

Health And Fitness

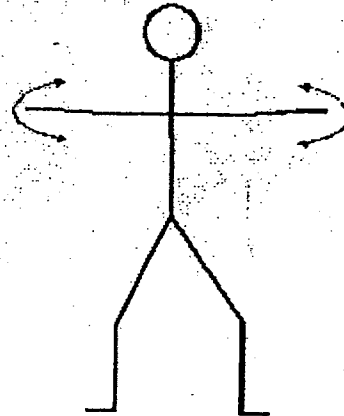
Work in the shearing industry is physically demanding. To keep physically fit and build up muscle groups used while working in the shearing sheds, a regular exercise routine needs to be conducted.



Following are some exercises which have helped many workers to keep flexible, for shearing, pressing, woolhandling, classing and penning up. It is important to exercise before, and after work, and it can be useful during breaks. Always warm up slowly before you stretch

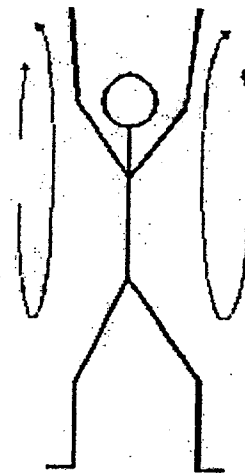
TRUNK ROLL 10 times

Have your arms horizontal (stretched out) feet shoulder width apart – Twist one way then the other



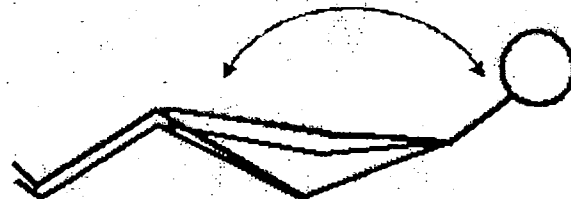
WINDMILL 10 times

Move your arms in a vertical circle, clockwise, then anti clockwise



STOMACH 10 times

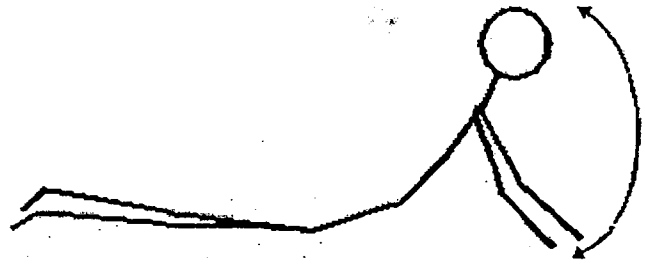
Lay on your back, feet under an immobile object. Raise your body, with your hands on your knees while breathing out. Hold for 10 seconds, relax and repeat



BACK ARCH

10 times

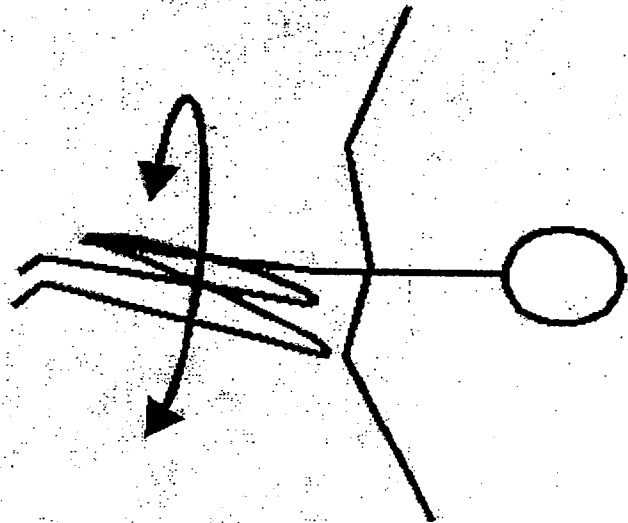
Lay face down, hands under your shoulders, push up with arms while breathing in. Tilt head back, hold for 10 seconds, breathe out, go back down. This exercise is useful when in a standing position at cutter changes



LOWER BACK

10 times

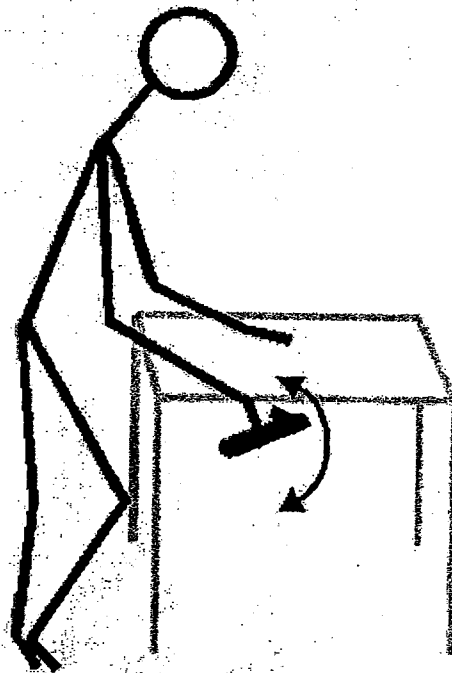
Lay on your back, raise your knees together, lower to one side, while keeping shoulders on the floor. Hold for 10 seconds, then roll knees to other side



WRISTS

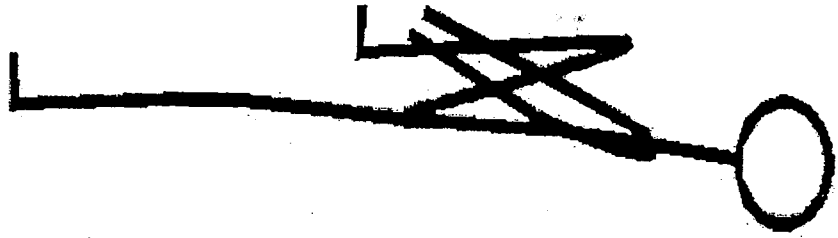
10 times

Place your arm on table or your knee with a handpiece or weight in your hand. Let the weight take your hand down, then raise it up as far as possible



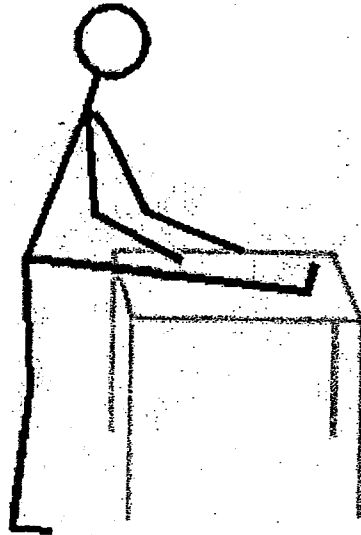
HAMSTRINGS 10 times

Lay on your back, bring right knee up to your chest hold for 10 seconds, while keeping left leg straight and 30mm off the floor, repeat with other leg



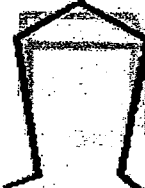
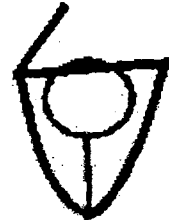
HAMSTRINGS 10 times

Stand erect, put your heel on a table, chair or shelf, keep leg straight, hands on knee, bring your head to knee and hold for 10 seconds repeat with other leg



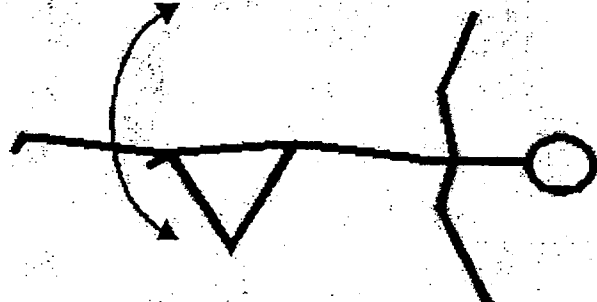
SHOULDERS 10 times

Stand or sit with your arms above your head, grasp right elbow with left hand, pull behind your head and hold for 10 seconds, repeat with other arm



LOWER BACK 10 times

Lay on your back with your right heel on your left knee, keep shoulder on the floor and roll to the left as far as is comfortable hold for 10 seconds and then repeat with other leg



Fitness for shearing

New Zealand Wool Board Field Service

If you are to enjoy life as a shearer, you must be fit, and strong in the special muscles that you use. These exercises have been carefully selected for that purpose. During the off-season, they will build your strength and help keep your flexibility. When you are working, they will make you a better, faster shearer.

The main difficulty with exercises is to keep them up. You want to find a regular time of day when you can spend 15 to 20 minutes - in the evening, an hour or so after dinner is not a bad time.

During exercise concentrate your mind on your breathing and the muscles being used. Work slowly. Good exercise is largely in the mind.

One or two of the exercises are particularly important. No 9, in which you arch your back, is used by physiotherapists to relieve back pain and correct damage caused by prolonged bending. You should do this exercise on your feet during the run. Arch your back as part of your routine every cutter change, or between sheep - whenever your back begins to hurt. Always try to keep your back as straight as possible when lifting, pulling out, or shearing.

Sit sensibly during smokos. If you lean against a bale with your legs flat on the floor, you are maintaining the shearing posture, and not giving any relief to the discs in your back.

Make sure that your car seat and favourite armchair give good support to the small of your back - a lumbar roll is a help. And sleep on a firm mattress.

The hamstring exercise, No. 13, practised regularly for two or three weeks should lengthen the muscles at the back of the thighs sufficiently to enable you to place the palms of your hands on the floor with your knees straight.

The ability to do this will greatly reduce the stress and pain for learners. You should be able to do this before attending your first course. For the competent shearer, it will give better control of the sheep on the last side.

Exercise No. 14 is a good insurance against a blown up wrist, which can immobilise the best of shearers. You should do this regularly, and especially before the season.

No self respecting athlete would fail to warm up, and neither should you. In the morning, or if you have become cold during a break, use a couple of repeats of Exercises 1 and 2, or jog on the spot for 60 seconds.

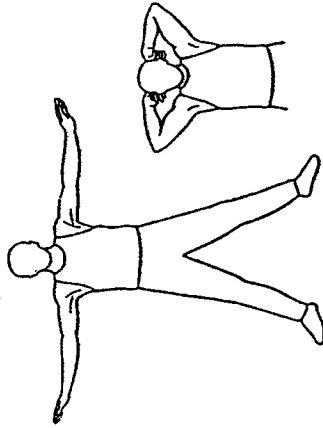
Top shearers are normal people who have trained their bodies to do exceptional things. That means a regular exercise programme, a sensible diet and drinking plenty of plain water to replace lost fluid.

You want to enjoy your shearing, and you want to enjoy your exercises. So don't overdo them at first; build up the repetition and the pressure gradually. If you have had serious back problems, exercise is even more important, but you should get medical advice about it.

If these exercises are practised diligently you will feel the difference within a week and you will see the difference within a month.

Good luck,

ROBIN KIDD
Field Superintendent, New Zealand Wool Board



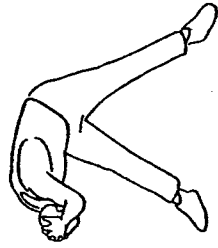
1: Chest and arms

For this and other standing exercises, have feet shoulder-width apart and hands by sides.

Raise the arms sideways, roll the wrists palm upwards and clench the fists. Bend the arms fully, raising the elbows high. Hold to the count of five, then reverse slowly to starting position. Breathe in on the upward movement, hold and breathe out on the return. Repeat twice.

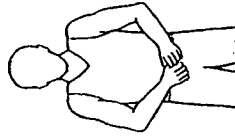
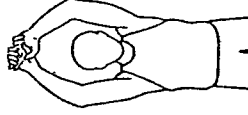
2: Trunk roll

Clasp hands behind head and move the upper body in a circular motion to exercise all the trunk muscles. Breathe in on the upward movement and out as the body swings down. Concentrate on the muscles being used, including the hamstrings. Repeat in the opposite direction. Repeat twice.



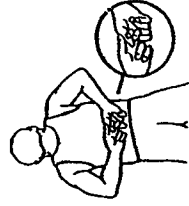
3: Shoulders and back

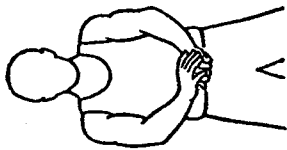
With both arms extended down in front of you, clasp the first two fingers of the left hand with the right hand. Pulling apart, slowly raise the arms above your head, breathing in. Hold to the count of five, then slowly return breathing out. Rest and repeat twice.



4: Shoulders

Clasp two fingers of the left hand with the right as high up the back as possible. Pulling apart, extend the arms fully downward. Hold, pulling the shoulders back and trying to get the shoulder blades to touch. Rest and repeat twice.



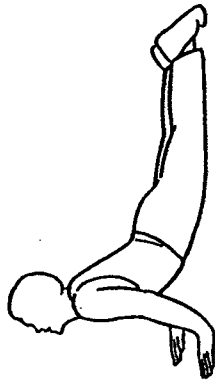


5: Shoulders and chest

With both arms extended down in front of you, place the right palm on top of the left fist. Slowly lift the straight left arm to head height against the downward pressure of the right hand, breathing in. Hold, then return slowly, the right hand maintaining the pressure, breathing out. Rest and repeat twice, using alternate arms.

8: Chest and arms

Lying face down, place hands under the shoulders and slowly press up, breathing in and keeping back perfectly straight. Hold, then return slowly, breathing out. Repeat 10 times. Rest.



9: Back

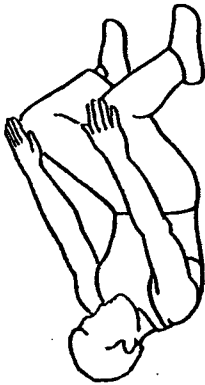
Lying face down with hands under shoulders, extend the arms slowly keeping the hips on the floor, breathing in. Raise head to look as far backwards as possible. Return, breathing out. Rest and repeat 10 times.

7: Legs and cardio-vascular

Stand in front of a strong chair, box or step about 38 cm (or 15 inches) high. Do about 50 step ups, in groups of 10 for each leg. Later use a 50 cm step. An alternative is to skip or run on the spot for 2-minute spells.

11: Stomach

Lie on back with feet flat on floor, knees bent and toes preferably under a firm object. Raise the upper body so that the hands rest on the knees, breathing out. Hold, then return slowly breathing in. Rest and repeat four times.



12: Hip roll

Lie on back with feet flat on floor. Raise both knees, then lower them to the right side, keeping the shoulders flat on the floor. Hold, return and lower to left side. Repeat twice.



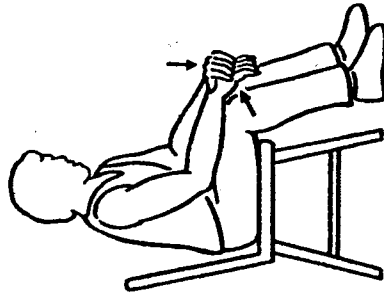
13: Hamstrings

Lying on back, raise the right knee. Pull the knee back onto the chest with the hands, then relax slightly, straighten the leg and force the toe down. Hold for at least 10 secs, rest and repeat three times with alternate legs.



14: Wrists

Sitting on a chair, place the right forearm on the right thigh with the wrist hanging over the knee. Place the left palm over the knuckles of the right wrist, then straighten the right wrist against the pressure of the other hand. Hold, then lower while still under pressure. Rest and repeat 10 times with alternate wrists.



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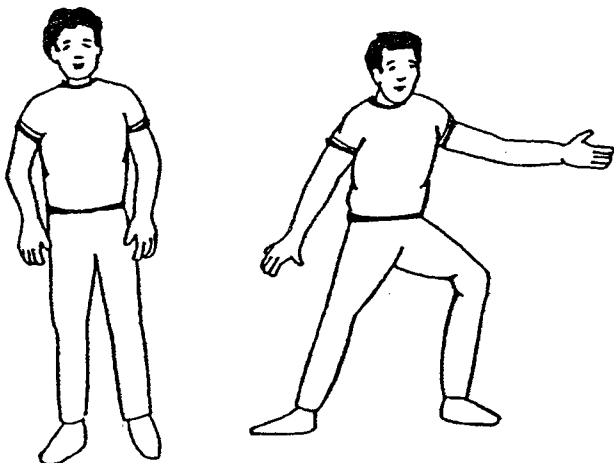
Concentrate on feeling your spine straightening. Now breathe deeply by pushing out your tummy then moving the air up into your chest to a count of four. Hold the air in your chest for a count or two — make sure that you keep the air in the chest by holding your chest out; try not to let pressure develop in your throat or glottis and keep your mouth open. Breathe out to the count of three making sure that you let the air out slowly. Repeat this about four or five times. If you feel light-headed STOP.

No. 2: From the same standing position reach to the ceiling with one hand as if you were trying to place your palm against the ceiling.



Breathe IN as you reach up to a count of three; hold the position for a count of one and lower to a count of two. Breathe OUT as you lower the arm. Repeat with each arm in turn about five times.

No. 4



Still from the standing position step to one side and reach out as far as possible with the arm on that side. Grasp a handful of air and pull it slowly into your body. Tense all the muscles in your arm and trunk as if you are pulling in a heavy weight. When back in the standing position relax. The breathing during this exercise is very important. Breathe OUT as you reach out and IN as you pull back. Breathe normally a couple of times before repeating the exercise with the other arm. Repeat about four times with each arm.

This exercise will activate the muscles of the shoulder and trunk and should make you feel good.

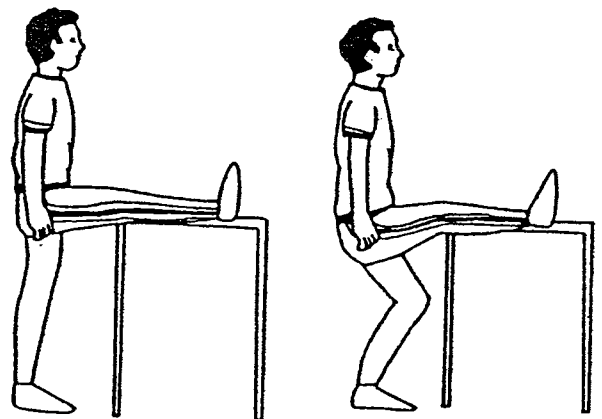
Note how this exercise works the large back muscles on either side of the trunk and that it warms you up and increases your heart rate. Please remember to do the exercise SLOWLY, not only does it feel good to do this exercise slowly, but it has the maximum benefit in stretching and activating all the trunk muscles when it is done with care as you are not using momentum or gravity to assist you.

No. 3: Again from the standing position fix on an object at eye level. Stand on one leg (hold onto something for support if you have difficulty standing on one leg). With the free leg draw a figure eight with your foot in the air. Do it slowly making a small figure to begin with and gradually increase the size of the figure. Make sure that you breathe as deeply as possible while doing this exercise. Repeat with each leg about ten times.



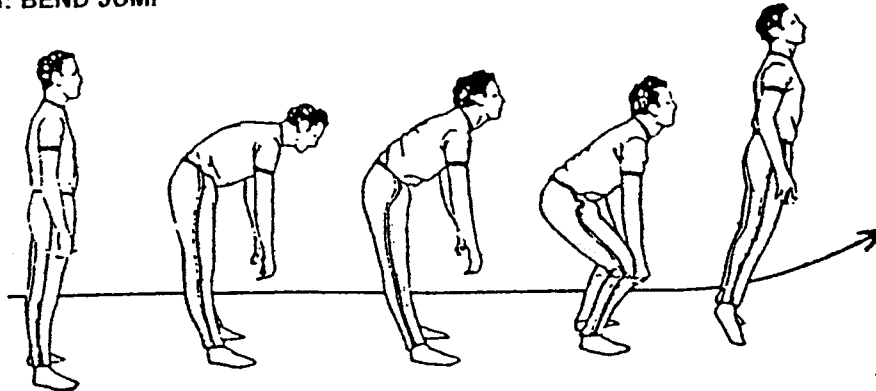
HAMSTRING LENGTHENING EXERCISE

No. 5: At all stages during shearing it is necessary to bend from the hips for long periods. To minimise the discomfort caused by this, use this exercise to lengthen the hamstrings, preferably before commencing your initial training as a shearer.



Stand beside a table and place heel on table keeping knee straight. Bend supporting leg which should stretch the hamstring muscles. Execute SLOWLY and try to hold the stretched position for several seconds. Repeat with other leg.

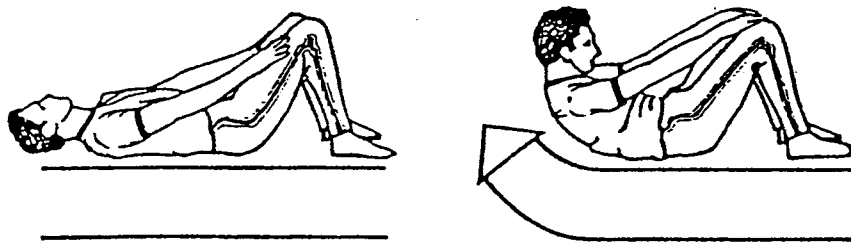
No. 6: BEND JUMP



Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Bend forward at the hips **KEEPING BACK STRAIGHT**. Raise head to face forwards. Bend knees and place hands on knees. Leap as high as possible — **KEEP BACK STRAIGHT**.

NOTE: This is **NOT** a strenuous exercise. The bending forward and head and knee bending establish the "feel" of safe back bending positions. The leap strengthens back, abdominal and leg muscles, all of which should be used when shearing.

No. 7: SIT-UP (Nos 7 & 8 are specifically to strengthen the abdominal muscles to support the spine while shearing.)



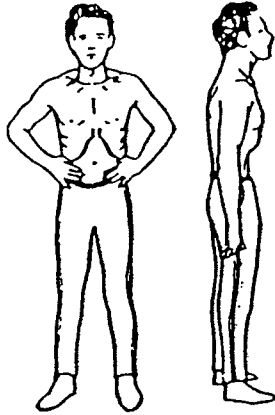
Lie on floor with knees bent so that feet are flat on floor with hands resting on thighs. Breathe **OUT** and raise head and curl back until small of back is off the floor and hands are reaching knees. Breathe **IN** and return slowly to resting position.

NOTE: Breathing is important in this exercise to minimise increases in blood pressure. Perform the exercise slowly for maximum benefit, ie, 2 seconds up and 2-3 seconds down. Start with about 5-7 per day and increase gradually to about 10 per day. There is no benefit to be gained from doing this exercise fast, in fact, rapid sit-ups can injure your back. Also, there is little to be gained by repeating the exercise more than about 10 times.

No. 8: BREATHING EXERCISE

Breathe out as forcibly as possible. Close glottis (ie, shut windpipe in throat). Perform sucking in or breathing in movements without inhaling any air.

This should cause a pulling in of the abdominal wall.



NOTE: This exercise is a very good exercise for the abdominal muscular wall. It needs some practise to master but once mastered, should be performed several times each day.

REMEMBER, try to keep the back as straight as possible when shearing by bending the legs whenever possible. Use these exercises as a preparation for shearing as well as "toning" up exercises during the shearing season.

WATER BALANCE

Often shearers are working hard and in hot conditions so that they lose a considerable amount of sweat each day. Replacement of lost body fluids is an important consideration for shearers. By far the best way to replenish body fluids is to drink water rather than beer or cordial. Beer, in fact, encourages more water loss by the alcohol acting on the kidney via the brain to produce more urine.

SUMMARY

- Keep back straight when shearing.
- Use exercises to prepare for the shearing season.
- Replace lost sweat loss with water.

Produced by the Field Service of the New Zealand Wool Board. "Permission given by Robin Kidd, Field Superintendent, NZMB, to use this information in the National Sheep Shearing Schools." August 1986