

MEDIA RELEASE

From Doug Laing, media officer, Shearing Sports New Zealand
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Caption

Ricci Stevens, of Napier, a contender for the North Island Senior Woolhandling Circuit title to be decided tomorrow. Stevens, who is also a top Senior shearer, was pictured winning the Taihape A and P Show Senior woolhandling title on January 27. PHOTO/Doug Laing SSNZ

North Island woolhandling champions to be decided

New Zealand's top woolhandlers will gather in a woolshed north of Masterton tomorrow (Wednesday) for a pre Golden Shears shakedown which will decide two hotly-contested North Island titles.

At stake at Riverside Farm, Mikimiki, will be the North Island Circuit Junior and Senior titles, in addition to three Wairarapa Pre-Shears Championships titles as competitors get ready for the three-day 58th Golden Shears in Masterton starting the next morning and ending on Saturday night.

It's also the last preliminary round in the North Island Open Circuit, the final of which will be held during the Golden Shears.

Top Open competitor and North Island Woolhandling Committee points co-ordinator Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, said the Junior circuit had had possibly its best entries ever, and at the weekend seven were still in contention. The seven are sisters Samantha Baxter and Summer Prichard, of Pongaroa, Crystal Bird, of Mangatainoka, Lucky Garrett, of Eketahuna, Cortez Ostler, of Dannevirke, Tyler Hira, of Onewhero, and Sarah Davis, of Rotorua.

They were among 14 who entered the circuit. Best placings from eight shows, from the 14 shows on the circuit, decide the top four for the final, which will be contested on both full-wool fleeces and second-shear wool. The four in the running for the Senior circuit title are Ricci Stevens, of Napier, 2017 Junior circuit winner Bianca Hawea and Nicole Petuha, both of Masterton, and Ash Boyce, of Dannevirke, while five remain in

contention for the Open circuit title, with Alabaster, of Taihape, Keryn Herbert, of Te Kuiti, and Carmen Smith, of Pongaroa, challenged by Pagan Karauria, of Alexandra, and Monica Potae, of Milton.

Missing from the Open lineup is defending Open circuit champion Maryanne Baty, of Gisborne, who has not been contesting the series from which she last year won a place in the New Zealand team which will on Friday meet Australia in a woolhandling test match at the Golden Shears. About 50 woolhandlers are expected at the Wairarapa Pre-Shears Championships which start tomorrow at 8am on Wednesday.

They include World champion and defending Golden Shears champion Joel Henare, who has confirmed he will be at both the Pre-Shears Championships tomorrow and the Golden Shears, aiming to bring-up a century of Open-class wins, having achieved win No 99 at the Otago championships in Balclutha last month.

From Gisborne and having grown-up around the woolsheds of Central Otago, he now lives with his wife and three children in Motueka, where he works in a fish shed for Talleys.

The Junior and Senior circuits are sponsored by Flaxmere shearing contractor Colin Watson Paul and the Open circuit is sponsored by Gibbs Honeybees, of Masterton.

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