

MEDIA RELEASE

From Doug Laing, Media Officer, Shearing Sports New Zealand  
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TAB favours Smith for NZ Shears treble repeat

The TAB has endorsed the near invincible finals form of shearier Rowland Smith by making him favourite to repeat a treble of the three Open-class shearing titles at the New Zealand shearing and woolhandling championships in Te Kuiti.

Smith won all three events last year, in a currently unbroken sequence of 40 wins in finals stretching back almost 15 months, and as the three-day 2018 championships opened today he was a short-priced \$1.35 favourite to retain North Island Shearer of the Year title tomorrow with the same odds posted for the New Zealand Championships Open Shearing Championship on Saturday.

The odds were more relaxed on his chances of successfully defending the New Zealand Shears Circuit, also on Saturday, with the \$2 reflecting his limited merino shearing the season. In the six-man circuit final each shearer shears five merinos, five second-shear crossbred ewes and five lambs.

Smith was last beaten in a final in New Zealand at the end of January 2017, and his only blemish in New Zealand was at Tauranga in January this year, when he failed to qualify for the final but went on to win the competition's Open Plate.

World champion John Kirkpatrick is second-favourite in both the NI Shearer of the Year and the Circuit, his odds expected to shorten reflecting his win five weeks ago in the PGG Wrighton Wool National Circuit, which also incorporates three different sheep and wool types. World champion woolhandler Joel Henare is a \$1.30 favourite to win Saturday night's Open woolhandling final, but there is expected to be big interest in Sheree Alabaster at \$6 and Pagan Karauria at \$8, also expected to shorten after her win in the first Royal Easter Show Open woolhandling event in Auckland on Sunday.

The Open woolhandling championships heats and semi-finals are being held today, the NI Shearer of the Year preliminary rounds and final are tomorrow (Friday) and the Circuit semi-final and final and Open Shearing Championship heats, quarterfinals, semi-finals and final are all on Saturday.

Full odds are available here <https://www.tab.co.nz/sport/#comp/shearing>

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