

MEDIA RELEASE

WoolProducers calls for status quo on non-mulesed status on the NWD

21 January, 2020

Peak woolgrower representative body, WoolProducers Australia has rejected the new mulesing status categories proposed by AWEX through the extended National Wool Declaration (NWD) Review.

AWEX are conducting a consultation on Identification of Alternative Methods to Mulesing through the NWD and are seeking feedback on two new mulesing status categories:

NM1: *No sheep in this mob has been mulesed, and an alternative* method to mulesing has not been used.*

NM2: *No sheep in this mob has been mulesed, and an alternative* method to mulesing has been used.*

WoolProducers CEO, Ms Jo Hall said 'WoolProducers have provided a written submission into this process strongly rejecting the proposed NM1 and NM2 categories.'

'We are concerned that the addition of these categories will cause immense confusion amongst not only growers, but also along the supply chain'. Ms Hall said.

The current mulesing definition is the removal of skin from the breech and/or tail of a sheep using mulesing shears.

The emergence of Sheep Freeze Branding (SFB) is being touted as a potential alternative to mulesing but is currently going through independent pain assessment trials, which are yet to be finalised.

Ms Hall said, 'There is a long standing and accepted definition of mulesing in Australia, and we believe that if another procedure does not meet this definition then it should simply be defined as non-mulesed.'

'WoolProducers are asking that there is no change to the non-mulesing status on the NWD until at least the pain assessment trials on SFB are completed'. Ms Hall said.

Australian growers and government, through Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) have invested tens of millions of dollars looking into alternatives for mulesing under the premise that these alternatives would be acceptable.

'Any change to this approach would be a shifting of the goal posts for our industry that will essentially mean millions of dollars have been wasted'.

'WoolProducers are keen to listen to our customers in the supply chain but are not interested in the views of activists groups whose aim is to shut down livestock production.' Ms Hall said.

WoolProducers also have concerns that if there is adoption of split definitions of non-mulesed, which is essentially including any form of breech modification that this could potentially lead to other husbandry procedures, such as tail docking, as being included in this in definition.

'The current mulesing definition refers to the 'breech and/or tail', if there is a concession on procedures that don't use mulesing shears as having to be declared, there can be no guarantee that

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in the future that tail docking would not need to be declared. This is a path that WoolProducers do not want to go down'. Ms Hall said.

Submissions into this consultation will be accepted by AWEX until 31 January, 2020.

ENDS

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About WoolProducers' Australia

WPA plays a critical role in working closely with companies and entities funded by woolgrower funds including compulsory levies or fees for service.

Its mission is to develop constructive and profitable outcomes for woolgrowers nationally.

The agency is responsible for appointing a director to each of the Australian Wool Exchange and the Australia Wool Testing Authority, promoting good corporate governance and ensuring that the interests of growers are met.

WPA maintains a working relationship with Australian Wool Innovation as the voice of woolgrower shareholders. It aims to contribute to AWI's programs for the benefit of growers, promoting responsible use of levy funds and ensuring good corporate governance.

WPA is the sole wool industry member of Animal Health Australia, and as such, carries a significant responsibility for decision making on behalf of the industry in the event of an emergency animal disease outbreak.

As the only wool grower organisation with membership of the National Farmers' Federation, WoolProducers is responsible for providing key policy advice on behalf of our members, and other wool growers, to Australia's peak farm body.

WoolProducers also works closely with the Federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources on key issues such as animal health and welfare, biosecurity, pest management control, natural resource management, drought preparedness, emergency animal disease outbreak preparedness and industry development, including research and trade.