

## MEDIA RELEASE

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

New Wales shearing team member Alun Lloyd Jones, back in New Zealand where he was pictured winning the 2014 Golden Shears Intermediate final. PHOTO/PETE NIKOLAISON

### Shearing tests almost cancelled because of visa holdup

A test series between New Zealand and Wales went within a few days of possible cancellation because of delays with visas for the visiting team.

Welsh shearers Matthew Evans and new international Alun Lloyd Jones hoped to arrive in New Zealand before Christmas to start work in preparation for eight matches, including the four-test CP Wool Shearing Series against the New Zealand team of reigning World champion John Kirkpatrick and 2014 champion Rowland Smith.

But the visas for the two, who have both shorn in New Zealand in the past, were sorted only at the end of last week and the pair landed downunder on Tuesday, just four days before the weekend's tour openers against local selections at the Taihape A and P Show on Saturday and Rotorua A and P Show on Sunday.

Shearing Sports New Zealand chairman Sir David Fagan was unsure of specific issues with the Welshmen's visas, but said the situation highlights difficulties with immigration matters for skilled shearers "desperately needed" from the Northern Hemisphere at the busiest time of the year in the country's woolsheds.

The need was immediately obvious, with Evans back on the handpiece on his first full day back in New Zealand, working for King Country contractor Neil Fagan, and Jones heading for Hawke's Bay to start on Thursday for Napier employer Brendan Mahony.

Sir David said farmers and shearing contractors "up and down New Zealand" are desperate for skilled shearers and better steps are needed to better facilitate the employment of the global shearing force in New

Zealand.

“There are not the young shearers coming through to meet the demand,” he said. “This is highly-skilled seasonal work. Every country has difficulty getting their own people to do their own seasonal work, because what are they going to do when it’s not the season?”

“New Zealand shearers have been going to the UK in our winter for years,” he said.

“We are also losing a lot of shearers to Australia, because of the better money, the higher price for wool, and the more consistent work,” he said.

“That’s one of the things we’re up against.”

While Wales has never beaten New Zealand in a shearing test in New Zealand and is up against a black-singlets side of the best international class, Evans and Jones arrived with big hopes.

Evans was in a three-stand gang that broke a World lambshearing record in the King Country 12 months ago, and Jones has graduated quickly to Open class after winning the Golden Shears Intermediate title in Masterton in 2014.

The itinerary for the Wales shearing team tour of New Zealand: January 27, v Local Selection, at Taihape A and P Show; January 28, v Local Selection, at Rotorua A and P Show, Nongotaha; February 2, v Local Selection, at Dannevirke A and P Show; February 3, First CP Wool test, v New Zealand, at Rangitikei Shearing Sports, Marton; February 10, Second CP Wool test, v New Zealand, at Otago Shears, Balclutha; February 17, Third CP Wool test, at Southern Shears, Gore; February 23, v Local Selection, at Taumarunui Jamboree Shears; February 24, Fourth CP Wool test, v New Zealand, at Apiti.

ENDS

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