

GUIDE FOR MITIGATING THE RISK OF SHEDDING FIBRE SHEEP TO THE AUSTRALIAN WOOL INDUSTRY

WOOLPRODUCERS
AUSTRALIA

INTRODUCTION

As a result of an increased number of producers running exotic sheep breeds, the risk of white wool contamination from pigmented and highly medullated fibre to Australian wool clip has also increased.

The following information has been prepared to help protect the integrity of the Australian wool clip by reducing the risk of contamination from exotic breeds of sheep.

Shedding fibre sheep breeds and their crosses which pose a risk to the Australian wool clip include, but are not limited to:



DORPER

The Dorper is a South African mutton breed with high lambing percentage. Its fleece is a mixture of wool and hair that is shed if not shorn regularly.



DAMARA

The Damara is a fat-tailed South African sheep which was first imported into Australia in the 1990s. They have a high fertility and their shedding fleece can be different colours including: tan, brown, black and white spotted.



AWASSI

The Awassi is a fat-tailed sheep from the Middle East growing carpet type wool, approximately 30um. The Awassi was first imported to Australia in the mid 1980s and its fleece colour varies from brown to white.



KARAKUL

The Karakul is a multi-purpose sheep native to Central Asia. They typically have a long black lustrous fleece but can be red, brown and white.

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BEST PRACTICE

The following management tools will help to minimise the risk of white wool contamination by shedding fibre sheep.

- Property boundary fences should be maintained in sheep proof condition, meaning that fences must be able to contain all breeds of sheep under reasonable circumstances. In some circumstances it may be necessary to double fence the boundary.
- Vendors should only sell their sheep at saleyards where exotic sheep breeds are segregated from other sheep.
- Producers should not allow their sheep to be transported in a vehicle with exotic sheep breeds.
- Vehicles used for transporting the above mentioned sheep must be reasonably enclosed and decontaminated of fibre prior to use for transportation of any other breed of sheep.

WOOL CLASSING

If white wool sheep have been in contact with shedding breeds, there will most likely be pigmented and/or medullated fibre contamination. It is the Woolclasser's responsibility to mark all bales with an R to highlight that the sheep have 'run-with' shedding breeds e.g. AAA M R.

Where pigmented or medullated fibre is visible, the Woolclasser must identify the presence of these fibres on the bale description using a Y (visible pigment) or a K (visible medullation). Where both characteristics are visible a Y and K may be used together. If Merinos have been run with shedding fibre sheep, including incursions from a neighbouring property an R should be used.

DARK AND MEDULLATED FIBRE RISK SCHEME

The Dark and Medullated Fibre Risk (DFMR) Scheme is a voluntary declaration made by wool growers regarding the risk of dark and/or medullated fibres being present in merino wool. There are six factors which cause dark fibre incidence:

- Wool type
- Sex/crutching
- 3 month crutch/shear interval
- Age
- Contact with shedding breeds

A DFMR rating can vary from 1 to 6, with 6 being "mated, reared, run with shedding breeds or their crosses (include picture)." For further information visit www.awex.com.au

LEGAL ISSUES

Common Law

A primary producer is bound to keep his or her livestock from trespassing on another's property at common law. The term "livestock" includes not only cattle, horses, donkeys, sheep, goats and pigs but also includes chooks. The expression does not however extend to dogs and cats.

If stock stray onto another's land the owner may be liable for any damage they cause. Damage includes not only the physical damage to crops but also injury to stock from infection, physical attack and misbreeding.

Such a loss could also occur also in the form of the reduced value of a grower's wool clip as a result of contamination of white merino wool with the fibres from exotic breeds.

Several defences may be available to a primary producer whose stock stray.

A primary producer will not be liable if the escape was due to the act of a third party for which he or she is not responsible, eg when a stranger leaves a gate open or drives the owner's livestock onto another's land.

Another defence is where the damage was due to the plaintiff's own default, eg his or her failure to maintain an adequate fence when under a duty to do so.

Another defence which may arise is an "Act of God" defence, eg a storm blowing down a gate or lightning causing livestock to stampede.

Notwithstanding these defences, the owner of exotic breeds may be liable to make good the losses of their neighbour if they can be found to be responsible. However, given the cost of litigation, both financially and to relationships within the community the best approach may often be for growers to discuss these issues openly and develop solutions together.

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Legislation

Producers have a legal duty to maintain boundary fences in good order so as to avoid problems for the public or your neighbours. The following table lists what laws apply in your state in regard to fencing.

STATE	ACT
Queensland	Dividing Fences Act 1953 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Section 14 Failure to carry out a repair</i>• <i>Section 15 Liability of adjoining owners to repair</i>
New South Wales	Impounding Act 1993 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Section 10 Trespassing animals can be impounded</i> Dividing Fences Act 1991 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Section 4 Determination as to "sufficient dividing fence"</i>
Victoria	Impounding of Livestock Act 1994 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Section 4 A person must not wilfully permit or cause livestock to trespass.</i> Fences Act 1968 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Section 4 Construction of dividing fences</i>
Tasmania	Animal Farming (Registration) Regulations 2005 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Regulation 7 Adoption of the Exotic Sheep Breeds Code of Practice</i> Law of Animals Act 1962 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Section 3 Limitation of right to distress</i>• <i>Impounding in private pounds</i>
South Australia	Impounding Act 1920 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Section 25 Penalty for allowing any bull, stallion, colt or ram to be at large</i>
Western Australia	Dividing Fences Act 1961 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Section 7 Liability of owners of adjoining lands to fence</i>• <i>Section 14 Liability of owners to repair dividing fence</i> Stock (Identification and Movement) ACT 1970 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Section 39 Proprietor may be permitted to search for straying stock</i>

For more information about their responsibilities and those of their neighbours, growers should contact their local DPI.

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Information sourced from:

AVTA Information Sheets – Exotic Sheep Breeds in Australia, a Status Report. 2001
AWEX Preparation of Australian Wool Clips – The Wool Classer Code of Practice 2007-2009
DPIW Tasmania – Exotic Sheep Breeds Code of Practice