



24 March 2008

Corporate Social Responsibility - Wool's new opportunity

The mulesing issue has identified a new opportunity for wool. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a concept whereby organisations consider the interests of society by taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders, communities and the environment in all aspects of their operations.

The CSR concept means that many Textile Brands & Retailers now require a certified animal welfare program that identifies wool has come from “safely” unmulesed sheep, or “susceptible” sheep that were mulesed with analgesia.

Some of the current issues critical to Retailers CSR's are;

- Animal welfare must be at world best practice now otherwise retail corporations cannot support wool products.
- Retailers believe that wool boycotts will spread if a solution is not implemented urgently. Quote from a retailer; “2010 means nothing, the problem is here today”.
- Retailers consider pain relief for mulesing should be mandated.
- Retailers understand that the promotion of unmulesed wool, from all sheep at this time, may lead to negative animal welfare outcomes.
- Chemicals used in Integrated Pest Management programs must be as environmentally friendly as possible.

The following action plan for wool can solve the current trade problem and deliver positive outcomes for wool;

1. Sheep with a low risk of breech blowfly strike, which can be safely managed unmulesed, remain unmulesed
2. Sheep with a high risk of breech blowfly strike should be mulesed by skilled & accredited practitioners, using currently available pain relief.
3. A program of best practice Integrated Pest Management and genetic advancement to be supported.
4. A certification system for “animal friendly” wool needs to be professional and accountable.
5. Mulesing should only be performed by skilled accredited practitioners.

Australian Wool is facing a trade crisis that will only escalate and spread throughout the world if not addressed to the immediate satisfaction of international textile corporations and retailers. Corporate Social Responsibility is the new language and set of rules that major retailers have adopted. This is wool's new opportunity, we must take it.

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AWGA - News Update

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