

SPORTS SHEAR Australia Ass. Inc



Shearing Guidelines & Rules 2025 / 2026

SPORTS SHEAR AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION INC. - (SSAA)

SHEEP SHEARING COMPETITION GENERAL RULES

2025 /2026 THESE RULES CANCEL ALL PREVIOUS RULES



SPORTS SHEAR AUSTRALIA SHEARING JUDGES'
CODE OF CONDUCT AND 'STANDARDS OF ETHICS'

1. Maintain and develop your judging skills by keeping yourself informed on developments in technique and style, and any changes in SSAA Rules and Protocols.
2. Arrive on time at the venue in reasonable physical and mental condition. Report to the SSAA, State or Head Judge and/or organiser. Confirm the timetable of the events for the competitions. Be available to perform the duties of a SSAA judge as scheduled.
3. If you believe that your physical or mental condition does not allow you to perform the job properly, without any limitations ask the Head Judge or organiser for a solution or a replacement.
4. If any person competing in that competition is a member of your family, related by blood or marriage, including de facto relationships, first cousin, adoption, or with whom you live, or where you have a personal relationship to any competitor in the competition which makes it inappropriate for you to serve as an adjudicator ask the Head Judge or organiser for a solution or a replacement.
5. Do not accept money, material rewards of value, or favours or promises of any future consideration, from any competitor or organiser, or from any other third party, who may have been, or could be affected directly or indirectly by the judge's decision.
6. Judges will always adhere SSAA Rules & Protocols. Judging in an independent, neutral, and objective manner.
7. Judges should concentrate on the competitor only and be mindful of their surrounds. Avoid distractions of mobile phones, cameras, and outside interferences.

8. Do not make any attempt to become familiar with names, numbers and nationalities of the participants by using the official program, or with any results or marks of other fellow adjudicators of the competition before the end of the competition.
9. Do not discuss the performance or results of any competitor with spectators of other competitors. Do not coach or advise any participating competitors. (Emergency's excepted)
10. Judges' behaviour on, off and away from competition must be consistent with the principles of good sportsmanship. Do not behave in a questionable or unseemly manner in public or at any Sport Shear Australian Association Competition related function or occasion where members of the public including competitors, spectators, and the media.
11. Do not consume any alcoholic beverage or recreational drugs before and during any period of the event.
12. Do not act in any way that may bring the image of SSAA into disrepute.
13. Follow any instruction given by the Host Committee Representative or Head Judge.
14. Adhere to the required dress code for the event. No Caps or hats to be worn while judging, covered in footwear to worn. Neat, clean and tidy attire. No use of mobile phones, smart watches or earphones while judging.

INTERPRETATION

In these Rules unless the context otherwise requires:

A word implying the masculine gender will include the feminine as the context fits.

Words implying singular will include the plural as the context fits.

PENALTIES & POINTS

Do not confuse penalty strokes with points.

(i) A penalty stroke is subject to further calculation (i.e. addition and division)

(ii) A point is subject only to inclusion and addition to the score.

1. ENTRIES

(a) Entries will be in the format required by the organising committee.

(b) Late entries may be accepted at the organising committee's discretion and may incur a surcharge.

2. COMPETITORS

(a) Competitors must abide by the Rules and Protocols of Sports Shear Australia Association Inc. (SSAA).

(b) Competitors enter and compete at their own risk.

(c) Competitors must report to the entry desk 30 minutes before the start of the event.

(d) Competitors in competitions must be suitably attired which includes covered footwear (i.e. no thongs, crocs or open sandals), caps, hats, earphones, headphones and ipods must not be worn whilst competing. The referee will administer this ruling.

(e) Competitors will not wear conflicting sponsor's singlets or any singlet that may give offence and will replace it or turn it inside out if requested by referee. Failure/refusal to do so will result in disqualification.

(f) The use of drugs drips or oxygen is banned in all competitions.

(g) Random drug tests may be taken and if proved positive, the competitor will pay all costs and be disqualified for 12 months from the date of the tests.

(h) Competitors should be suitably attired for prize giving. No singlets, dirty work clothes or thongs

(i) Competitors must provide their own hand-pieces, combs and cutters and hand shears. Sharpening equipment will be available unless forbidden by Regulation or Law.

(j) Competitors will each be allowed two loaded hand-pieces or two pairs of shears which are his responsibility and no time will be allowed for stoppage caused by his shears, hand-piece, or sheep getting away from the competitor on the board. However, should any stoppages occur through the fault of the machine or through other competitor's sheep escaping, a time allowance will be made or a re-run given only at the Disputes Committee's discretion. The organising committee may allow competitors to use up to 3 handpieces in multiple breed/wool type events.

(k) Without assistance, each competitor must:

(i) Start and stop his machine;

(ii) Catch his own sheep; (see 7h)

(iii) Put each sheep out of the chute/porthole; (see 7m)

(iv) Switch his handpiece off between sheep.

- (l) It is the responsibility of the competitor to be clear on ruling re. socks/shanks.
- (m) Competitors may be required to sort sheep into even lines prior to their heat or final.
- (n) Competitor may enter his pen in the presence of a judge, to inspect and sort his sheep.
No plucking of wool allowed
- (o) Competitors must wait on the board and may place hand/s on the closed door/s to await the word 'Go'.
- (p) Competitors have the right to appeal to the referee in regard to any sub-standard sheep before the heat commences. The referee's decision in the matter is final. Should a sub-standard sheep be disqualified by the referee, the sheep will be raddled and withdrawn from the entire event.
- (q) There will be a draw to determine heats and stands before the start of the event.
- (i) Competitors in all finals will draw their stand after the pens are filled and/or sorted.
- (ii) This will be done in time to allow the names of the competitors to be put above their stands.
- (r) Each competitor may be provided with an official in his pen to act as a second. This person may not tip or lift the sheep for the competitor or switch the machine on or off and will ensure sheep are facing away from the pen door. This person must ensure they do not interfere with Board judges' view of the shearing. No unauthorised person/s will be permitted in the catching pens.
- i. Shearers are not to have a catcher in the pen if shearing and wool handling is running in conjunction / together. The shearer may have a pen mate who prevents sheep from escaping for the purpose of safety. (Upto 5 penalties per occurrence)
- (s) In any event, competitors may change handpieces at any time (i.e. do not have to change when shearers change in a team event).
- (t) Any competitor who is not present for the presentation of prizes will not receive the prize unless reasonable grounds for being absent are presented to the organising committee before the prize giving.
- (u) On completion of shearing their sheep, each competitor will remain on their stand until the last competitor on the board has finished, unless,
- (i) they need to seek urgent medical attention.
- (ii) they have been granted permission to leave the board by the referee prior to the commencement of such heat or final.
- (iii) At the completion of shearing in all wool handling events, down tubes are to be left hanging in their natural position. Unless in a teams event. (Upto 5 penalties per occurrence)
- (iv) The competitor is responsible for holding the sheep for judging in the following heat /event. Or provide a replacement . (upto 5 whole points at judges discretion)
- (v) Competitors will contest one class only except at discretion of organising committee.
- (w) All finalists will receive a print out of the final results if facility is available.
- (x) Competitors will be disqualified for conduct deemed by the referee, a judge, or the relevant committee, to be detrimental to SSAA, e.g. deliberate injury to a sheep, abusive

language, not conducting themselves in a manner appropriate to a sports person, under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

(See 4e, 5e, and 9 d)

(y) Disqualified competitors will receive no prize or prize money other than a ribbon.

(z) A competitor who is bleeding or who has his or her blood on their uniform will at the discretion of the Board Referee or Chief Referee:

(i) If only a minor injury they will be allowed to stop the bleeding by way of tape and continue shearing with no allowance for time lost.

(ii) If a more serious injury they will be asked to leave the event and have the problem seen to. The competitor will not be allowed to return until the bleeding has ceased and any blood completely removed from their person and clothing. The competitor must exit the competition immediately or they forfeit the event.

(iii) In the event of the competitor being asked to leave the event due to the blood rule above, they may be allowed a re-run in the last heat if sheep numbers and time permits. In finals the competitor will be relegated to the lowest finals placing (see Protocol 6. COMPETITORS).

2 (ii) Where shearing and Wool Handling run in conjunction with each other

- a. If a shearer cuts themselves or blood from the shearer can be seen, the wool handler must stop competing and the head wool judge called.
- b. If a wool handler is cut or blood from that wool handler can be seen, the wool handler must stop competing and seek first aid.
- c. A wool handler who has stopped competing due to the blood rule will not have their points calculated and organisers will offer another heat to compete in where sheep numbers allow and at head judge's discretion. Where possible an average score may be calculated.
- d. Any wool that has human blood must be treated as a biohazard and carefully isolated.

3. SHEEP

(a) Preparation of competition sheep must be kept to a minimum, at a uniform standard, but sufficient to ensure the safety of teats, vulva and pizzle.

(b) Competitors may not present their own sheep for outside judges but may be required to present sheep from other heats or competitors.

(c) It is important to select an even line of sheep from a single flock for each event. A high standard of sheep quality is expected.

(d) The sheep numbers to be shorn by each competitor will be at the discretion of the organising committee, save and except in the SSAA National Championships and the Golden Shears World Championships, where the number to be shorn will be decided by SSAA and the Golden Shears World Council respectively.

4. THE REFEREE

- (a) A referee or chief referee will be appointed for each competition.
- (b) A chief referee may appoint one or more referees for a specific event E.g. pen and board.
- (c) The referee or chief referee will be Chairman of the Disputes Committee. (See 13a)
- (d) The referee will be responsible for the administration and control of the competition strictly according to these rules, any additional local rules and the SSAA Protocols.
- (e) The referee has the right to disqualify any competitor whose work or conduct is detrimental to the good reputation of competition shearing. (See 2x, 9d)
- (f) Prior to the commencement of any competition heats, all the competition rules must be available to the competitors, and the referee must be available to answer any queries.
- (g) Any person may seek a clarification on any point from the referee. The referee may rule on the matter raised or refer it to the Disputes Committee.
- (h) The referee will ensure that the board judges use different colour pens or markers or approved hand held counters.
- (i) The referee will ensure that the pen judges strictly adhere to the pen judging method adopted for the particular event or competition and do not confer while judging, except as in 8e.
- (j) The referee must be called and decide the penalty for 9b. (See 8e)
- (k) The referee for an event will draw up the names of and place the judges.
- (l) Before the start of the competition the referee will announce whether 'socks' or second growth wool, are to be taken off or left on.

5. THE JUDGES

- (a) A competitor may judge at a competition where he is competing, but not in the class in which he is competing.
- (b) Judges must report to entry desk or referee 15 minutes before the first event they are required to judge.
- (c) Judges must be tidily dressed, preferably wearing a white coat.
- (d) Judges are not permitted to judge while under the influence of alcohol or to smoke or vape while judging.
- (e) A judge has the right to switch off and/or disqualify any competitor whose work or conduct is detrimental to the good reputation of competition shearing. (See 2x, 9d)
- (f) Judges are to ensure they understand all rules prior to judging at a competition.
- (g) At the start of every heat or final, judges must ensure counter is zeroed and score card is filled in if necessary. Starter or referee to check/remind. (See 6m)
- (h) Judges must not be changed during the heats of an event. Judges may be changed for any finals of an event.
- (i) If required, the referee will have the final say on all decisions re dog bites, yoke boils, stitching etc. (see 9b re stitching)

6. THE BOARD JUDGES

(a) The board judges will judge for:

- (i) double cutting of the wool;
- (ii) skin pieces on fleece;
- (iii) handling of sheep;
- (iv) breaking of fleece;
- (v) work before or after time; (see 2n and 7n)

(b) Board judges must start on the same stand in each heat or semi-final.

(c) Board judges must be alert to protect competitors and woolhandlers if a sheep escapes.

(d) Floating judge to change after the fastest competitor finishes the belly of the first sheep.

(e) Board judges must not hesitate when changing unless it is prudent to do so.

(f) Board judges will rotate during the course of every heat so that each sheep is judged by more than one judge.

(g) Board judges must ensure they spend time on all stands even if one or more be vacant to avoid altering the overall pace of change.

(h) Board judges' rotation must continue until last sheep of last shearer is finished.

(i) When changing, incoming judge must tap outgoing judge, then outgoing judge scores no more.

(j) Place the counter so the incoming judge can find the trigger easily.

(k) Board judges must retain a constant focus on the sheep and competitor while judging for board penalties.

(l) Board judges to keep away from timer button.

(m) Board judges using counters must, at completion of last sheep of heat, record penalty strokes on card provided. They should check counter with shearer and/or person collecting cards, then zero counter. (See 5g and 6h)

(n) blood rule see section 2 (ii) and 2 (z)

7. BOARD PENALTIES

(a) Second cuts – one credit card in size (85mm x 55mm x 10mm) equals **5 penalty strokes**.
(85mm x 11mm x 10 mm) **One penalty stroke** -

(b) Two penalty strokes for not throwing the belly wool clear and within reach of the woolhandler.

(c) Up to five penalty strokes for wool thrown interfering with another competitor.

(d) One penalty stroke per side for obvious belly wool not removed.

(e) Two penalty strokes for first hind leg wool broken out deliberately by competitor.

(f) One penalty stroke for not breaking the neck wool.

(g) Up to three penalty strokes for using blades or handpiece to cut open neck wool.

(h) Two penalty strokes if pen handler lifts sheep to assist catch or interferes with Board judges' view of the shearing. Repeated offences the pen handler will be disqualified by the Board Referee.

- (i) Two penalty strokes for dragging competitor's foot through fleece on completion of the long blow.
- (j) One penalty stroke for competitor placing foot on fleece. Two penalty strokes if fleece is damaged.
- (k) Up to four penalty strokes if shorn sheep on release breaks up fleece or carries fleece wool out into release pen.
- (l) Rough handling of sheep – up to 20 penalty strokes per offence.
- (m) Allowing a shorn or partly shorn sheep to escape – up to 20 penalty strokes per offence. The shearer must make a genuine effort to pen the sheep. Does not apply if sheep is fully penned and returns to board.
- (n) Work before or after time (i.e. plucking, removing tassels etc.) – up to 20 penalties strokes per offence. (See 2n and 6a). Judges must be aware that –
 - (i) If stopwatch timing, time is until pull of rope after last sheep (i.e. handpiece stops);
 - (ii) If self timing, (i.e. button) time is until button is pushed. (i.e. handpiece may be still running).(See 10b (ii))
- (o) Skin pieces on fleece to be penalized as if skin cut on sheep (i.e. pen penalty – See 9a).
- (p) Five penalties for removal of NLIS ear tag.
- (q) Each competitor's board points will be calculated by dividing his total number of board penalty strokes by the number of sheep shorn.

8. THE PEN JUDGES

- (a) There will be a minimum of two pen judges judging the shorn sheep either together or singly. If single judging is used, each pen judge must judge the same number of sheep for each competitor. (e.g. – two (2) pen judges – seven (7) sheep heat. Judge A judges four (4) for each competitor, Judge B judges three (3) for each competitor).
- (b) Each pen judge must record his score for each sheep he judges on the scorecard provided. Pen judges must sign the card as required.
- (c) Pen judges must not confer and must form their own opinion as to the number of penalties taken from each competitor, except as required by Rule 8e.
- (d) The pen judges will judge shorn sheep for –
 - (i) Wool left on.
 - (ii) All cuts on sheep (i.e. skin, eye, ear, teat, pizzle, vulva and minor teat or pizzle cuts) except as per 9b and 9d.
- (e) The pen judge/s must call the referee to decide penalty for 9b and 9d, then judge the rest of that sheep. Pen judges cannot impose a whole point penalty.

9. PEN PENALTIES

(a) Wool left on sheep – one credit card in size (85mm x 55mm x 10mm) equals **5 penalty strokes**.

One penalty stroke - (85mm x 11mm x 10 mm).

(i) Skin cuts – one penalty stroke per 15mm in diameter depending on depth of cut and position on sheep.

(ii) Two penalty strokes per full sock left on, unless prior arrangements by committee and referee.

(iii) (See 2l)

(iv) Mutilation of registered earmark-five penalties. Other damage to ear up to five penalties

(b) Referee must be called and must decide the penalty (see 8e) if the competitor causes lifetime irreversible damage

(i) Cuts a teat and impairs the breeding ability of a ewe.

(ii) Seriously damages the pizzle on a wether.

(iii) Cuts a sheep to the extent that it requires surgical attention.

(iv) For each infringement this penalty will be up to a maximum of **50** whole points added to his calculated score. (The referee may require a minor cut to be stitched without imposing the above penalty.) (See 8e)

(c) Each competitor's pen points will be calculated by:

(i) Single judging – Divide total number of penalty strokes by number of sheep.

(ii) More than one judge judging each sheep – Divide total penalty strokes by number of judges, then divide by number of sheep.

(d) A competitor will be disqualified:

(i) If he severs a hamstring or tendon

(ii) For a major cut (e.g. major artery).

(iii) Also see 2x, 4e, 5e, & 8e.

10. THE TIMEKEEPERS

(a) Each competitor will have a separate stopwatch or an approved self-timing device.

(b) Competitor's time will be taken from the word 'Go' until they have –

(i) Completed their final sheep and switched off his handpiece, or in the case of hand shears, replaced the shears in the water tin.

(ii) Pushed the button on self-timing device.

(c) One spare stopwatch and timekeeper will be available to time any stoppages and the stoppage time will be deducted from the competitor's total time.

11. TIME PENALTIES

- (a) One (1) point for each twenty (20) seconds. Multiply minutes by three (3). Multiple seconds by five (5) and move decimal point two places or divide by twenty (20).
- (b) Organising committee may elect to vary the time penalty for events provided all competitors and scorers are informed of the change prior to the event. (Exception – National Championships – Permission to vary must be applied for and granted at the previous SSAA AGM).

12. THE WINNER

- (a) The eventual winner will have the lowest combination of time points, board quality points and pen quality points.
- (b) In the event of a tie, the competitor with the lowest score for board and pen will take precedence. If there is still a tie, the competitor with the lowest pen score will take precedence. If there is still a tie, the competitor with the lowest board score will take precedence.

13. DISPUTES COMMITTEE

- (a) A disputes committee will be appointed and the members' names displayed during the competition. This committee will include the referee, another experienced judge, and an experienced committee member with knowledge of the rules.
- (b) In the event of a dispute or appeal that relates in any way to the procedure adopted for the judging or staging of the event, the matter will be handled expeditiously by the Disputes Committee.
- (c) A person seeking clarification under 4f may request the referee to raise the matter with the Disputes Committee.
- (d) An appeal to the Disputes Committee
 - (i) must be in writing with reference to the relevant rule;
 - (ii) will be accompanied by a fifty dollar (\$50) fee ;
 - (iii) must be made within thirty (30) minutes of becoming aware of the need for such appeal.
- (e) Person/s appealing may speak to their appeal before the Disputes Committee. Other persons will not enter discussion unless requested or invited to do so by referee.
- (f) In all cases, and in any matters not covered by the rules, the decision of the Disputes Committee will be final and binding on competitors.
- (g) If appeal is upheld, fifty dollar \$50 fee will be refunded.

14. NATIONAL REPRESENTATION

- (a) To be eligible to Manage, judge or compete for your state, at National Championships level or to represent Australia, the person /competitor must be an Australian Citizen and a resident in the state they are representing for their state selection, prior to the National Championship event.

- (b) Competitors must provide proof of Australian citizenship if requested by a SSAA member committee, the Disputes Committee or National Executive.
- (c) Competitors in the National Championships should be prepared to represent Australia in Australia and/or overseas, and, as a State or Australian team member, must agree to meet any reasonable sponsorship obligation or request.
- (d) A competitor has the right to contest the National final, but if unavailable to represent Australia, his position in the team will go to the next highest competitor. i.e. a competitor may win the National Title but not proceed to team membership.
- (e) Competitors seeking to represent Australia after having represented another country, (who would qualify under 14a above), must also have completed a three year 'stand down' period commencing from the date they last represented that other country.

15. ADDITIONAL RULES

- (a) All competitions must be equipped with first aid kit, needle, thread and antiseptic.
- (b) Each competitor's points will be calculated and recorded regardless of whether he has scored insufficient quality points or has a slow time.
- (c) Where a prize is given for the best shorn pen of sheep then the pen must have been shorn within a reasonable time as decided by the referee.
- (d) Organising committees should endeavour to provide a clock that is visible to competitors and spectators.
- (e) An organising committee may formulate additional rules to apply to a specific event (e.g. local prize, sheep mix in a multi-breed event, novelty event, rules re-entry (see (i)). Any such rules shall not override rules 1-16 and may only be additional to these rules.

16. CHANGING OF RULES

- (a) Application to change a particular SSAA General Shearing Rule must be made in the form of a motion for discussion and decision at a SSAA general meeting.

SPORTS SHEAR AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION INC SHEARING JUDGES AND SCORING INFORMATION – FOLLOWS