

Shearing sheep and goats

Shearing is when you cut the wool off a sheep or other animal. Wool breeds need to be sheared at least annually, ideally before lambing and definitely before the onset of hot weather. Not shearing a wool sheep is an animal welfare issue. Most hair sheep shed their coats and do not require shearing. The only goats that require shearing or combing are Angora and Cashmere (and some of their crosses).

Best Management Practices for Shearing

- Contact your shearer ahead of time
- Shear under good conditions, as weather allows
- Pen sheep prior to shearing
- Hold sheep off feed and water before shearing
- Don't shear wet sheep
- Avoid shearing during last 4-6 weeks of pregnancy
- Provide a clean place for shearing
- Keep the shearing area clean. Sweep after each sheep
- Keep the fleece in a single piece.
- Skirt fleece according to the quality standards of the clip.
- Don't mix fleeces from hair sheep or their crosses with fleeces from wool sheep.
- Store wool in a clean dry place until it is sent to market
- Freshly-shorn sheep may require more feed than normal for 3 weeks or more after shearing.



Shearing is an acquired skill. It takes years of practice to be good at it. You can learn to shear your own sheep by participating in a shearing school.

Skirting is when you remove bellies, tags, and other inferior parts of the fleece.



Unlike sheep, Angora goats are generally sheared twice a year. Goats have bony rumps; so, cannot be shorn sitting upright like sheep. Cashmere goats are sheared or combed.