



30 September 2008

## AWI SILVER BULLET “PAINLESS” RESEARCH CONDUCTED ON DEAD SHEEP

---

The Australian Wool Growers Association (AWGA) will write to the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Tony Burke, seeking clarification of Australian Wool Innovation’s (AWI) recent public claims about new “painless” mulesing alternatives known as a ‘silver bullet’.

An AWI media release on 8 September 2008 stated;

“The new technologies designed to combat flystrike in Merino lambs are painless and leave no open wound.” AWI Chairman, Brian van Rooyen said “that in both cases the area treated sufficiently enlarges the bare breech area and also removes the breech wrinkle of the Merino genotypes which have been tested so far.” Van Rooyen was quoted in Rural Press on 21 August 2008 as saying “We have been doing hundreds of lambs.”

But a bombshell was dropped at the AWI Roadshow meetings in South Australia last week when AWI Director, Dr Chris Abell, stated the research on these ‘silver bullet’ technologies had been conducted on dead sheep.

AWGA Chairman Martin Oppenheimer says that it seems extraordinary that this research was not conducted on live animals.

“How can AWI make claims that the new mulesing alternative is painless and leaves no open wound if it has only been tested on dead sheep, indeed, even that it works?”

Public claims and statements such as this go directly against ‘The Australian Code for The Responsible Conduct of Research’, which outlines:

- Discussion of findings should not occur in the public arena until the findings have been tested through independent peer review. (AWI has failed to follow this code with both the mulesing clips and the ‘silver bullet’ research)

It is also against the code to release results publicly before informing all interested parties, yet this has also occurred in this case, when several members of the AWI Board were completely unaware that these trials on dead animals had even taken place.

Perhaps even more worrying for woolgrowers is the question as to why these sheep needed to be killed for the ‘secret’ trials in the first place. AWGA notes that it is unlawful to conduct research on animals without proper authority and oversight by an Animal Ethics Committee. Such committees generally do not approve of killing animals for trials unless there is no other alternative.

AWGA will ask the Minister to provide clarification on the following issues relating to AWI’s activities and conditions under the Statutory Funding agreement, which allows use of woolgrower levies for research and marketing activities;



# AWGA - News Update

- Was proper authority acquired for these trials to kill sheep and inject them with chemicals?
- Which animal ethics committee authorised the killing and why was it considered necessary?
- How did the researchers hope to assess pain and wound inflammation, or healing, if the animals were dead?
- How could they tell whether skin contraction was due to the 'silver bullet' treatment and not due to rigour mortis?
- What was the purpose of claiming the treatments were painless and did not cause an open wound, when this clearly could not have been assessed in this setting?

All research institutions are expected to have research governance policies that ensure that they meet the laws and codes outlined in;

- 'The Australian Animal Research Act',
- 'The Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes'
- 'The Australian Code for The Responsible Conduct of Research'.

These laws and codes outline strict provisions for the use of animals for research.

Woolgrowers urgently need to be reassured that AWI has conducted the 'Silver Bullet' technology research correctly and with integrity. We need confidence in AWI and that statements and claims of results can be trusted.

Martin Oppenheimer

Chairman AWGA

02 6777 2124

0413 580 040

---

## Related Links

<http://australianwoolgrowers.com.au/>