



Combi Clamp: Having tested the trailer-mounted version in our 2015 test of sheep handlers, we tested a stand-alone unit as we put units through their paces this time. Photos: Ben White

Combi Clamp

Utilising the weight of the operator and some clever geometry, the Combi Clamp was the fastest throughput sheep handler we tested for drenching, taking around 1m 23sec for the run of 20 sheep to be drenched.

The modular unit comprises the main squeeze clamp, lead-up race and an optional three-way drafter. The squeeze clamp is actuated by the weight of the operator on a foot panel, meaning the Combi Clamp requires no air or power to use. Catering for left or right-handed operators the unit has adjustments for either configuration.

The squeeze mechanism can be adjusted to accommodate different sized animals in

two ways; for larger adjustments, shifting the hinging point into one of the three sets of hinge hole positions under the handler to shift the actuated side of the clamp module, or for smaller adjustments, lifting and shifting the stationary wall on the operator side into one of three pairs of positions spaced at 25mm increments.

A foot-operated clamp locking bar can be engaged to close the handler or restrain sheep in position without the operator pressing down on the foot panel.

Once the operator gets a feel for the timing and required pressure to restrain and release, sheep flow smoothly through the Combi Clamp. The unit can be set up for weighing by taring off the operator and

clamp module. The required weighing-ready frame is an \$825 including GST option.

Animal foot work, wiggling and a light crutch is possible with the animal in the standing position, but handlers that tip the animal arguably provide superior operator manoeuvrability with the handpiece for a full crutch. For crutching, a door can be closed on the lead-up race which blocks sheep coming up the race and also has a rubber sweep mat attached to the bottom to clear dags off the handler floor.

Drenching happens in a simple flow with more agile operators we spoke to finding it easy to apply their weight. The Combi Clamp is noticeably quieter than all of other handlers we tested.

MINOR CHANGES

The Combi Clamp has only seen minor changes since our last round of sheep handler testing back in 2015, but all have been to refine the unit for improved usability.

These changes have been made in response to Kondinin Group review and customer feedback. In addition to finer clamp position adjustments, other changes include the addition of a “gadget holder” for ear-tags and tools as well as a sleeve built into the clamping panel for an ear-tag stick-reader to be mounted.

A “lamb cushion”, comprising a smaller piece of gripping rubber running the length of the cradle 150mm from the top rail helps hold smaller lambs in place.

A “classing wall” with open rails to interchange with the fixed panel is also available for side sampling fleeces.



Adjustable: Easily sourced trampoline springs provide the clamping resistance. Adjustment for a range of sheep sizes is via a series of three hole settings under the machine. Finer adjustments can be easily made by shifting the clamping panel position.

The frame is predominantly 25mm Square Hollow Section (SHS) 2.5mm wall hot-dipped galvanised steel. The operator platform is perforated aluminium and the cradle and lead-up races are aluminium checker-plate.

We chipped the Combi Clamp in our last review for having un-plugged steel sections, suggesting some cut cross-sections would be better capped after the galvanising process to avoid any sharp edges in manufacture or use. While the open section allows good galvanising penetration and drainage, we still believe the finish is superior on a capped section.

Plastic panels on the Combi Clamp are UV treated, recycled plastic while rubber grip surfaces are round-hay-baler belt.

Springs used in the clamping module are standard size trampoline springs ensuring parts are easily sourced if required.

Maintenance is as simple as cleaning given there is no lubrication points on the Combi Clamp. Clean down is simple with removable panels providing simple access to all areas likely to trap dust from operation in the yards.

With the main clamp module weighting just 120kg, unpacking and setup for a single person is possible. It requires the operator to lift off the lead-up race and doors before rolling the frame up lengthways for wheel removal before rolling back into position and fitting doors and baulk rails on the lead-up race for operation. Pack up ready for transport took a shade over three minutes onto the optional \$775 wheel kit suitable for on-farm transport.

If needing to shift between farms, the road-ready trailer-mounted Combi-Clamp unit is available for \$17,000 including GST. For more details on the road-ready trailer refer to our report in *Farming Ahead* no. 282, July 2015.

A standard Combi Clamp costs \$7260 including GST in the eastern states and an additional \$200 in Western Australia. A three-way manual draft is an additional \$1210. **FA**

Contact:

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WHAT WE LIKED

- ✓ Clever engineering
- ✓ No power required
- ✓ Quiet

WHAT COULD BE BETTER

- ✗ Probably requires two people to operate (clamp and push up)
- ✗ Cut section profiles could be capped for superior finish



Wand pocket: The addition of a sleeve for ear-tag readers to sit is simple but effective.



Catching sheep early as they come through permits a light crutch with a door on the lead-up race blocking sheep running through. Catching animals later as they move through the cradle allows simple front foot paring or drenching once the operator becomes familiar with the machine.