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**THE WINNING FAMILY TRADITION CONTINUES:** Wairoa farmers' daughter Ashlin Swann, 15, winning the novice shearing final on the opening day of the 2024 Golden Shears in Masterton, emulating her brother Ryka, who won in 2020.

Picture by Peter Nikolaison

Ashlin shows she shares family's shearing talents

A 15-YEAR-old Wairoa College student claimed first bragging rights for the growing number of female shearers at the Golden Shears by winning the novice final on Thursday. Ashlin Swann, in Masterton with her twin sister and fellow novice shearer Shawna, brother and 2020 novice winner Ryka, and father, wool-presser and open-class shearer Paul Swann — leaving mum Sonya at home to run the Ardkeen farm — was one of five Hawke's Bay-based competitors who made

the final six. Swann was fourth of the 61 shearers in the heats and the third qualifier from the semi-finals. She was slowest in the final, shearing the two sheep in 7 minutes 27.019 seconds — two minutes slower than the first to finish, 18-year-old Ryan Craw, from Coromandel, but currently in his first year in cadet-farm training at Pukemiro — near Dannevirke.

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Potential ban 'only part of response to gang presence'

EXPECT consequences — that is the message from Police commissioner Andrew Coster to gangs, if central Government approves a bylaw that will ban gang patches from being worn in public places. Last Sunday, Police Minister Mark Mitchell said the Government will introduce legislation to ban all gang insignia in public places. Speaking to the Star on Friday morning, Mr Coster says gangs could choose whether to deal with that or not. "They can expect consequences, if they do not come on board with what this law is trying to do." Police would be dedicated to the legislation, if it went ahead says Mr Coster. "We will go through a bedding-in period and maybe a period where we will have to work harder, but we do not want to see an intimidating presence of gangs in our community. "It is the presence of patches that does intimidate people." Mr Coster is confident that police will get the job done. "We know that there are some places where this will be more challenging, like rural areas with larger gang presence and less staff. "Police effectively deal with a range of different incidents even if they are short numbered, and I am



**PREPARED TO CRACK DOWN:** Police commissioner Andrew Coster says police would be 'dedicated to legislation' if it is passed. confident that they will go about that." One way to help with a shortage of police staff is to bring in staff from other larger areas, says Mr Coster. "Where we have persistent breaching and staff need support, we can mobilise other staff to help our rural communities. "We already do that with serious crime events or with a gang funeral." Mr Coster says police would not have to act on the spot. "When forced to take action, it does not require immediate action but can be done later on. "It could be done as a search

warrant." Despite some premises not allowing gang patches already — such as police stations, hospitals and schools — Mr Coster says the legislation would have a much wider impact. "It is a big shift and it will be challenging but that is what the Government is signaling that they want to change. "The challenge is supplying more support and effort to areas that will need it — and those areas are anywhere that has a high gang presence in a smaller town." Mr Coster says there is work to be done to accommodate and attract staff to rural areas. "We are always looking to improve that. "We have some work to do to ensure police houses are a good standard and we know it is a part of a larger picture to lure staff to rural areas." To address the root of the problem with gangs being an attraction to youth, Mr Coster says that the potential ban is only a small response to gang presence. "We need to be clear that there is no one thing that will limit gangs. "This ban focusses on the powers that we can exercise as police. "Other agencies that can work to provide support or help children stuck in tricky situations at home will help."

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