



## **Rob talking to ADELE**

### **ADELE**

I get busier every year, but in Brittany I'm busy from about say, end of February until early September, starting with angora goats and finishing with angora goats, and doing sheep in between.

### **ROB**

So it's goats and sheep that you look after?

### **ADELE**

Yep. All round Brittany.

### **ROB**

Beause there are sheep all over Brittany?

### **ADELE**

Yep.

### **ROB**

And the farmers, your customers, are they interested in using the wool for anything?

### **ADELE**

Some do. More and more do. Farmers are quite busy people to be able to process their own wool, but we've had in the last few years, it's mainly ladies, it's mainly girls, but people interested into processing the wool. So we've got a mattress maker in Bulat. So she comes on shearing day, on farms, and she harvests the wool. And we've got a lady in Bulat as well, she's a farmer, but she processes a lot of her wool into felt. And we've got another couple of ladies in Morlaix – they come on shearing day and do the wool handling, and get the best of the wool to make a yarn, and sell it.

### **ROB**

This is an unusual thing for Breton farmers. Normally it's not for the wool that they raise sheep.

**ADELE**

No. Well, they used to get good money for the wool, but it's back in the days. And they have been breeding sheep for mainly meat, and they have left behind the wool.

So the wool we have now is not so good quality, it's not very fine and not very dense and gets quite dirty in the barns with the straw and hay and that. So...

**ROB**

I can't help but notice your accent. I think you've got a link with New Zealand. Tell me about that.

**ADELE**

I was interested in shearing, and so I went to New Zealand, and I went in a wool shed on a shearing day. And I realised that I was not going to be able to shear there, because it was mainly then a strong man job. So I took a broom and I helped the lady, and I had a real job at wool handling because it's mainly the lady job. And I learned, every season learned a bit more. I've done a lot of wool handling on merino wool, which is very interesting because it's beautiful fibre.

**ROB**

Are there any merino sheep in Brittany?

**ADELE**

No, there is not, because merino sheep like dry countries, and they get very sore feet in wet country like Brittany. And they perform better, or their wool gets finer, on poor feed, so our green pastures are too rich for them. We've got some merinos in France, but it's more in the south, in the mountains.

**ROB**

You went to New Zealand because you were interested in sheep, or did you go there and become interested in shearing when you got there?

**ADELE**

Well, I was on a work placement on a farm in France, and I was seeing some shearers there, and I thought, oh it looks cool. I want to try.



**ROB**

And you've had several years now. How many years...?

**ADELE**

I think I'm starting the fifth season in Brittany

**ROB**

How long does it take to shear a sheep?

**ADELE**

Sometimes it will take a couple of minutes, or sometimes it can take a bit more. Depends on the sheep, depends on the breed, depends on the season, depends on whether it's in lamb or in milk, or whether it's five degrees outside or whether it's 30 degrees outside

**ROB**

It's a very physical job?

**ADELE**

Yes it is. That's part of the job that I like. Because I'm not very strong at all, I had to learn the technique, not to get too tired and not to hurt my body. I've been lucky enough to work with good shearers and learn from them. Just working with people better than me has been very helpful, so going to New Zealand for me is good for that, 'because it helps me on the improving.

**ROB**

I can't help wondering about the sheep itself. How does it feel about being sheared?

**ADELE**

Shearing is not supposed to be painful for the sheep, but it is very stressful. But shearing is a couple of minutes of stress for the sheep, but then it's a whole year of wellbeing and comfort without the wool.

**ROB**

Because the sheep is better off without its wool?

**ADELE**

Yes, it is. If you leave the wool on the sheep, it will keep growing, and the sheep will get very skinny underneath, and it will stop eating and it will stop breeding. As a couple of minute of stress, it's worth it for the sheep, health and wellbeing. You don't want to leave a sheep with the wool on her back.

**ROB**

What kind of reactions do you get when you appear...?

**ADELE**

A lot. Because I'm a lady shearing. I know quite a few ladies shearing too. I think in France, we're about 200 shearers, and there's about 20 ladies, which is 10 per cent, so that's not bad.

**ROB**

In Brittany – how about in Brittany? I was hoping I was speaking to the *only*...

**ADELE**

Well, there's another one that's from Brittany, but she is in the south, but, yep.

**ROB**

So you're practically the only female sheep shearer in Brittany?

**ADELE**

The only one making a living out of it anyway.

**ROB**

You're a bit of an expert on this wool handling, aren't you? I understand that you represent France in a national team.

**ADELE**

Yep. In New Zealand, shearing, wool handling, is a sport. They have got like a national association and it's a real sport. And in France it's not as big, but we do have a few shearing shows as well. For us, it's a way to put a spotlight on the wool at a shearing show. Because the local farmers will come. And we like to show that we care about the wool on the shearing show too.



So we do those wool handling competition, and in doing that, we can join the six nation of wool handling and we can go and compete in the UK, and get to meet the UK wool handlers and meet the UK sheep farmers, and learn about the UK way of preparing the wool and that. So it's quite a good experience. Oh, the competition side of it is exciting, but I think the human side is probably a lot more, a lot better.

**ROB**

So you've got a campaign really, to get people more aware about the quality of wool that comes off a sheep?

**ADELE**

Yep.

**ROB**

The wool fair that happens every autumn in Bulat Pestivien – will you be there?

**ADELE**

Yes. I have been there for the last couple of years doing the shearing demo.

**ROB**

Right. So people can actually see you at work? Well, we'll see you there.

**ADELE**

We'll be waiting for you there!

**ROB**

Okay, Adele, thank you ever so much for talking to us about...