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PETA Counters WoolProducers' 10 False Claims With Cold, Hard Facts

WoolProducers' attempt to mislead and scare away farmers doesn't hold up to scrutiny. Read PETA's response to WoolProducers' lies.

Since news broke of the historic agreement signed just last week between PETA and the Australian Wool Growers Association (AWGA), PETA and the AWGA have received a rousing show of support from retailers and consumers around the world. Faced with growing criticism and waning credibility at home and abroad, WoolProducers, a body of sheep farmers in Australia, has issued a litany of false claims regarding the agreement.

Here are WoolProducers' claims and PETA's responses:

1. "PETA cannot be trusted to honor any deal. Recent history shows that PETA merely use each capitulation by an industry as a platform from which to launch its next set of demands."

Fact: Untrue. Among other industry giants, McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, Mercedes-Benz, Gillette, PETCO, Forever 21, and Gap Inc. have all experienced the strength of a PETA campaign, which came to an immediate end once clearly defined improvements in animal welfare were adopted. Campaign materials were relegated to the PETA archives and, in some cases, partnerships were forged to increase the visibility of the once-targeted company's compassionate choice. PETA looks forward to providing retailers with information about the new Australian merino brand from sheep who have not been mulesed or shipped overseas alive, just as we let all visitors to PETA.org know about Burger King's veggie burger via colorful ads and giveaways.

2. "This deal does not promise an end to PETA's campaign against Australian wool."

Fact: Ah, but a simple reading of the agreement shows that it does. The premise behind the agreement is very simple: Agree to an achievable and gradual phasing out of mulesing and to a review of the current state of live exports to ensure that the trade is complying with Australian welfare standards, and PETA will end its campaign against the Australian wool industry and promise not to start any campaign against it for at least 10 years.

3. "The agreement provides PETA an ongoing role as an arbiter of standards of welfare practices for livestock in Australia ... [which] has developed and maintained among the highest animal welfare standards in the world"

Fact: Again, that's not what the agreement says. It says that experts acceptable to both PETA and the AWGA, along with Australian animal welfare groups, will decide whether live export lives up to the standards set by Australian animal welfare laws. If Australia's standards are as high as they claim to be, the industry should not fear showing them to the experts.

4. "The PETA/AWGA deal will effectively mean an end to live exports of sheep from Australia, severely impacting on the livelihood of all sheep producers. ... The Wool and



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Sheep Industry Taskforce supports the continuation of live exports, and any agreement that threatens this important Australian industry is rejected.”

Fact: The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, PETA, and animal welfare groups worldwide support a chilled-carcass trade over live exports. The chilled-carcass trade can support the livelihoods of Australian sheep producers and create slaughterhouse and meatpacking jobs in Australia, rather than in countries that do not have to pay Australian wages or adhere to basic animal welfare standards.

5. “PETA’s policy is the total liberation of all animals. ... A deal with PETA represents an endorsement of this view.”

Fact: Well, world peace is the goal of those negotiating settlements around the world, but if you agree not to shoot your neighbor, you do not have to embrace your neighbor’s religion. However, we are outspoken proponents of incremental change. Our goal is to minimize needless suffering—in this case, the pain caused by mulesing mutilations and the terror and suffering associated with live export. Despite our lofty ideals, PETA is a pragmatic and practical organization, and we recognize that measured, verifiable improvements in animal welfare standards are important. If you choose to agree with us that wearing fur supports cruelty to animals, you are not required to stop wearing leather shoes.

6. “PETA’s values in relation to animal welfare are below those expected by Australians. In 2004, PETA killed over 85% of homeless animals it took into care.”

Fact: We are negotiating with farmers in Australia who usually kill 100 percent of the animals they handle for no reason other than profit. We provide free euthanasia services for unwanted, sick, aged, and aggressive animals for whom there are no homes. We fail to see the relevance of this point, but for more information on our programs, which also include charity rescue work for hundreds of animals, please visit HelpingAnimals.com.

7. “The agreement is unworkable.”

Fact: The AWI claimed in 2002 that it would “deliver a commercial alternative to the mules operation by 2007.” Two years later, that deadline was bumped back to 2010, with the caveat that an acceptable alternative would have to be found first. Now it says that the agreement to phase out mulesing by 2010 is unworkable. Clearly, the AWI and their brother body, WoolProducers, is not committed to even its self-imposed deadlines. Thousands of farmers believe that the agreement is the only workable document on the table.

8. “The agreement is an opportunistic attempt by AWGA to raise its own profile, ahead of the interests of the wool industry. AWGA is driven by a small group of individuals currently advancing their political campaign for election to the Australian Wool Innovation Board.”

Fact: PETA and the AWGA disagree on many things to do with sheep farming. However, the AWGA recognizes that compromise is vital if the situation is to improve. So do we. The AWGA has presented an agreement to the industry that gives farmers the power to end PETA’s campaign so that the levies paid by Australian farmers can support programs to further the industry, rather than be wasted on million-dollar lawsuits and ad campaigns that seem politically motivated.



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9. “[A] deal with PETA, which is opposed to the use of wool for clothing, is not in the best interest of retailers.”

Fact: This flat statement says nothing and means less. In the very short time since the agreement has been announced, more than a dozen retailers—including Nordstrom, Talbot’s, Liz Claiborne, and H&M—have issued letters of support for the new brand of Australian merino wool created under the agreement, which will give retailers access to wool from sheep who have not been mulesed or shipped overseas alive. The same retailers have examined and rejected the industry’s rather lame claims regarding animal welfare concerns. Based on a 25-year history of victorious campaigning and keeping our promises, retailers believe that working with PETA is a far cry better than warring with PETA.

10. “The deal has no mandate from Australian farmers. AWGA is acting unilaterally.”

Fact: The highhandedness of the AWI and WoolProducers is not in the best interests of farmers, and there is obvious growing dissent about its representation of farmers facing serious threats to the industry. Australian wool farmers have obligations in many quarters—but most importantly, to their customers and to sheep. At the moment, the AWGA seems to be the only wool body with a head still on its shoulders—a luxury not afforded to the sheep sent to slaughter in the Middle East.

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