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AWI's Nuisance Suit Against Opposition to Mulesing, Live Exports Suffers Yet Another Setback

Sydney – A sizeable wool broker has withdrawn from Australian Wool Innovation's (AWI) Federal Court case against People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) President Ingrid E. Newkirk. West Coast Wools has filed a "notice of discontinuance" with the court, leaving AWI minus a strong ally in its already struggling case to try to stifle PETA's efforts in behalf of mutilated lambs and abused sheep.

AWI sued Newkirk under the Australian Trade Practices Act, but although AWI has now attempted five versions of the claim – initially lodged in November 2004 – the court struck out the claim in its entirety earlier this year and ordered AWI to pay Newkirk's legal fees. The Federal Court will hear arguments in support of Newkirk's motion to strike out the latest incarnation of AWI's lawsuit against her on 19 August.

This latest development in the case follows close on the heels of a historic agreement between PETA and the Australian Wool Growers Association that establishes a built-in timeframe for ending mulesing and live export in the Australian wool industry.

PETA declared an international campaign against Australian wool in October 2004 and has already won the positive response of prestigious retailers American Eagle, Abercrombie & Fitch, Timberland and Limited Brands in the US and New Look and George in the UK. India's Mohini Knitwares and seven top designers in India – a major importer of Australian wool – as well as Pakistan's Bonanza Garments, have also pledged not to use the cruelly obtained product. US-based giant SmartWool has struck a 7-year deal worth US\$30 million to buy New Zealand merino wool from farmers who end mulesing by the end of 2005.

"West Coast Wools must have realised that AWI's case is doomed, and it will surprise me if other litigants who have been misled by AWI don't start dropping like blowflies", says Newkirk. "The wool industry has to face the fact that the only way it can survive is by stopping mulesing and live-sheep exports."

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