

## MEDIA RELEASE

From Doug Laing, media officer, Shearing Sports New Zealand  
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Photos (1) IMG\_0256

Napier dad Ricci Stevens at the end of today's New Zealand Senior woolhandling final in Te Kuiti. He won, and wife Angela was third.  
PHOTO/DOUG LAING SSNZ,

(2) Napier couple Ricci and Angela Stevens after finishing first and third in a unique Senior woolhandling final on the first day of the 2018 New Zealand Shearing and Woolhandling Championships in Te Kuiti today.  
PHOTO/DOUG LAING SSNZ

### The man about the house wins unique

Napier dad Ricci Stevens claimed dinner-table bragging rights with Shearing Sports New Zealand's No 1 Senior woolhandling ranking for the season after a unique national championships final in Te Kuiti today.

He and wife and fellow 26-year-old former Junior champion Angela started the day equal on points at the top of the rankings after each making more than 10 Senior finals during the season which started at the beginning of October.

A rankings and championships showdown emerged when each made their way through the heats today to qualify in the top five for the final, which was won by first-season Senior woolhandler Ricci Stevens, giving him the point to also claim the top ranking.

The runner-up was nearest other rankings challenger Ash Boyce, of Dannevirke, and Angela Stevens was third in her last Senior event after two seasons in the grade and heading for the Open-class next season.

Golden Shears Senior final winner Sharon Tuhakaraina, of Gore, was fourth.

The triumph by the man about the Stevens house, as the couple's near two-year-old son Carter nestled in a pushchair nearby, was true to latest form. While Angela Stevens had the better placings in the two finals in

which the couple had come up against each other before Christmas, today's win made it six-out-of-six for him in their rivalry in the new year. Ricci Stevens put the form reversal down to his wife's break from the woolshed in the last few months. "I carried on working," he said.

But it wasn't so much as a woolhandler, for, mainly a shearer, with a 2015 national title to his name with the handpiece, his training for the woolhandling competitions was limited to the end of the run or the day in the family shearing gang run by his parents-in-law, World champion shearer John Kirkpatrick and wife Raylene.

"I sometimes help the presser out," said Riccie Stevens, adding he only started competing in woolhandling events because it helped pass the time of day while he waited through the woolhandling events for shearing events later in the day, or in the week as it is at the New Zealand championships where he competes in the Senior shearing heats tomorrow (Friday).

Angela Stevens has shorn a sheep or two, but hasn't competed. "I'd love to," she said, pondering maybe a bit of prep-work before the Novice shearing at next year's Golden Shears.

Meanwhile, Manawatu competitor Ngaira Puha completed a Golden Shears and New Zealand Junior woolhandling finals double today, among the beaten finalists being partner Whakapunaki (Naki) Maraki. Second and third respectively were sisters Samantha Baxter and Summer Pritchard, of Pongaroa, in Northern Wairarapa, and fourth, from Flaxmere, was Maraki, who is also mainly a shearer.

Results from the opening day of the 34<sup>th</sup> New Zealand SAhearing and Woolhandling Championships being held in Te Kuiti on Thursday-Saturday, April 5-7, 2018:

Woolhandling:

Senior final (5 second-shear sheep) Ricci Stevens (Napier) 47.34pts, 1; Ah Boyce (Dannevirke) 48.78pts, 2; Angela Stevens (Napier) 57.94pts, 3; Sharon Tuhakaraina (Gore) 5d9.34pts, 4; Adrienne Samuels (Marton) 69.362pts, 5.

Junior final (5 second-shear sheep): Ngaira Puha (Kimbolton) 52.41pts, 1; Samantha Baxter (Pongaroa) 67.12pts, 2; Summer Pritchard

(Pongaroa) 71.16pts, 3; Whakapunaki (Naki) Maraki (Flaxmere)  
76.09pts, 4; Lucky Garrett (Eketahuna) 76.85pts, 5.  
ENDS

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