



13 March 2007

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

MULESING IS NOT CRUEL

The recent statement by current AWI Chairman Ian McLachlan that “You cannot convince anyone that mulesing is not cruel” (Weekly Times 21.2.07) is totally incorrect and a capitulation to animal rights propaganda.

Perhaps what he means is that HE cannot convince anyone that mulesing is not cruel, and, if that is the case, then he should think about handing over the reins to somebody who can. His current strategy of sticking to a promise that he may or may not be able to keep (the 2010 phase-out) is playing Russian roulette with the Australian Wool Industry and our reputation and credibility with our international retailers.

The fact is that mulesing is no different from any other procedure performed in humans, or animals, to protect the long term health and well being of the recipient – whether it is having teeth drilled, having skin lesions excised or undergoing cardiac bypass surgery.

Our hospitals are full of people undergoing such procedures - all day, every day. Despite the pain involved, procedures such as these are not considered cruel and are justified by the lack of a painless alternative. The only reason that mulesing may be perceived as ‘cruel’ in comparison, is because it is performed without pain relief.

However, highly effective post-operative pain relief is now available and is being widely adopted by farmers across Australia. In addition to this, work is underway to develop further pain relief options and render the procedure itself painless (Dr Sheil Country hour 9.3.07). At present, we do not have an effective painless alternative to mulesing. Whilst it is hoped that we may do so by 2010 we must accept that research is unpredictable and that a definitive date for finding a ‘cure’ cannot be given.

In the absence of a painless alternative, there can be no argument against mulesing on the grounds of cruelty where available pain relief is used – whether it is 2007, 2010 or 2020. If Mr McLachlan believes that retailers and consumers are not convinced of this, then it is his role to convince them, not to capitulate to the propaganda of groups like PETA.

There has been a tremendous uptake of the use of pain relief for mulesing. Mr McLachlan has used it to successfully relieve pain in his own lambs. He should be broadcasting this to the world, rather than apoplectically sticking to an ill-fated promise and caving in to PETA’s ill-considered propaganda.

Here is what Mr McLachlan is saying; “The industry...gave a commitment to phase mulesing out by 2010 and that is what we are going to do.”

Here is what Mr McLachlan should be saying; “We will do the utmost to protect the welfare of our sheep. We will continue to mules with pain relief until an effective painless alternative is found.”



AWGA - News Update

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