

New Zealander, Gavin Rowland who is a Director of Tectra (New Zealand's leading provider of shearing training) brings his extensive knowledge to the Falklands. Gavin himself has competed for many years in shearing competitions with some success. He has the role of delivering judges training nationally. He actively supports the shearing community as Spearing Sports Chairman and is Chairman of the 2017 World Championship organising committee.

Why Falkland Shears felt a shearing instructor would be of benefit to the Islands and people

Falkland Islands shearers are well known around the world for their hard work ethics and commitment to the shearing industry. There are many aspects of shearing a sheep which, all combined, makes getting the wool off a lot easier and a lot more profitable.

We were keen to make shearers aware (especially the young) that there are certain things they can do to make it easier on their bodies and up their numbers, keeping farmers happy.

We wanted to show the shearers the importance of how to correctly hold a sheep, foot positioning and the correct shearing gear. To get the best job done, they need to hold the sheep correctly so that it doesn't kick (may cause cuts) and put unnecessary strain on the body. Footwork is also very important whilst holding the sheep and keeping in a good position for your eye and body throughout the process. Shearing gear - well, if that's not ground to a high standard and looked after, you're going to have major issues when trying to shear.

Put all the above together and you will have happy farmers as the second cuts, which are rubbish to a farmer, will reduce dramatically along with cuts.

Having a shearing instructor who has worked with the world's best in the industry, we felt would be a major benefit to all shearers and farmers. Inviting an instructor from overseas, we all decided would be better as the shearers would be more interested to learn and listen, especially knowing that he works with the world's champions and record breakers.

The Programme

Goose Green, Port Howard, Salvador

Monday 24th - Thursday, 27th (6 pm ferry—west)

Returned to Goose Green Tuesday 2nd pm - Wednesday 3rd

Friday 28th - Monday 1st—Port Howard

Thursday 4th - Friday 5th—Salvador

Gavin spent 4 days with the gang before going to the west and called in for a night on his return from the west, to see how much the gang had taken on board.

The gang had wet sheep on the first day so Gavin used this opportunity to go through gear with the shearers. This involved different types of cutters, combs and hand pieces, how to get a correct grind and the importance of having good gear as a whole.

The rest of the time was generally spent 1 on 1 with the shearers while shearing. Gavin shored sheep for the shearers so they also had a demonstration as well as an explanation.

At smokos, dinner, breakfast, etc, Gavin was always on hand to answer questions and teach shearers how to do combs up, etc. Gavin was very impressed with the keenness and enthusiasm shown by all shearers.

To show the importance of holding a sheep and footwork, Gavin got all shearers to shear a sheep without using a hand piece - they had to go through the whole motion just holding the sheep with their legs and feet, using an imaginary hand piece. All shearers said they found that activity very beneficial.

On the west, Gavin used a similar programme for the shearers, covering all aspects of the job. The Port Howard farm hands took turn about at shearing as well and also learned a lot from shearing. Critta Lee also commented on how it was a success and after over 15 years from first picking up a hand piece, he also learned from Gavin's visit.

Although Gavin was only with the 2 stand 2 days, there was only the 3 shearers there to divide his time between, instead of having a whole gang.

Gavin says it's important to give them an explanation as to why what he is teaching works instead of telling them that's just the way to do it. They take on board better if shown or told a reason why.

Falkland Shears would like to one again thank the Shackleton Scholarship for their generous funding which enabled this group to go ahead.

I'm very confident in saying that it has been a great success from speaking to the shearers, Sammy Hirtle (wool classer) at Goose Green - "the locks bin isn't filling up half as fast". Farmers have also commented on the difference, especially at the recent shearing competition.

The next world championships will be in Christchurch, New Zealand February 2017. The Falkland Islands will have 2 machine shearers and 2 wool handlers representing the Islands, chosen from the 2 qualifiers at the shearing competition in 2015.