



Five decades as good as gold

Taratahi Agricultural Training Centre is still lending a hand in the sheds at the Golden Shears Championships.

Former Taratahi student Richard Porritt now living in Taumarunui was one of the initial students to help with the Golden Shears preparations back in 1961. Richard recalls being lucky enough to actually be the first to shear the first sheep prior to the competition commencing.

Richard who now farms 2500 acres says 'in the first year there was a lot of concern that the Golden Shears would be a financial disaster, and it is to the credit of those who instigated and followed through with the original idea to have a national shearing competition that the event is still viable and continuing.'

Fifty years on and Taratahi students are still a feature behind the scenes at the three day competition with around 24 enthusiastic students helping out in the catching pens each day .

All students involved in the Golden Shears are first year students completing their Taratahi Certificate in Agriculture Level 3, with some also taking on the National Certificate in Agriculture Level 3 qualification as well. All students are based at the Wairarapa campus and are specialising in sheep and beef operations.

Students work extremely hard in the pens over the three days of competition, taking instructions from the shearers on which sheep need to go out in which order. The task of sorting the sheep isn't for the fainthearted and students need to be on the ball the whole time to ensure the shearers aren't disadvantaged in competition. Students are only allowed to hold the sheep ready to pass onto the competing shearer and there are strict rules such as not lifting the sheep as this could instantly disqualify the shearer and end their chances of a win. There is definitely an art of holding the sheep and knowing when to release them into the hands of the shearer.

The top 12 students who have performed throughout the preliminaries are then chosen to assist the big guns on finals night. This is a fantastic opportunity for the students to work with some of the world's top shearers.

The shearers are always willing to give advice to students on best practice and technique. The competitors are talented mentors which Taratahi students can aspire to. Students are rewarded for their hard work by receiving the top shearers singlet's as mementoes.

As well as the Taratahi students working behind the scenes, the Agricultural Training Centre also has a number of students who compete in the novice shearing section.



Second year Taratahi student Hannah Moorhouse competing in the annual Taratahi shearing competition

This year will see six Taratahi students competing in the novice field, including second year student Hannah Moorhouse. 18 year old Hannah will be competing at her second Golden Shears and her tutors at Taratahi say that her shearing skills have greatly improved over the past 12 months and Hannah definitely has the ability to be shearing up there with the best of them. Shearing is in the Moorhouse blood with Hannah's brother Tom who was a former Taratahi student in 2005 winning the Te Kuiti and Te Mata speed shearing competitions recently.

Taratahi Agricultural Training Centre is privileged to have been able to work in partnership with the Golden Shears since its inception and to have been able to provide past and present students with the opportunity and experience of being involved in this world class shearing competition at all levels.