

Thursday March 5 2009

Three Thousand Sheep Descend on Masterton.

THREE THOUSAND sheep descend on Masterton as the 49th Golden Shears swings into action today. The world's premier shearing competition sees around three thousand woolly competition sheep carted, corralled and shorn over three exciting days.

Meanwhile caterers will produce some 1200 hot meals to feed volunteers and judges in addition to the 200 kilograms of chicken drum sticks and 100 dozen soft drinks sold front of house.

"And we've lost count of the chips!" said Ambassador Catering boss Tweet Bird.

He said as well as the regular fare he would be selling Tui Brewery's new gourmet 250-gram Tui pie.

Golden Shears entertainment and finance officer Greg Herrick said around 250 hard-working volunteers made the iconic event happen each year.

He said some volunteers had given in excess of 25 years service, which worked out to around two years worth of volunteer hours throughout their involvement.

When all the hours were tallied, over 100 years worth of volunteer work had gone in to the Golden Shears since the first competition in 1960.

Golden Shears International Shearing Championship Society president Mavis Mullins said the next few days would be a great opportunity for Wairarapa people to connect with their famous event and keep it country.

"We used to say the divide between town and country was growing bigger. It's even happening in our small towns. Let's not be guilty of that and take our kids down to the Golden Shears," she said.

Mrs Mullins said the competition wasn't just for the young viewers, she could recall being impressed by more than the shearing skills of competitors at her first Golden Shears.

"I remember thinking 'wow!' all these hot guys in tight pants, glistening with sweat!"

"These guys are elite sports people doing an elite sport and it's happening right on Wairarapa's doorstep."

Golden Shears secretary Pip Dalgliesh said among the more usual entries from New Zealand, Australia and the British Isles there were also shearers from Finland, Germany and the Czech Republic set to compete.

"We've got one Czech guy who's entered. His English isn't too good so we'll have to try and translate for him during the competition," she said.

Mrs Dalgliesh said competitor numbers were up and ticket sales were going well.

A rise in foreign entries reflected the Golden Shears growing international profile in the build up to the 50th anniversary event next year.

The Golden Shears is recognised as the world's premier competitive sheep shearing contest attracting shearers from around the globe.

It is regarded as one of New Zealand's iconic events and is closely associated with a country where one of the most significant industries and exports is wool.

For all other results and archived video action see www.goldenshears.co.nz.

For further information and free higher resolution images contact the Golden Shears Media Group at goldenshears@pete.co.nz or phone 021 488 137 or 027 5788 137. International callers phone 006421 488 137 or 006427 5788 137