Sheep Densities

- Holding Areas:** Allow 1 sheep per square metre, and each should hold average mob.
- Forcing Pen:** Allow 3 sheep per square metre, and the pen should hold 30 to 50 sheep.

### Dimensions

- Drafting Race:** Length 3 to 3.5 metres long with inner side of bugle entry sheeted for 4.5 to 6.5 metres.
- Width V-shaped, with bottom 280 mm and top 550 mm.
- Height 850 to 900 mm.
- Fences & Gates:** Height External fences, 900 mm to 1000 mm. Internal divisions, 850 to 900 mm.
- Gate sizes General gates, 2.3 to 2.6 metres wide.  
Drafting gates, 1.1 metres.
- Working Race:** Length 10 to 15 metres total length.
- Width For adjustable sides, provide widths from 450 to 1000 mm to cope with variations in sheep size, amount of fleece cover, and the particular activity being carried out. For fixed sides, select from 600 to 800 mm depending on predominant sheep size.
- Height 850 to 900 mm.

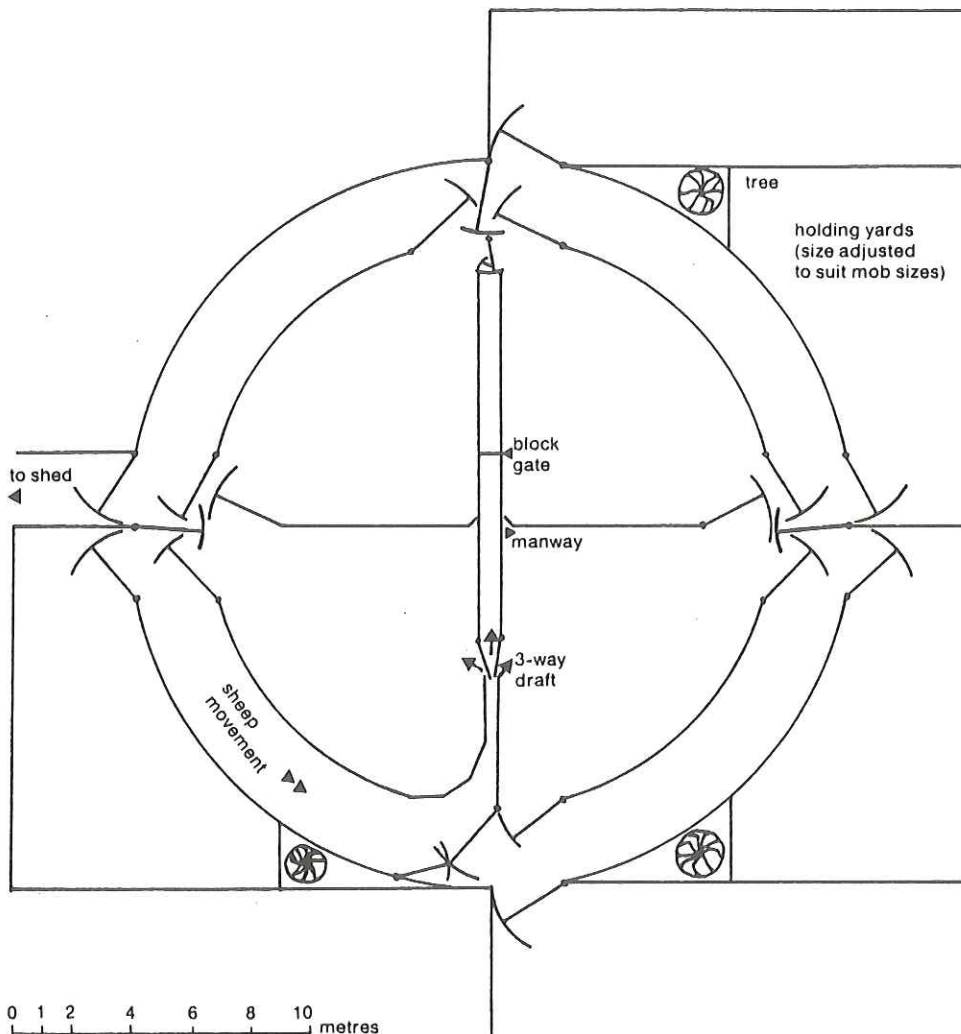
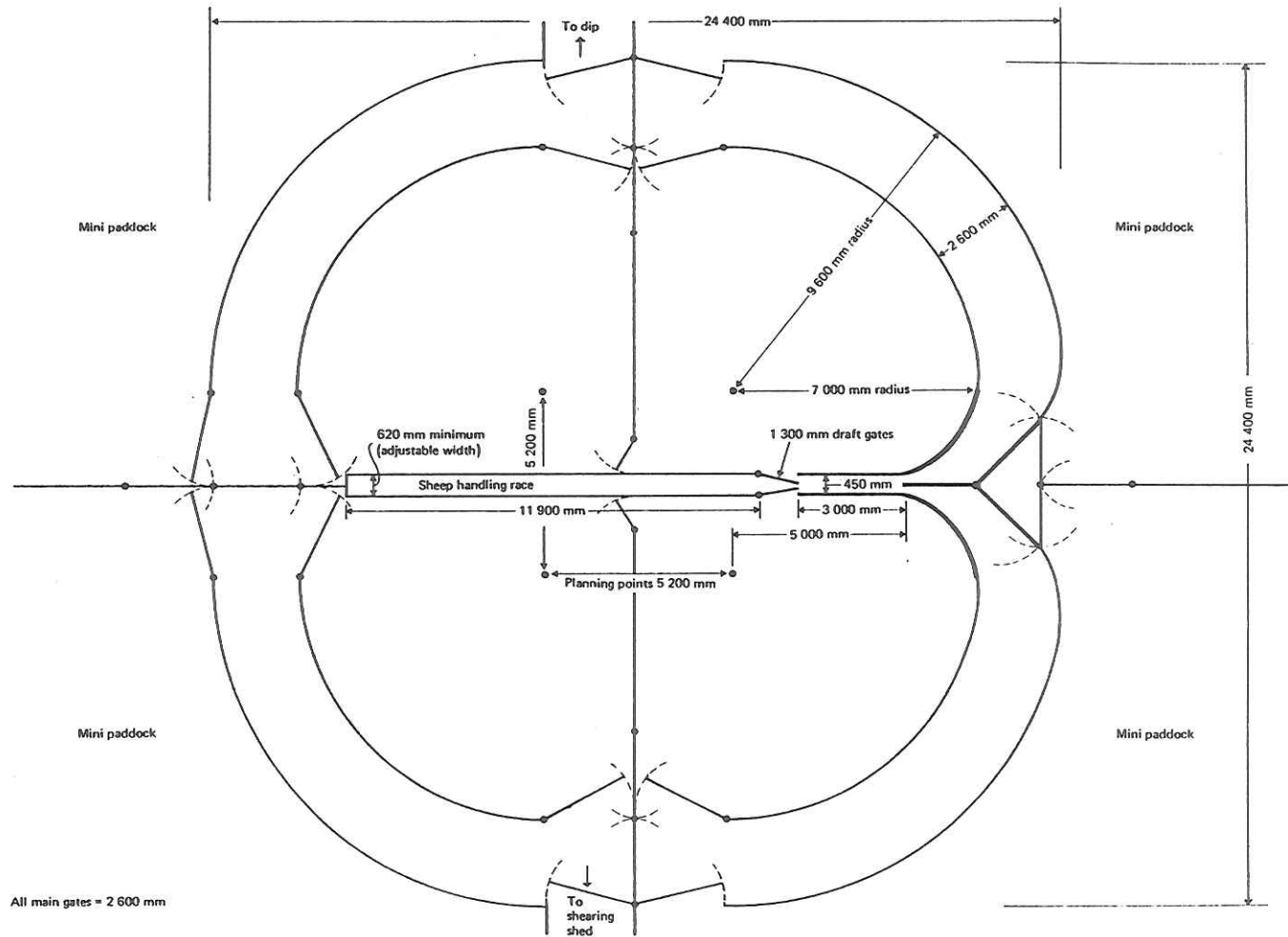


Diagram 1. Scale diagram of a typical set of circular yards



**Diagram 2.** Dimensional details of a different set of circular yards. In this case, the yards are not truly circular as indicated by the use of four planning points for laying out the curved laneway.