

2023

IWTO Specifications for Wool Sheep Welfare

A concise summation of good practice principles for ethical wool sheep production.



**IW
TO**

International Wool
Textile Organisation



THE AMERICAN SPIRIT IS ALIVE IN THE FIBER, FLEECE,
AND FABRIC OF NATURAL AMERICAN WOOL.

This is where happy, healthy sheep are raised to thrive in vast, open ranchlands. It's where bold shepherds and ranchers are genuine stewards of the earth - constantly seeking sustainable ways to ensure the future of this invaluable industry.

Unparalleled loft / Exceptional Versatility / Remarkable Value

americanwool.org | @experiencewool



PROMOTING
A SUSTAINABLE
FUTURE FOR WOOL.

Click here to join: www.iwto.org

Conditions of Use

© Copyright 2023
International Wool Textile Organisation.

Comments or inquiries should be addressed to: International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO), Rue de l'Industrie, 4 Brussels, 1000 Belgium.

Phone: +32 2 505 4010
E-mail: info@iwto.org
Web: www.iwto.org

Use of the material provided in this publication is subject to the Conditions of Use as stipulated below. These conditions are designed to point out to users of this material how they may use the content provided to them.

Conditions Of Use

The user may use the content for noncommercial, educational, instructional or research purposes. The definition of content applies to layout, design, images, programme, text and other information.

Copyright

The content of this publication is the property of the International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO). Where indicated, images are under copyright to Australian Wool Innovation Limited.

The user may retrieve and display content from this publication, print pages and store pages in electronic format on a computer.

Any content printed or downloaded may not be sold, licensed, transferred, copied or reproduced fully or in part in any manner or in or on any medium to any person without the prior written consent of the IWTO.

Copyright notices may not be modified or removed from any content obtained under the terms of this licence. Any enquiries about authorised use or any requests for permission to publish, reproduce, distribute, display or produce derivative content should be directed to info@iwto.org.

Availability

Although IWTO publications are produced to facilitate maximum user-friendliness, IWTO cannot guarantee that these publications will be compatible with any particular computer system.

Liability

Although IWTO has taken all reasonable care to ensure that the information, data and other material made available in this publication is error-free and up-to-date, it accepts no responsibility for subsequent distortions of the information, data and other material, including but not limited to any defects caused by the transmission or processing of the information, data and other material.

The information made available in this publication, has been obtained from, or is based upon, sources believed by IWTO to be reliable, but it offers no guarantee as to accuracy or completeness thereof.

The official version of this document is in English. IWTO cannot guarantee the accuracy of translations in another language.

The information is supplied without obligation and with the understanding that any person who acts upon it does so entirely at his/her own risk.

Contents

Foreword	1
Overview of the Wool Sheep Industry	3
Australia	4
Canada	5
New Zealand	6
Norway	7
South Africa	8
United Kingdom	9
United States	10
Uruguay	11
Legislative Frameworks for Wool Production	14
IWTO Specifications for Wool Sheep Welfare	16
Glossary	20
Legislative Frameworks by Country	22
Wool Industry Resources	28
Acknowledgements	30



Foreword

Wool has been used by humankind for centuries, and evidence is mounting that it offers extensive benefits for health and well-being. Recent studies on skin, sleep, and breathability are current examples the industry can cite in stating the case for widespread use of one of the oldest and noble fibres known to mankind.

The scientific evidence supporting wool's health benefits is well-established and includes thermal insulation, breathability, and resistance to the development of body odour. In addition, wool offers significant fire retardancy and ultraviolet light protection benefits. These attributes have been well researched since the 1950s and are supported by a growing body of evidence.

When sourcing raw materials from animals, it is essential that welfare and environmental credentials support the sustainability aspects of the land, the animals, and the people caring for it. The World Organisation of Animal Health, WOA (founded as the OIE), speaks about the One Health concept, where human health and animal health are interdependent and committed to the ecosystems in which they exist. The International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO) and WOA have been partners in a cooperation agreement for many years, committed to constantly updating scientific evidence regarding animal welfare and communicating the results in a responsible and transparent manner.

Transparency in each step of the wool pipeline remains essential. Animal welfare and sustainable environmental practices are governed by the national legislative framework of each individual country. Woolgrowers are in turn governed by their local lawmakers and by the fundamental laws of nature; where if farmers do not take exceptional care of natural resources, the return on their investment will simply diminish with time.

This document aims to offer a summary of the main IWTO wool-producing country members and highlights the country specifications they adhere to. Animal abuse is a criminal offence in each of these countries, punishable by law and carrying heavy penalties. Animal welfare remains the essence of our wool farmers' existence and is non-negotiable.

IWTO supports responsible grower practices and encourages all aspects of sheep wellbeing. Our members remain fully committed to sustainable practices throughout the value chain. We believe that transparency and communication are essential to ensuring that consumers can make informed decisions about the products they purchase. By working together, we can ensure that wool remains a sustainable and responsible choice for consumers seeking high-quality, natural fibres with proven health benefits.

Wolf Edmayr

President | International Wool Textile Organisation
April, 2023



01

Overview of the Wool Sheep Industry

For thousands of years, humans have been using animals to make clothing and home textiles. Sheep were likely domesticated around 10,000 BCE and there is evidence of woven wool garments as early as 3,000-4,000 BCE. From origins in the Middle East and Central Asia, the keeping of sheep spread into Europe and from there throughout the New World.

There are more than 1,000 different sheep breeds, each with their own unique body type, temperament, and wool type. Some have shorter, finer wool while others have longer, coarser wool. To keep their sheep healthy and happy, farmers must consider the best environment and animal husbandry practices for each breed.

Animal welfare has become increasingly important, as society recognizes the value of good animal husbandry.

Today, the Five Freedoms form the basis of animal welfare standards globally. The Five Freedoms were developed in response to a 1965 report made to the British parliament. This report, which became known as the Brambell Report, stated that farm animals should have the freedom “to stand up, lie down, turn around, groom themselves, and stretch their limbs.” These were the first five freedoms.

By 1979, that list had developed into the Five Freedoms which continue to be recognised today. The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the global authority for standards in animal welfare, lists these as:

- 1. Freedom from hunger, malnutrition, and thirst
- 2. Freedom from fear and distress
- 3. Freedom from heat stress or physical discomfort
- 4. Freedom from pain, injury, and disease
- 5. Freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour¹

The IWTO created its first Guidelines for Wool Sheep Welfare in 2013 with input from woolgrowing countries and animal welfare and veterinary experts.

Ten years later, the aim of these Specifications for Wool Sheep Welfare remains intact: to establish and promote sound welfare practices for wool production, while accounting for the diversity of production environments worldwide. IWTO's Specifications for Wool Sheep Welfare align closely with the WOAH's Terrestrial Animal Health Code.

Each woolgrowing country is responsible for its own laws and regulations regarding animal welfare. Chapter 05 provides the legislative frameworks of each IWTO member country involved in wool production. To address this, the IWTO has established a global stance on what constitutes good welfare practices for wool sheep, based on agreements with its members. In these Specifications for Wool Sheep Welfare, the IWTO provides the specific laws and regulations for each member country involved in wool production.

¹ <https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-welfare/>, retrieved 23 August 2023

1.1 Australia



With 18% of total global wool production, Australia is the world's largest wool producer. There are approximately 60,000 farmers who grow wool from around 75 million sheep. The Merino breed is predominant in Australia, producing 80% of the world's fine wool that is used in apparel.

Australia is a federation made up of a national government, plus six state and two territory governments. Animal health and welfare is the responsibility of state and territory governments. Each of these jurisdictions has specific regulatory framework governing animal health and welfare. Contravention of these laws will result in prosecution.

The federal government of Australia has no direct responsibility for animal welfare. However, it supports the state governments to ensure a coordinated approach by facilitating the development of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep.

These Standards and Guidelines (specifically the standards) guide state and territory lawmakers on how to position their regulations to achieve a nationally aligned approach to animal welfare.

The Standards and Guidelines are based on current scientific knowledge, recommended industry practice and community expectations, to ensure that legislation delivers positive lifetime welfare outcomes to sheep in Australia.

The relevant state government departments responsible for animal welfare are:

NSW - Department of Primary Industries

Victoria – Agriculture Victoria

Queensland – Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

South Australia - Department for Environment and Water

Tasmania –Department of Natural Resources & Environment Tasmania

Western Australia – Department of Primary Industries & Regional Development



1.2 Canada



Canada has 11,000 sheep farms with 950,000 sheep. Because of Canada's diverse climate, we have 63 different sheep breeds that call Canada home. There are only 20 breeds that are common throughout the country.

Canada's wool industry is small yet thriving. We rank 36th in the world for global sheep production. Most sheep are raised for meat, and the wool is usually disposed of, with only a small percentage being sold.

The micron count of our wool ranges from 27-29, making it suitable for the artisanal and interior markets. Whatever wool farmers do sell is largely sold to the artisanal market, however, the interiors market is in development. We currently have no large-scale production; however, we are working to redevelop our mid-scale production capacity.

There are multiple organizations that oversee sheep welfare across the country. Federal organizations include:

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC)
- Canadian Livestock Records Corporation
- Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)

Groups of provinces have come together to form organizations that tend to the well-being of sheep. These organizations include:

- National Sheep Network (NSN): Provincial members include Alberta (Alberta Lamb Producers, ALP), Ontario (Ontario Sheep Farmers, OSF), and Quebec (Les éleveurs ovins du Québec LEOQ). They represent the provinces that have the most sheep, thereby representing the majority of the sheep in the country.
- Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF): Provincial members include British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Saskatchewan.
- Canadian Sheep Breeders Association (CSBA): Provincial members include Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan.

Most legal framework regarding animal welfare is overseen by each individual province.

Image courtesy of Don Tubb, Topsy Farms, Amherst Island, Ontario

1.3 New Zealand



The New Zealand sheep population has recently stabilised at 26 million, with an annual clip of 130,000 tonnes greasy, representing 10% of global production, making the country the third largest producer of wool in the world.

The sheep population is dominated by dual-purpose crossbred animals, approximately 85% of the total flock, which makes the wool clip comprised predominantly of strong wool. Mid-micron sheep account for 9%, whilst fine wool breeds account for 6% of the total flock.

This mix of sheep breeds contributes to New Zealand being the largest producer globally of strong wool largely for use in interior textiles. New Zealand has a well-established regulatory framework to ensure animal welfare is a paramount focus for farmers and those involved in overseeing the health and wellbeing of the sheep and the harvesting of the wool.

The Animal Welfare Act (1999) sets out the high level of responsibilities for owners and persons in charge of animals, to provide for their physical health and behavioural needs.

Other key standards related to sheep welfare include the Safe Sheep Shearing Standards 2016 which sets out the roles and responsibilities for those involved in the wool harvesting process.

New Zealand has a zero-tolerance to the mulesing of sheep, legally enforced by the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018. The act specifically outlaws the mulesing of sheep in New Zealand.

The 'New Zealand Farm Assured Programme' (NZFAP) has recently been launched. This is the first national wool certification programme in the world. NZFAP provides assurances regarding integrity, traceability, animal health and welfare, people, farm, and biosecurity.

This programme provides confidence to consumers worldwide that the wool produced from New Zealand sheep farms is authentic, genuine, and safe.



1.4 Norway



Norway had a clip of approximately 3,500 tons of wool which more than 3,200 tons was delivered to grading stations for grading last season. More than 13,500 privately-owned small-scale family farms are growing wool from 900,000 ewes and their lambs.

The most common breeds are Norwegian White Sheep (crossbreed) and Norwegian Short Tail Sheep. The mean fibre diameter of wool from Norwegian White Sheep is about 32 microns. Norwegian wool is a versatile fibre that is used for apparel, hand-knitting yarns, throws and blankets, upholstery and carpets.

Small herds provide the opportunity for good monitoring of animal health and welfare. All animals have electronic ID (full traceability) giving farmers, industry, and government the opportunity to document, monitor and continuously improve the production.

Due to the cold climate, most animals are kept indoors during winter. All lambs are born in the spring and 85% of the sheep grazes in mountain summer pastures. Most farmers shear the sheep both in the autumn and in the spring.

The universally recognized Five Freedoms of animal welfare provides basic guidelines for wool production. The welfare of all animals in Norway is protected by the Animal Welfare Act.

Regulations for the welfare of sheep and other livestock and combating animal diseases have subsequently been drafted based on the Animal Welfare Act and in 2023, a programme on sheep welfare will be introduced. Participation will be mandatory for all farmers. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Norwegian Food Safety Authority will ensure that the legislation is adhered to.

Norway has worked systematically with preventive animal health care for many years. It is forbidden to remove body parts from animals, like amputation of tale, castration or mulesing. Veterinarians are required to register all visits, as well as illness and medical treatment.

This information is analysed and used both by farmers, industry, and the authorities. The use of antibiotics is one of the lowest in the world.

1.5 South Africa



South Africa is an important player in the global supply of wool, accounting for around 2,2% of wool production. South Africa is also the second largest supplier of fine Merino wool for the apparel market and has approximately 8,000 commercial and 46,000 communal wool farmers.

From the total number of 24 million sheep numbers in South Africa, the wool production of 42 million kgs stems from around 12.5 million woolled sheep, consisting mainly of Merino sheep, with 49% of the clip ranging between 19 and 20 microns.

The Sustainable Cape Wool Standard (SCWS)² is conducted on farm by one of the assigned production advisors by means of a completely paperless process. Third Party Verification on at least the square root of the assessments completed is done by SAMIC, an independent quality assurance company.

The South African wool industry is also a participating member of the Livestock Welfare Co-ordinating Committee (LWCC), where animal welfare organizations are represented.

The committee is tasked with all animal welfare related issues in South Africa. The welfare of animals in South Africa is regulated under the Animal Protection Act (1962) and Performing Animals Protection Act (1935). The Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1993) governs the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

The animal welfare legislation falls under the Directorate Veterinary Services of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development.



² <http://capewools.co.za/pdf/documents/pdf1-26-sustainablecapewoolsstandard.pdf>

1.6 United Kingdom



In global terms, UK sheep farms are small, having on average approximately 350 sheep. UK sheep are raised naturally outdoors on pasture. As a result, the scale and method of UK sheep farming is such that it is not considered an 'intensive' farming activity by animal welfare campaigning bodies.

Animal Welfare has been an integral part of British farming for centuries and the UK has led this area globally for many years and today have the strictest animal welfare laws in the world. UK legislation includes all of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)'s animal welfare standards.

- 1822 First law in the world protecting against animal cruelty was introduced in the UK.
- 1824 Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals established (Now known as the RSPCA).
- 1911 Protection of Animals Act introduced into law in the UK.
- 1964 The "Five Freedoms" framework was established in the UK.
- 1998 The EU passed the Council Directive 98/58/EC (Protection of Animals) based on the "Five Freedoms" framework.
- 2006 Animal Welfare Act introduced in the UK introducing a maximum sentence of up to 6 months and/or unlimited fines and a possible lifetime ban.
- 2020 The UK passed legislation formally recognising animals as sentient beings.

The Five Freedoms is a framework that was originally developed in the UK in the 1960s and has since been adopted globally and forms an integral part of the 2006 Animal Welfare Act. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 and its detailed subsidiary guidelines, The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007, prescribe the high animal welfare standards that English farmers are required to meet. Very similar legislation exists for the other UK countries:

- Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012
- The Welfare of Farmed Animals (Wales) Regulations 2007
- The Welfare of Farmed Animals (Scotland) Regulations 2010.

British Wool train between 800-1,000 shearers every year. An integral part of the course is animal welfare ensuring sheep are shorn in a way that causes the animal no stress or pain. The vast majority of shearers in the UK will have attended a British Wool course during their career.

1.7 United States



The U.S. is a small global producer of wool, accounting for over 100,000 sheep farms with just under 5.4 million sheep. While the majority of these farms are in the eastern states, sheep farms in the western states tend to be larger and account for as much as 80% of U.S. sheep numbers.

Just over half of American Wool is finer than 24.6 microns and suitable for apparel. Animal welfare is regulated at the federal, state, and local levels through laws varying between the 50 states, 16 territories, and numerous county governments.

Federally, the government's authority is limited by the U.S. Constitution and can only regulate limited aspects of animal welfare. Under that authority, Congress passed the Animal Welfare Act in 1966 to regulate the treatment of animals in research, exhibition, transportation, and by dealers, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In turn, the states and territories have broad responsibility for regulating activity within their jurisdictions and have a corresponding department of agriculture.

Each of the states and territories have individual animal care laws and are unique; all have enacted statutes to punish individuals who engage in cruelty to animals.

American wool growers take great pride in caring for their sheep; they do not use mulesing or dipping. The American Sheep Industry Association published the Sheep Care Guide decades ago and continues to add programs including the American Wool Assurance and the Sheep Safety and Quality Assurance programs.

For more information, visit www.sheepusa.org/researcheducation-animalcarewelfare.



1.8 Uruguay



Uruguay is a global supplier of wool produced outdoors in extensive systems of mixed livestock production (sheep and beef cattle), mainly based on native pastures of temperate climate.

Most of the production comes from 6.4 million sheep raised on family-owned farms (there are approximately 19,800 farmers) that have been in the industry for generations. The most common breeds of sheep are dual purpose such as Corriedale, Merino, Polwarth, Dohne Merino and Merilin.

As a consequence, nearly half of Uruguayan wool is mid-micron (between measures 24-32 microns) while the remaining half is fine wool (between 16 and 24 microns) suitable for apparel, hand knitting and upholstery.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MGAP) is in charge of the regulation and control of animal welfare in productive species. Its representatives also head the Animal Welfare Group, which advises the government on the construction of general and specific public policies on animal welfare.

The group brings together all the institutions involved in livestock production at the national level and especially their respective experts in animal welfare.

The Uruguayan Wool Secretariat (SUL), managed and funded by woolgrowers and the National Institute of Agricultural Research (INIA) collectively play an active role in animal welfare. Research projects, partnerships in education, training and communication strategies are covered by them.

A working group made up of representatives of organizations and companies that are part of the sheep industry developed a code of practice entitled "Guidelines for ethical sheep production in Uruguay" to ensure an adequate level of animal welfare in Uruguayan production systems.

Also, there is an increasing number of wool lots under different private certifications that address animal welfare in sheep production (for example, RWS, Nativa and Origen).



02 Legislative Frameworks for Wool Production

Each country has sovereign responsibility for its laws and regulations pertaining to animal welfare practices. The sovereign responsibility may be devolved to states and territories within countries (such as is the case in Australia), or individual countries within a regional aggregation, such as the European Union. This legal framework is designed to ensure that individuals and businesses operate within the law of these countries at all times.

These legislative tools cover almost every aspect of farm operations, including how farmers care for the land and animals, the animal husbandry practices they are allowed to use, and specific chemicals and processes banned under local law.

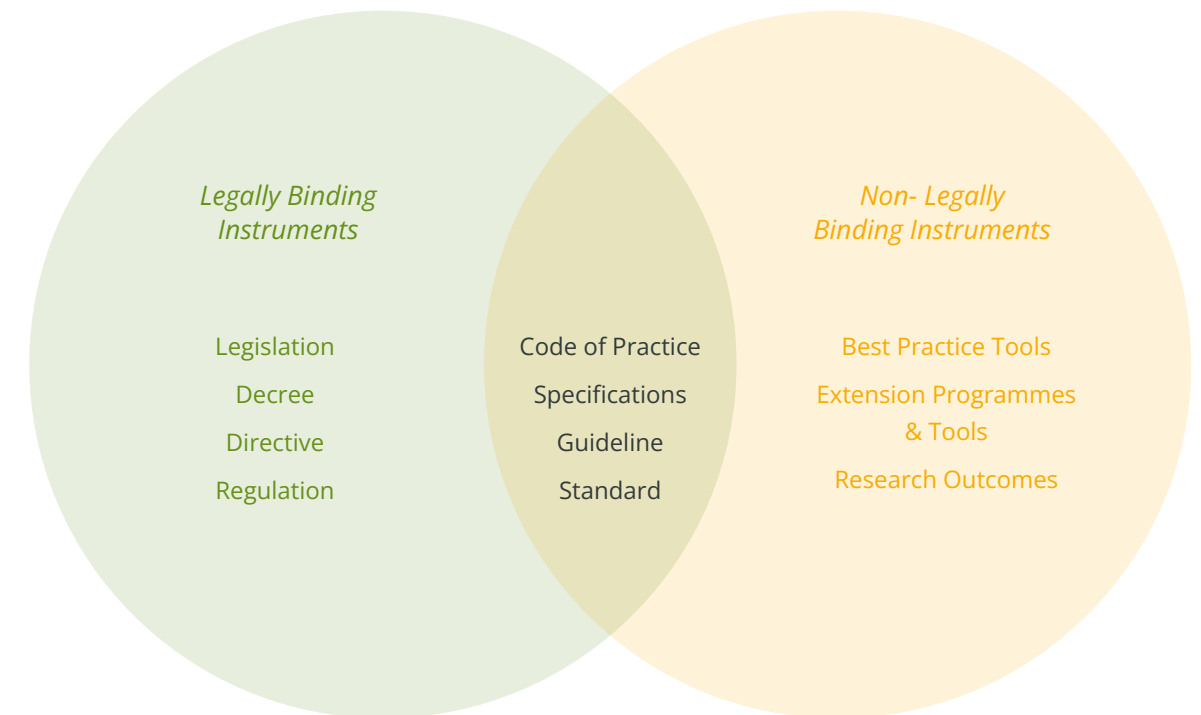
Legally binding instruments (e.g. decrees, acts, directives and regulations) form the baseline for acceptable practice. They provide the high-level and interpretive requirements that farmers in each wool producing country have to adhere to.

Meeting the appropriate legal requirements relevant to their jurisdiction is compulsory for farmers and those breaking the law would be prosecuted accordingly. Supporting the legislation outlined above are the best practice tools.

These tools are based on the latest research and development, welfare expertise and animal husbandry practices. These guidelines are dynamic and ever evolving as new information becomes available. For example, best practice may recommend that a farmer manages sheep to reduce the risk of pests; however, how and when this is done will depend on whether the farm is located in a summer or winter dominant environment and the type of sheep present.

These management tools are highly specific to the production system, environment and type of sheep. The approaches that wool-producing countries have taken with these best practice tools also varies. Some countries adopt one programme that covers all facets of wool production¹, whereas others have different guidelines for each facet of production².

Relationship between legally binding and non-legally binding instruments.



World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)

The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) is the intergovernmental standard-setting organisation responsible for improving animal health. With 182 (2023) member countries worldwide, the WOAH is recognised as a 'reference organisation' by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).³ Animal welfare was first identified as a priority in the WOAH 2001-2005 Strategy Plan. WOAH was mandated by its members to take the lead on animal welfare internationally and provide recommendations and guidelines covering animal welfare practices⁴ The international community views the WOAH animal welfare standards as the key guiding principles upon which individual countries develop further detailed tools. In 2017, WOAH Member Countries adopted the first Global Animal Welfare Strategy.⁵

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

FAO's aim is to provide food security for all. It strives to raise the level of nutrition, improve agriculture productivity, improve the lives of the rural population and contribute to the growth of the world economy. These objectives are achieved by making relevant information accessible, sharing policy expertise, providing a meeting place for nations and bringing knowledge to the field. Find FAO's resources on Animal Health at <https://www.fao.org/animal-health/en/>.

1. Best Practice Reference Manual for Wool Sheep Farming - South Africa - <https://www.nwga.co.za/file/5ac4a28396ee9/2015cobpengunedited.pdf>

2. Woolgrowers of Australia - <https://auswoolgrowers.com.au/>

3 <https://www.woah.org/en/who-we-are/structure/framework/basic-texts/new-mandates/>

4 <https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/standards/>

5 <https://www.woah.org/app/uploads/2021/03/en-oie-aw-strategy.pdf>

03

IWTO Specifications
for Wool Sheep Welfare

In the establishment of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code, the WOAHP acknowledges the guidance provided by the internationally recognized Five Freedoms¹:

1. Freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition – through ready access to fresh water and a diet sufficient to maintain full health and vigour.
2. Freedom from discomfort – through provision of an appropriately sheltered and comfortable environment.
3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease – by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. Freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour – through provision of sufficient space, suitable facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
5. Freedom from fear and distress – ensuring conditions and treatments imposed avoid mental suffering.

ENVIRONMENT

The general principles for the welfare of animals in livestock production systems of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code is covered by Article 7.1.5², which states:

"The physical environment, including the substrate (walking surface, resting surface, etc.), should be suited to the species so as to minimise risk of injury and transmission of diseases or parasites to animals. The physical environment should allow comfortable resting, safe and comfortable movement including normal postural changes, and the opportunity to perform types of natural behaviour that animals are motivated to perform. For housed animals, air quality, temperature and humidity should support good animal health and not be aversive. Where extreme conditions occur, animals should not be prevented from using their natural methods of the thermo-regulation."

Extending the WOAHP Terrestrial Animal Health Code specific to wool production practice guidelines, the general principle is that sheep should be managed so as to minimise the impact of threats to their lifetime welfare, including extremes of weather, natural disasters, disease, injury and predation. Specifically:

1. Sheep should be purpose-bred and effectively managed so as to enable a high level of physical adaptation to the production environment and minimise undue stress;
2. Sheep should be inspected at intervals appropriate to risks to their welfare;
3. Consideration should be given to the provision of shelter in the absence of natural protection;
4. When sheep are confined for extended periods, they should:
 - a. have effective ventilation;
 - b. be housed in social groups; and
 - c. have non-slip, non-abrasive and free-draining floor surfaces that avoid the accumulation of faeces and urine likely to compromise their welfare.

5. Handling facilities should be free from protrusions and obstacles that may cause injury;
6. Measures should be put in place to prevent sheep being harmed or killed by predators.

NUTRITION

The WOAHP Terrestrial Animal Health Code states:

*"Animals should have access to sufficient feed and water, suited to the animals' age and needs, to maintain normal health and productivity and to prevent prolonged hunger, thirst, malnutrition or dehydration."*³

Extending the WOAHP Terrestrial Animal Health Code specific to wool production practice guidelines:

1. Sheep should have reasonable access to feed and water appropriate for their age and needs;
2. If sufficient feed and water cannot be provided for sheep, options such as relocating, selling, or humanely disposing of the sheep should be considered before their welfare is adversely affected;
3. Self-feeders and watering points should be checked regularly to ensure feed and water quality and quantity is maintained;
4. Access to contaminated and spoilt feed, toxic plants and harmful substances should be avoided;
5. Digestive problems should be prevented by gradually introducing sheep to a change of diet.



¹ Terrestrial Animal Health Code, Article 7.1.2 (WOAH, 28th Edition, 2019)
² Terrestrial Animal Health Code, Article 7.1.5 (3,4,6) (WOAH, 28th Edition, 2019)

³ Terrestrial Animal Health Code, Article 7.1.5 (7) (WOAH, 28th Edition, 2019)

HEALTH

The WOAHP Terrestrial Animal Health Code states:

*“Diseases and parasites should be prevented and controlled as much as possible through good management practices. Animals with serious health problems should be isolated and treated promptly or killed humanely if treatment is not feasible or recovery is unlikely. Where painful procedures cannot be avoided, the resulting pain should be managed to the extent that available methods allow.”*⁴

Extending the WOAHP Terrestrial Animal Health Code specific to wool production practice guidelines:

1. As part of a preventative approach to managing the health aspects of sheep welfare, a health management plan should be designed and implemented under the guidance of qualified advisors;
2. Within the health management plans, disease prevention strategies should include vaccination against relevant diseases, monitoring and control of internal and external parasites, and selection toward genetic resistance and resilience to parasites and diseases;
3. Sheep should be inspected regularly, and unexplained diseases and deaths should be investigated to formulate appropriate remedial and preventative actions;
4. Appropriate treatment for sick, injured or diseased sheep should be undertaken at the first reasonable opportunity, and sheep suffering from ill health that cannot be reasonably treated should be humanely euthanized at the first reasonable opportunity;
5. Surgical procedures should be avoided wherever possible and should only be performed where there is a positive health or welfare outcome for the animal. Where surgical procedures cannot be avoided, the resulting pain should be minimized by selection of the most appropriate method for the age of the animal and the use of anaesthesia and analgesia. Genetic, technological, and management interventions should be sought and applied to remove the need for surgical procedures;
6. Good hygiene practices should be applied relating to facilities, hands, handling and instruments; and
7. Sheep that grow and retain long wool should be shorn at least annually.

HANDLING

The WOAHP Terrestrial Animal Health Code specifies:

*“The handling of animals should foster a positive relationship between humans and animals and should not cause injury, panic, lasting fear or avoidable stress.” And: “Owners and handlers should have sufficient skills and knowledge to ensure that animals are treated in accordance with these [WOAHP] principles.”*⁵

Extending the WOAHP Terrestrial Animal Health Code specific to wool production practice guidelines:

1. Handling practices should be appropriate and minimise risk to the welfare of sheep:
 - a. handling should be minimised during extreme weather;
 - b. extra care should be taken when handling sheep with special needs — for example, young lambs, heavily pregnant ewes, lame sheep and rams; and
 - c. sheep should be returned to feed and water as soon as possible after handling.

⁴ Terrestrial Animal Health Code, Article 7.1.5 (8-9) (WOAHP, 28th Edition, 2019)
⁵ Terrestrial Animal Health Code, Article 7.1.5 (10,11) (WOAHP, 28th Edition, 2019)

2. Overcrowding of sheep in pens or yards and on transport vehicles should be avoided. Precautions should be taken to prevent smothering - especially for lambs and weaners;
3. Handling facilities should be appropriate to minimise risks to sheep welfare;
4. The use of dogs and handling aids should be limited to the minimum needed to complete the task. When dogs are used, they should be effectively trained and managed; and
5. In the interests of the livestock and all involved in the farm enterprise, farm staff involved in management of livestock should be suitably proficient in their animal management practices.

BEHAVIOUR

The WOAHP Terrestrial Animal Health Code specifies that:

*“Social grouping of animals should be managed to allow positive social behaviour and minimise injury, distress and chronic fear.”*⁶

Extending the WOAHP Terrestrial Animal Health Code specific to wool production practice guidelines:

In general, sheep should be able to express normal behaviour free from undue stress or constraint:

1. Sheep confined for extended periods should be able to turn around, see, hear, smell and touch neighbouring sheep or have a companion if individually penned;
2. Trough space should be adequate to allow sufficient daily intake of feed and water by all sheep, including shy feeders, and to minimise bullying;
3. In intensive production systems, sufficient space should be allowed for all sheep at the same time to lie on their sternums; and
4. Sheep should be restrained for the minimum time necessary and tethered sheep should be able to exercise daily.

⁶ Terrestrial Animal Health Code, Article 7.1.5 (5) (WOAHP, 28th Edition, 2019)



04 | Glossary

ACCESS TO FEED AND WATER

A reasonable opportunity for sheep to be able to drink water of a suitable quality and quantity to maintain their hydration, and consume a sufficient quality and quantity of feed to maintain appropriate levels of health and vigour.

ANIMAL WELFARE

The physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies (WOAH's definition).

EXTREMES OF WEATHER

Temperature and climatic conditions (e.g.rain, hail, snow, wind, humidity and heat) that, individually or in combination, are likely to predispose sheep to heat or cold stress.

FACILITIES

Fences, yards, sheds, raceways, feed and water troughs, portable yards, ramps and equipment, including lamb-marking cradles, dips, sprays and jetting races.

FIVE FREEDOMS

Define ideal states rather than standards for acceptable welfare. They form a logical and comprehensive framework for analysis of welfare within any system together with the steps and compromises necessary to safeguard and improve welfare within the proper constraints of an effective livestock industry. See the website of the (British) Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC), <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20121010012427/http://www.fawc.org.uk/freedoms.htm>

HUSBANDRY

The practice of breeding and raising livestock.

INTENSIVE PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

An operation where sheep are confined for a period longer than four weeks for the purposes of wool, meat or milk production, and are dependent on the daily supply of feed and or water provided by human or mechanical means. Excluding rams housed for breeding or stud sheep in preparation for showing.

LAMB MARKING

A set of procedures commonly undertaken simultaneously. May include earmarking, ear tagging, vaccination, drenching, tail docking and castration of lambs.

MULESING

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

SHEEP

Ovis aries aries and other members of the genus Ovis.

SURGICAL PROCEDURE

A procedure requiring surgery that is conducted to improve the long-term welfare of a sheep. Usually conducted during lamb marking.

TROUGH

A container for animal feed or water.

VENTILATION

Natural or mechanically induced air movement sufficient to provide oxygen and remove excessive heat load and noxious gases.

WEANER

An adolescent sheep that no longer requires liquid feed.

WETHER

A castrated male sheep.

WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH (WOAH)

Founded as the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) in 1924.

WOAH TERRESTRIAL CODE

Sets out standards for animal health and welfare, and veterinary public health worldwide. Access online at: <https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/standards/codes-and-manuals/terrestrial-code-online-access/>



05

Legislative Frameworks
by Country

INSTRUMENT TYPE	DETAILS	LINKS
AUSTRALIA		
Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep (2016)	<p>The Standards and Guidelines for Sheep has been developed to provide nationally consistent rules for sheep care and management across Australia. They have been endorsed by state and territory Ministers who use them to guide legislation in their respective states.</p> <p><i>Note: Each of the legislative instruments referenced below are the jurisdictions primary legislation, which are generally supported by subordinate legislative instruments such as regulations, standards, codes of practice etc. Instruments annotated below with “*” are undergoing a formal review process at the time of publication of this document, which may result in changes to the title of the legislation.</i></p>	https://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/sheep/
New South Wales: Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 No 200*	The objects of this Act are to prevent cruelty to animals, promote the welfare of animals by requiring a person in charge of an animal to provide care for the animal, and to treat the animal in a humane manner, and to ensure the welfare of the animal.	https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1979-200
Victoria: Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*	The Act does not permit cruelty to occur. Where people are not complying with the specific requirements of these or other Acts, and related regulations, standards or codes they can face prosecution for cruelty.	https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/prevention-cruelty-animals-act-1986/096
Queensland: Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*	The Act promotes the responsible care and use of animals. It places a legal duty of care on people in charge of animals to meet those animals’ needs in an appropriate way.	https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2001-064#ch.1-pt.2
South Australia: Animal Welfare Act 1985	The Act lists the types of actions which constitute ill-treatment. The Act applies equally to all animals regardless of their value or status (i.e. threatened or pest species). Compliance with the requirements of the Act is mandatory.	https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz?path=%2FC%2FA%2FANIMAL%20WELFARE%20ACT%201985

Western Australia: Animal Welfare Act 2002*	The Act provides the legal framework for ensuring that all animals have appropriate standards of care.	https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/law_a4340.html
Tasmania: Animal Welfare Act 1993	The Act prescribes animal welfare offences and sets out minimum standards of care.	https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1993-063
CANADA		
National Farm Animal Care Council	Maintains the Canadian Livestock Code of Practice.	https://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice
Canada Food Inspection Agency - CFIA	Legislates over sheep, lamb, wool, dairy	https://inspection.canada.ca/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/eng/1300386686425/130038782403
NEW ZEALAND		
New Zealand Animal Welfare Act (1999)		https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1999/0142/latest/DLM49664.html
New Zealand Sheep and Beef Cattle Code of Welfare (2018)		https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/46051/sitemap
The Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018, Section 59 ‘Prohibition on mulesing sheep’		https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2018/0050/latest/whole.html#LMS22932
NORWAY		
Animal Welfare Act (2010)	<p>The Animal Welfare Act establishes the legislative framework for animal welfare in Norway. The intention of the Act is to promote good animal welfare and respect for animals.</p> <p>The Act also contains a duty to help animals and to alert relevant authorities if there is reason to believe that an animal is exposed to mistreatment or serious neglect.</p>	https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/animal-welfare-act/id571188/

Welfare regulations for livestock. Forskrift om velferd for produksjonsdyr	The regulations shall contribute to good health and well-being of livestock.	https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2006-07-03-885
Welfare regulations for small ruminants (sheep and goats) Forskrift om velferd for småfe	The purpose of the regulations is to facilitate conditions for good health and well-being of sheep and goats, and to ensure that the animals' natural needs are met.	https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2005-02-18-160
Animal health regulations Forskrift om tiltak mot sjukdommer og zoonotiske agens hos dyr (Dyrehelseforskriften)	The regulations shall promote good animal health and contribute to good public health and animal welfare by regulating how diseases of animals should be prevented, controlled, restricted and eradicated.	https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2002-06-27-732
Regulations on animal health conditions for the import and export of sheep and goats Forskrift om dyrehelsemessige vilkår for innførsel og utførsel av småfe.	The purpose of this regulation is to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, through strict regulations of import and export of live sheep and goats.	https://lovdata.no/dokument/SFO/forskrift/1998-12-31-1480?q=Forskrift%20om%20dyrehelsemessige%20vilk%C3%A5r%20for
Regulations on marking, registration and reporting of sheep and goats Forskrift om merking, registrering og rapportering av dyr.	The regulations ensure identification and registration of all sheep by using ear tags. Animals born after 2010 need to have electronic ear tags. It regulates what information the ear tags need to contain, and how to register the information in public registers.	https://lovdata.no/dokument/LTI/forskrift/2002-09-03-970
Regulation on the commercial transport of animals Forskrift om næringsmessig transport av dyr.	The regulations shall promote proper welfare of animals during transport. The maximum length of time of transport is eight hours.	https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2012-02-08-139
Animal welfare program for sheep Dyrevelferdsprogram for sau	The animal welfare programs give a framework for working systematically on documentation and improvement of animal welfare in livestock herds.	https://www.animalia.no/no/Dyr/sau/dyrevelferdsprogram-for-sau/

SOUTH AFRICA

Performing Animals Protection Act, 1935 (Act No. 4 of 2016)	South African animal welfare legislation falls under the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Directorate Veterinary Services. The welfare of animals is regulated under the Animal Protection Act, 1962 and Performing Animals Protection Act, 1935. The Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1993, governs the organisation of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.	https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201701/a4of2016performinganimalsprotectionamendact.pdf
Animals Protection Act, 1962 (Act No. 71 of 1962)		https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201505/act-71-1962.pdf
Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1993. (Act No. 169 of 1993)		https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/act169of1993.pdf
Sustainable Cape Wool Standard (SCWS)		https://www.capewools.co.za/content/sustainable-cape-wool-standard

UNITED KINGDOM

UK Animal Welfare Act (2006)	The UK Animal Welfare Act (2006) established the legislative framework surrounding animal welfare in UK. It is an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal. The Act also contains a Duty of Care to animals – to ensure all reasonable steps are taken so that the animal's needs are met.	www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/45/contents
The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007	The Animal Welfare Act 2006 and its detailed subsidiary guidelines, The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007, prescribe the high animal welfare standards that English farmers are required to meet. Very similar legislation exists for the other UK countries:Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012, The Welfare of Farmed Animals (Scotland) Regulations 2010 and The Welfare of Farmed Animals (Wales) Regulations 2007.	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/2078/contents http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2012/156/contents/made https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2010/388/contents http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2007/3070/contents/made
Best Management Practices	A comprehensive summary of the husbandry, health and environmental standards under which British Wool is produced.	https:// www.britishwool.org.uk/ksupload/userfiles/Shearing/ Best_Management_Practices_27092017.pdf

USA

Animal Welfare Act And Regulations	The Animal Welfare Act was signed into law in 1966. It is the only federal law in the United States that regulates the treatment of animals in research, exhibition, transport, and by dealers.	https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/downloads/AC_BlueBook_AWA_508_comp_version.pdf
Individual State Animal Cruelty Statutes	The National Agricultural Law Center, authorized by the U.S. Congress, has collected and made available for easy reference each of the 50 states' animal cruelty laws and provides updates as state legislatures pass new laws or make revisions.	https://nationalaglawcenter.org/state-compilations/animal-cruelty/

URUGUAY

Uruguay Wools	Uruguay Wools highlights the aspects of our wool industry to obtain first class products.	www.wool.com.uy/
---------------	---	--

Decreto No 369/983	For the humanitarian slaughter of animals including transport: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre mortem (Art.17 to 38) and post mortem (Art. 39 to 86) vet inspection• Pen facilities (Arts. 23), pre mortem (Art.158) and post mortem handling (Art.165)• Transportation (Art. 284, 285, 286, 288, 289)• Loading and un-loading (Arts. 287,290)• Stunning and Slaughter (Arts. 79, 178, 179, 180)	https://www.impo.com.uy/bases/decretos/369-1983/2
Law 18.834 (2011), Article 160	Gives MGAP the powers to regulate and control Animal Welfare of Productive species.	www.impo.com.uy/bases/leyes/18834-2011
SUL (Secretariado Uruguayo de la Lana, Uruguayan Wool Secretariat), created by law no.13.602 in 1966	SUL seeks to promote sustainable development of the sheep sector, maximizing economic performance through research, technology transfer, training and supply of highly specialized services.	www.sul.org.uy
INIA (National Institute of Agricultural Research), created by law no. 16.065 in 1989	INIA seeks to generate and adapt knowledge and technology aiming at contributing to the sustainable development of the agricultural sector and overall to Uruguay's economic and social development. With a focus on national policies, social inclusion and market demands.	www.inia.uy
INAC (National Institute of Meat), created by law no. 15.605 in 1984	The Institute has a wide scope of action given that it monitors performance for several species, namely beef, sheep, pigs, and poultry, and various links of the meat chain concerning processing in the domestic and international markets. They are in charge of the Animal Welfare Certification Program, including the farm, transportation and the slaughter plant.	www.inac.gub.uy



06 | Wool Industry Resources

INTERNATIONAL

International Wool Textile Organisation | www.iwto.org

AUSTRALIA

Australian Wool Innovation | www.wool.com

Sheep Sustainability Framework | www.sheepsustainabilityframework.com.au

The Woolmark Company | www.woolmark.com

Wool Industries Australia | www.woolindustries.au

WoolProducers Australia | www.woolproducers.com.au

CANADA

Canadian Co-operative Wool Growers Limited | www.wool.ca

Canadian Wool Council | campaignforwool.ca/canadian-wool-council

The Campaign for Wool Canada | campaignforwool.ca

NEW ZEALAND

National Council of NZ Wool Interests (Inc) | www.natco.nz

NORWAY

Norilia | www.norilia.com

SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Wools SA | www.capewools.co.za

UNITED KINGDOM

British Wools | www.britishwool.org.uk

UNITED STATES

American Sheep Industry Association | www.sheepusa.org

American Wool Assurance | www.americanwoolassurance.org

American Wool Council A division of the American Sheep Industry Association | www.americanwool.org

URUGUAY

Cámara Mercantil de Productos del País | www.camaramercantil.com.uy

Wools of Uruguay | www.wool.com.uy





Acknowledgements

For this 2023 update we again thank IWTO members for their timely contributions and for ensuring the accuracy of the content, in particular our members in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Uruguay.

We also wish to thank our sponsor, the American Wool Council, for their support.

DISCLAIMER:

Please note that this guidance document is intended for information purposes only. It has been produced by the IWTO to provide informal, non-binding advice on the legal requirements and best practices guiding the wool industry internationally.

As the area of environmental and animal welfare legislation is continuously evolving, it is not possible for this guidance document to cover all possible applicable rules and practices globally. Therefore, users should not base their actions on the contents of this report only and conduct their own due diligence where it comes to conducting the business of wool production and providing guarantees concerning sheep welfare.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with local applicable rules and regulations. The legal requirements and practices described in this guidance should not be taken as an authoritative statement or interpretation of the law, as only the courts have this power. It is ultimately the responsibility of individual businesses to ensure their compliance with the law.

The IWTO expressly declines responsibility and liability for any misinterpretation or damage incurred by persons, entities (private or public) or organisations as a result of the contents of this guidance document.





2023

IWTO Specifications for Wool Sheep Welfare

www.iwto.org