

Dealing with shearing cuts

Advice for sheep owners and managers

Shearing is a dynamic process, therefore skin cuts can occur. They must be taken seriously and treated appropriately. Shearing cuts can be a severe animal welfare issue and may have long term consequences for the animal.

Where possible, seek shearers that treat sheep well. A slightly slower shearer who does not cut sheep is preferable to a fast one who is also careless. Your sheep and your wool clip will be better for it.

Regardless of how good a shearer is, cuts will happen when sheep and humans are continuously moving. Careful preparation before shearing begins and appropriate action when cuts occur will ensure a better outcome for any wounded sheep.

Before shearing begins

Select your team

Where possible, select a shearing team you know will provide a good service.

Consult your veterinarian

Vets have an important role in any sheep enterprise and are particularly valuable at shearing time. Sedatives for use on rams can only be obtained under prescription from vets. When obtaining these sedatives, discuss other requirements around shearing. This may include prescriptions for pain relief medications and antibiotics

to have on hand to treat injured sheep. Be prepared to treat or euthanase badly injured sheep. You or a member of your staff, or the contractors, should have high level skills in animal first aid. Talk to your vet about developing these.

Vaccinate

There is a strong and well-established link between infection of wounds and the development of arthritis. Because small cuts are inevitable in shearing, vaccination with Erysipelas/arthritis vaccine before shearing is a good preventative measure.

Fast facts

- Obtain first aid supplies and medications before shearing.
- Assess all cut sheep.
- Treat cut sheep appropriately.



Obtain supplies

Ensure adequate first aid supplies, veterinary medications and over-the-counter antiseptic sprays. Wound treatment sprays that contain antiseptic and insecticide (fly repellent) are preferable (e.g. Centrigen or Extinosad).

Set up pens

Set up a hospital pen and recovery pens before shearing starts. The hospital pen will be used to hold cut sheep until you can reassess them. The initial assessment should be done on the board by the shearer. Recovery pens will need shelter, water and feed. They are only for very ill sheep that need to be closely watched. Other injured sheep should be held in a small paddock close to the yards where they will be less stressed.

Euthanasia protocols

If you intend to euthanise severely injured sheep yourself, ensure you have an appropriate (licenced) firearm or bolt gun on hand (and securely stored). When sheep must be killed, the primary consideration is preventing the animal from suffering pain and distress. Killing should be done promptly and safely by a competent person. Follow best practice guidelines. Euthanasia is a major responsibility.

On the day

At the beginning of shearing, ensure all shed staff know how to implement your plan for managing shearing cuts. For severe cuts, shearers should notify you immediately. All sheep with cuts or grazes need to be placed in the hospital pen for you to assess and treat accordingly.

This can be communicated as part of your general shed induction when you discuss occupational health and safety and any other matters you need to cover. Point out the *Cut? Assess. Treat.* poster available at www.wool.com/shearingprep, and encourage all shed staff to familiarise themselves with it and make sure they know where the hospital pen is.

Ensure all shed staff understand that animal welfare is everyone's responsibility.

The sheep owner or farm manager should assess the sheep in the hospital pen at the end of each run. Severely wounded sheep must be assessed on the board and appropriate action taken.

Assessing wounds

The severity of shearing cuts depends on the nature of the wound (small cut, larger cut, graze) and where on the body it occurs. Assessment should take these factors into account. Treatment will vary depending on the severity of the cut and its location on the sheep's body. The severity of the cut can look different according to how the sheep is positioned and this should be taken into account when assessing cuts.

Head

Cuts on the head and around the eyes and ears tend to bleed profusely. Apply antiseptic spray containing fly repellent (e.g. Centrigen or Extinosad). Clean the cut before spraying so that the antiseptic can contact the tissue. Pain relief may be required.

Legs

High risk area. Any cuts to the legs have the potential to cut through tendons. Cuts need to be immediately assessed for severity. If tendons are cut, sheep may need to be euthanased immediately.

Where euthanasia is required, ensure animal welfare guidelines are followed. Seek veterinary advice if necessary.

Udder

High risk area. Damage to udder and teats may predispose the ewe to mastitis. Assess for likelihood of recovery and long-term damage. Seek veterinary advice.

Pizzle

High risk area. May affect sheep's ability to urinate and mate (rams). Assess for likelihood of recovery and long-term damage. Seek veterinary advice.

Scrotum

High risk area. May affect ram's ability to breed. Assess for likelihood of recovery and long-term damage. Seek veterinary advice.

Body grazes

Assess severity. Apply antiseptic spray containing fly repellent (e.g. Centrigen or Extinosad). Clean the cut before spraying so that the antiseptic can contact the tissue. Pain relief may be required. Antibiotics may be needed if graze is extensive. If wound is severe and extensive, seek veterinary advice.

Body cuts

Assess severity. Apply antiseptic spray containing fly repellent (e.g. Centrigen or Extinosad). Clean the cut before spraying so that the antiseptic can contact the tissue. Pain relief may be required. Antibiotics may be needed if the cut is severe. Stitching may be required for deep cuts and any over 3cm long. Stitching should only be done by qualified people and in conjunction with pain relief. Previous practices of unqualified people stitching with cotton or dental floss are inappropriate.

CUT? ASSESS. TREAT.

HEAD



- May bleed profusely



- Apply antiseptic spray with fly repellent, avoiding eyes

BODY CUTS



- Assess



- Apply antiseptic spray with fly repellent



- Cuts over 3cm may need stitching

UDDER



- High risk area



- Apply antiseptic spray with fly repellent

SCROTUM



- High risk area



- Ask vet

BODY GRAZES



- Assess



- Apply antiseptic spray with fly repellent

PIZZLE



- High risk area



- Apply antiseptic spray with fly repellent

LEGS



- High risk area

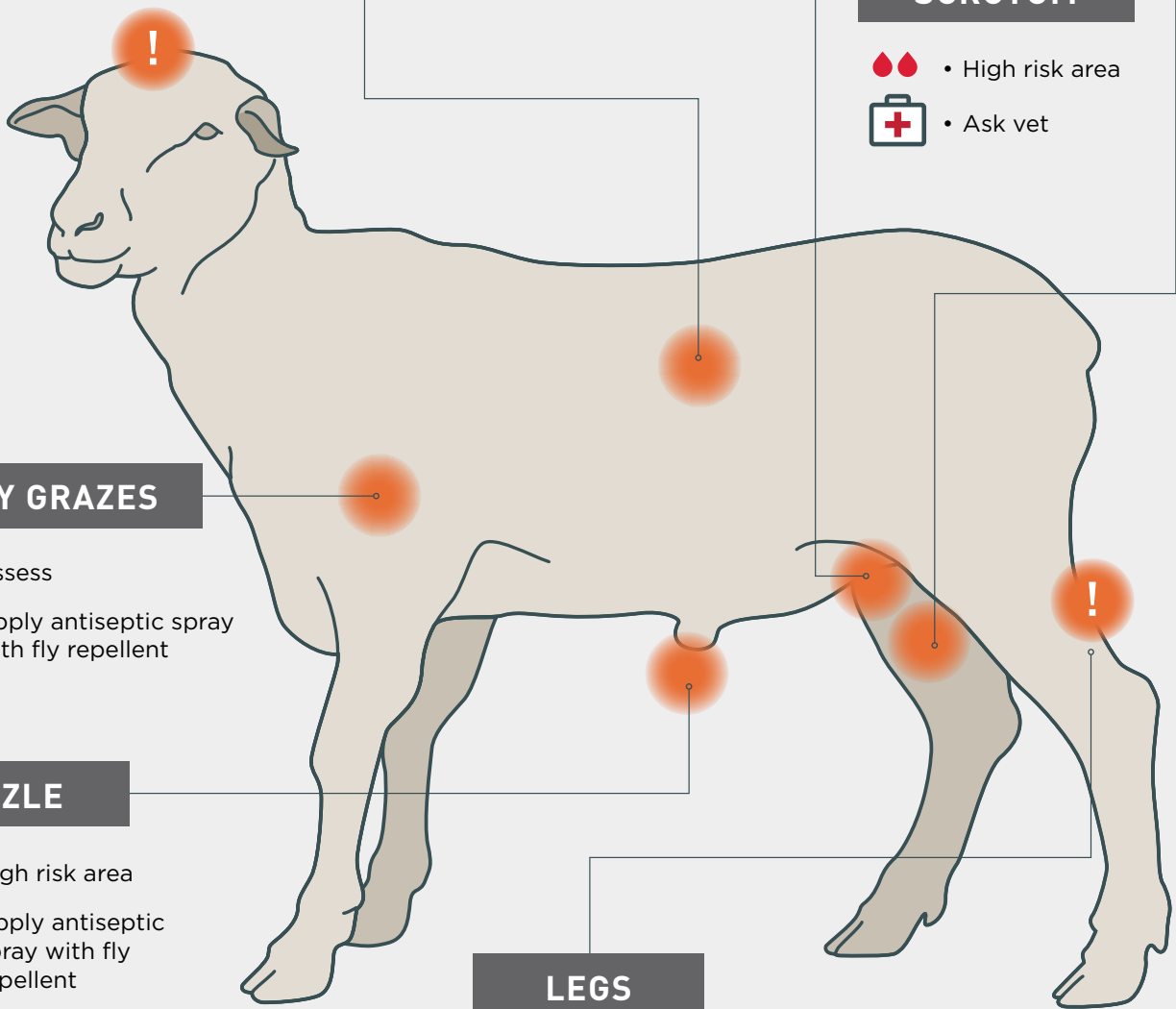


- Assess immediately



- Extreme cases may need to be euthanased

 RISK RATING



Treatment protocols

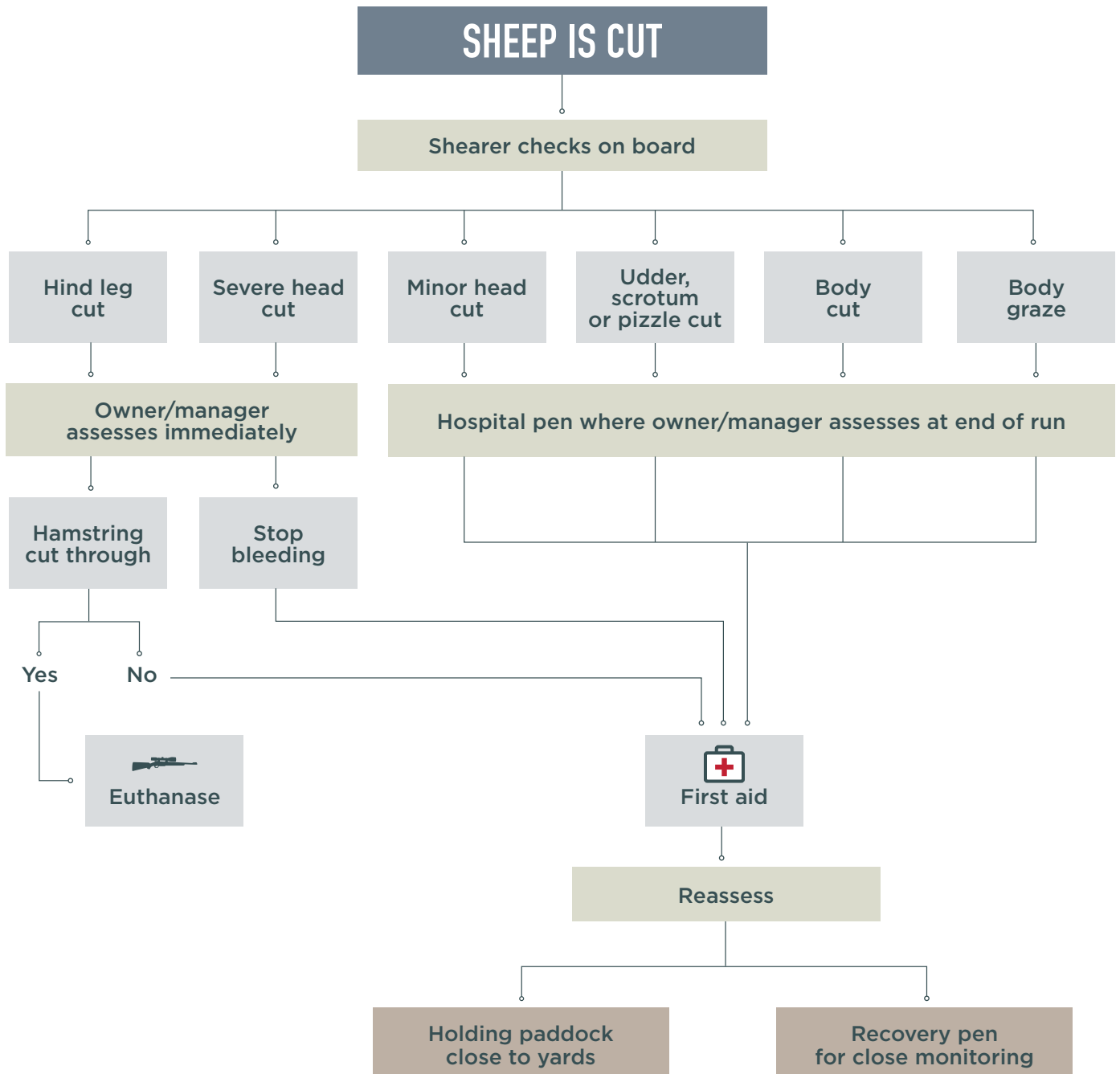
Use the flowchart below to assess and treat animals in the hospital pen. Remember that seemingly minor injuries can become severe or flyblown if left untreated.

First aid treatment at the time of the wound can potentially protect animals' future health and may even save lives. It is well worth the effort required.

Cuts and abrasions cause animals pain and pose a potential animal welfare concern.

Assessment and treatment is a necessity not a luxury.

Animal welfare is the responsibility of everyone working in the shed.



For more information, please refer to the poster or go to www.wool.com/shearingprep to learn more about sheep health and welfare and shearing

