

Keeping control of shear chaos

By Kathryn Godsiff
Correspondent

A well-organized shearing barn is a place of controlled chaos. Restless sheep constantly move and rustle and bleat in their pens. Dust motes hang in the air, stirred up by activity in a shed that sees a multitude of use. There's a clear space for the shearer, a clean area for the wool to fall and a wool bag in a nearby stand. Extension cords lie ready for the clippers. Brooms are nearby to sweep the wool away. The rancher and helpers shift from foot to foot, waiting for one of the biggest days of the year to begin.

The shearer is the master of this small universe. The success of the day hinges on his skill and ability to cope with sheep that are not always cooperative. He expects to find sheep waiting in the pens and a cooperative crew ready

to go at his pace, keeping out of his way.

One of the barns on the Cyrus family ranch was the recent scene of a shearing day. Awbrey Cyrus, daughter of Matt and Kelly Cyrus and at least the fourth generation of her family to raise sheep, got her helpers all lined up, and local photographer Gary Miller spent the afternoon behind his lens, capturing the action of the day. When Sisters resident Allan Godsiff, a New Zealander who's been shearing for 37 years, arrived with his clippers in hand, everything was ready.

There's an economy of motion involved in shearing, a set pattern of "blows" that a shearer makes with his shears. He begins with the sheep tipped belly up, the clippers traveling across the skin under the fleece just below the breastbone. He removes the belly wool, tossing it aside, then heads south to the genitals, backside, and left hind leg.

The next blow divides the neck wool near the jugular. Several more take the clippers around the back of the head and down the left front leg. One step to the right and the sheep is lying on its side, ready for the "long blow,"

a sweeping movement of the shearer's arm that causes the fiber from the back to cascade off in even waves. It generally takes three long blows before the shearer steps back, lifting the sheep to rest between his legs again. The right front leg, right side and right hind leg are clear of wool in a few more swift blows.

The shearer steps away from the sheep, which scrambles to its feet and out the door. The fleece is left lying in a pile on the floor, waiting to be tossed into the wool bag.

A skilled shearer makes it look easy, but Godsiff quips that some of his best customers are those who've tried to shear their own sheep, usually without much success. He also notes that while he expects certain things from his clients, he also sees the shearing as a team effort. He works with the clients to make sure things go smoothly.

Awbrey's sheep, raised to be competitive in the show ring, are a meat-producing breed and don't grow a long and lustrous fleece. Wool from meat breeds is typically used in quilt batting or insulation and sells for less than fine garment or craft wool.

"Even though this wool isn't worth much, it's worth something," she said. "Those two bags of wool will pay for Allan being here. It covers the cost of keeping my sheep healthy."

Shearing reveals issues covered by a full fleece.



PHOTO BY GARY MILLER

Alan Godsiff has the technique down after decades of shearing experience.

Observing her freshly shorn sheep allows Awbrey to see the ewes' body condition and adjust her management accordingly. This year's

shearing uncovered a flock in good shape, testament to her passion for ranching, a long family tradition with sheep and a shearer's skill.



PHOTO BY GARY MILLER

Awbrey Cyrus pitched in to process the wool.

— Cowgirls & Indians Resale —
HUGE CLEARANCE RACK!
DD Ranch Jackets \$125 or less!
\$60 Boot Bin!
 "We always wheel & deal!"
 160 Oak Street (Next to The Pony Express) 541-549-6950
 www.cowgirlresale.com

DROP-IN PUBLIC YOGA CLASSES
7 DAYS A WEEK!

life.love.yoga.
YOGA STUDIO & ECO BOUTIQUE
164 N. Elm St., Sisters
541.390.5678 | www.lifeloveyoga.com

Quality Truck-mounted CARPET CLEANING
Quality Cleaning 13 years in Sisters!
Reasonable Prices

ENVIROTECH
541-771-5048
Licensed • Bonded • Insured • CCB#181062
RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL

NOW OPEN!

THE COTTON WOOD CAFE

Serving Breakfast & Lunch
Wednesday through Sunday,
7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

541-549-2699
403 E. Hood Ave., Sisters

Art in the Park

Live Entertainment Food, Arts & Crafts

June 13 & 14
Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 Variety of Art, Crafts, Kid Zone, Food & Entertainment
 Featuring Country Singer Briana Renea
Sisters Creekside Park
 Hwy. 20 & Jefferson Avenue

Opportunity Drawing Fundraiser Benefiting The Make-A-Wish Foundation Of Oregon

For Information: Richard Esterman
541-549-8905 | www.centraloregonshows.com

Sponsors: Bend/Sisters Garden RV Resort, KSJJ 102.9, Mix 100.7, Sisters Rental, Les Schwab, The Pony Express, Press Pros, Indian Head Casino, News Channel 21, Applebee's, Heritage U.S.A., High Desert Promotions & Printing.

TWO WAYS TO SAVE
Enjoy pristine course conditions, stunning scenery and unparalleled golf on two of Oregon's best courses.

Black Butte Ranch
THERE IS A PLACE

Sunday noon - Thursday
18 & DINE FOR \$69
 18 holes of golf, plus a selection from the all-day menu at Robert's Pub for \$69.

Mondays & Tuesdays
LOCALS Special
\$47 Walking **\$57** With Cart
 Local's Special available to Deschutes County residents. Valid ID requested.

Offers valid through 6/25/15. Carts not included unless noted. Not valid for groups.
 TEE TIMES 877-570-5818 | BLACKBUTTERANCH.COM