

MEDIA RELEASE
(team members photos attached)
From Doug Laing, media officer, Shearing Sports New Zealand
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Trans-Tasman rivalry never stops

Kiwis head for test matches in Bendigo

Another team chocked with World champions is crossing the Tasman this week intent on restoring a bit of Kiwi pride after the All Blacks loss to the Wallabies in Brisbane last Saturday.

A Shearing Sports New Zealand team of seven, including four World champions and two World championship runners-up, will be competing in shearing and woolhandling tests against Australia at the Australian national shearing and woolhandling championships in Bendigo, Vic., on Friday and Saturday.

There will be separate machine shearing, woolhandling and blade shearing tests, with New Zealand trying to make it two-in a row after winning machine and woolhandling tests at the Golden Shears in Masterton in March and a blades shearing test at the Waimate Shears on October 14.

New Zealand's machine shearers are new World champion John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, 2014 World champion, reigning Golden Shears and New Zealand opens champion Rowland Smith, of Maraekakaho, near Hastings, and 2015-2016 team member Troy Pyper, of Winton.

The woolhandlers are the World teams champions combination of in-form Gisborne woolhandlers Joel Henare and Maryanne Baty and the blades shearers are World teams championship runners-up and Canterbury shearers Tony Dobbs, of Fairlie, and Phil Oldfield, of Geraldine.

The manager is shearing judge Ken Macpherson, of Masterton, and the woolhandling judge is Fiona Walker, of Owaka.

For the machine shearers and the wool handlers, the tests are the first legs of annual home-and-away series' in which the second legs are at the Golden Shears in Masterton in March, while Dobbs and Oldfield beat

Australians John Dalla, of Warooka, S.A., and Ken French, of Glenisla, Vic., in the first of their tests in Waimate on October 14.

Spearheaded by South Australian merino shearing legend and 2002 and 2005 World champion Shannon Warnest, Australia is favoured to win the machine shearing test, having not been beaten by New Zealand in Australia since 2010. Australia has won 17 of Warnest's 27 consecutive tests since 2004, and has now won 31 of the 61 tests since annual home-and-away trans-tasman machine shearing tests were initiated in 1974.

While regularly the top individual, Warnest will have a particularly stern challenger in Smith who, despite comparative minimal experience on the finewooled merinos, was the top individual in Masterton seven months ago and who has been beaten only once in 26 individual show finals in New Zealand this year.

From Willalooka, Warnest is expected to be joined in the test by seasoned internationals Jason Wingfield, of Cobram, Vic., and Daniel McIntyre, of Glenn Innes, NSW, while the Australian woolhandling team is the World championships pair of Sophie Huf, of Hawkesdale, Vic., and Melanie (Mel) Morris, of Cressy, Tas.

There have been 37 woolhandling tests since 1998, with New Zealand winning 28 and Australia 9, and New Zealand have won all eight blade shearing tests since 2010.

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