

MEDIA RELEASE (with pic, caption)
From Doug Laing, media officer, Shearing Sports New Zealand
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caption

New Zealand shearers Paerata Abraham (left) and Jack Fagan (right) in a speedshear final during the the 2017 World shearing and woolhandling championships in Invercargill. On Saturday they're expected to be chasing a \$5000 first prize in the Mangawhai Speedshear north of Auckand. PHOTO/SSNZ

Chasing shear glory at Mangawhai

Some of the biggest prizemoney offered in speed shearing in New Zealand will be at stake on Saturday (November 3) at a Northland hotel which an organiser says is worth every bit of its role in staging the historic event.

Organiser and Open-class shearer Phil Wedd says about \$10,800 will be on the line at the Mangawhai Tavern, well over a century old and situated 100kms north of Auckland, an hour and a half's drive - traffic-willing.

With a DJ and "live band", the usual type of entertainment fare, also on the programme, there will be a new range of stars on stage after top prizes of \$5000 for the Open-class winner and \$1000 for the Senior winner, each winner likely to spend little more than a minute shearing during the night.

Wedd says that after six months' organisation the support of sponsors and the community puts it into the same prize-pool ballpark as most of the top competitions in Australia where "Quick Shears" are held as popular bars attractions most weekends across the commonwealth.

As a result, he says, some shearers could be crossing the Tasman for the chance to pick off the top prizes against the best New Zealand opposition, although as is the case in most events of its type the real lineup won't be known until they roll-up on the night.

But it is expected to draw the best in New Zealand, including Te Kuiti gun Jack Fagan and Paerata Abraham of Masterton, who have battled many speedshear finishes, among them the World Championships event won by Fagan in Invercargill in February 2017.

Also expected is former World nine-hour-day lambshearing record holder, speedshear record holder and 2006 Golden Shears champion Dion King, from Hawke's Bay.

Wedd, from Hawke's Bay but living in the Managawhai area for about three years, apart from visits to the US where he has been known to split his time between trailer-shearing and coaching golf to such stars as Pink Floyd legend Roger Waters, will have some local knowledge, but perhaps most in-the-know will be veteran Neville Osborne, who owns the lambs being shorn in the competition.

It starts at 4pm, with shearers racing for fastest times per lamb, under the strict eyes of judges with well-established authority to disqualify competitors if the quality is not up to scratch, as happened to Abraham when he exited the final at the World Championships – first to finish, but with a red light behind him first out.

"It's a fine line between going through to the next round, or winning, and getting put out or losing," says Wedd. "But they all know the rules, and know they've got to keep it clean, or they're not in with a chance."

It's a big boost to shearing competition in Northland, which is mainly restricted each summer to small-entries A and P show events at Kaikohe, Paparoa, Arapohue, Broadwood and Warkworth in January-March.

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