

MEDIA RELEASE (with photo)

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

Tense moment as three 2016 New Zealand World Championships woolhandling series finalists await an announcement of which two would compete for the titles in Invercargill three months later, from left Joel Henare, Pagan Karauria and Maryanne Baty. The battle starts again next week to find the woolhandling pair for the next World Championships in France next July 1-7. PHOTO/SSNZ

Woolhandling in the spotlight

Woolhandlers can look forward to one of their biggest nights in domestic shearing sports with two big finals on the last night of the new season's Golden Shears in Masterton..

Golden Shears president Philip Morrison said plans are being made for the World Championships New Zealand woolhandling team selection series final to be held in the same session as the Golden Shears Open woolhandling and shearing finals, on the last night of the 59<sup>th</sup> Golden Shears on February 28-March 2..

The winner and runner-up in the selection series final will make-up New Zealand's woolhandling pair for the World shearing and woolhandling championships in Le Dorat, Central France, on July 1-7 next year.

The winner of the Golden Shears Open Shearing Championship final will also win a place in the team for Le Dorat, along with the winner of the New Zealand Shears Open in Te Kuiti four weeks later.

While the two woolhandling finals loom as an unprecedented double challenge, the move appeals to 2008 World Champion and 2008 and 2010 teams champion Sheree Alabaster, who kept comment to a single word: "Awesome."

For the leading contenders it's likely to have been a tough day, with the series semi-final, the North Island Circuit final, and the Golden Shears Open woolhandling semi-finals in the morning and afternoon programmes.

To make room for the selection series showdown, the Golden Shears quarterfinals, usually part of the Saturday morning programme, is expected to be held on the Friday, when the regular Trans Tasman Woolhandling Test match will also be held.

At least 20 competitors are expected to contest the preliminary round which will spice-up competition during the season at shows in the North Island and seven in the South Island.

The first is the New Zealand Merino Championships in Central Otago shearing hub Alexandra, opening the 2018-2019 shearing sports season on September 28-29, while the first in the North Island is a week later at the Poverty Bay A and P Show in Gisborne.

The top four in the separate north and south series' will qualify for the semi-finals.

Events in the series' are:

North Island: Poverty Bay(October 13), Hawke's Bay(October 19), Wairarapa(October 27), Manawatu(November 3), Central Hawke's Bay(November 10), Taihape(January 26), Rotorua(January 27), Dannevirke(February 1), Marton(February 2), Taumarunui(February 22), Apiti(February 23), Wairarapa Pre Shears(February 27).

South Island: Alexandra(September 28-29), Waimate(October 5-6), Christchurch(November 15-16), Lumsden(January 18), Winton(January 19), Balclutha(February 8-9), Gore(February 15-16).

