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It's time to adopt pain free mulesing

The belated “active support” of pain relief by Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) Chief Executive Craig Welsh is welcome, but not enough. AWI and their Taskforce must prove their support by adopting pain relief with mulesing, as they promised in the 2005 agreement with retailers.

Mulesing with the Australian developed pain relief Tri Solfen, which is commercially available, efficacious and easy to administer, means that any comments about animal cruelty are unfounded. In 2007 CSIRO published results of a trial which confirmed that the pain associated with mulesing can be completely abolished using adequate analgesia.

In fact those who call for an immediate cessation of mulesing, without viable alternatives being commercially available, would be responsible for animal cruelty on a massive scale.

Retailers want to know what Australian woolgrowers are doing about mulesing now, and pain relief is the only industry wide solution currently available.

Genetics will play a major role in the future as more breeders include breech traits in their already busy breeding programs. The commercial demand for unmulesed wool will drive this growing segment. The progressive sheep breeders who have already started this unmulesed innovation are our template to copy and learn from.

Growers have had a gut full of AWI using compulsory levy funds to block innovation and for negative activities that have delivered few solutions to the mulesing issue. Legal action, allegations of bribes, conflicts of interest, intimidating journalists, even threatening AWI directors and shareholders with legal action, does not improve the perception of Australian wool.

The Australian Wool Growers Association supports the mandated use of pain relief for mulesing in the Australian wool industry.

In 2007 it was estimated that up to 20% of the Australian woolclip was unmulesed and 17% of the merino lamb drop were mulesed without pain, using Tri Solfen. These volumes are significant and are growing. Retailers can have confidence that woolgrowers are serious about improving animal welfare.

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