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AWI ADMITS CONDUCTING “UNLAWFUL” ANIMAL RESEARCH

Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) has confirmed that research on the “Silver Bullet” mulesing alternative was carried out on live and dead sheep, and also confirmed that trials were conducted prior to obtaining the required animal ethics committee approval.

Through involvement in these trials AWI, and some AWI directors, have become implicated in breeches of the Animal Research Act (sections 46 and 47, “unlawfully carrying out animal research”, and section 56 “offences by corporations”) and of the Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes.

Penalties for breaching these laws can be severe and include large fines and jail terms.

An AWI Media release on 7 October 2008 stated; “Mr van Rooyen also said that earlier preliminary studies done by a registered veterinary practitioner on live and dead sheep have been explained to the PIRSA AEC (The South Australian Department of Primary Industry and Resources Animal Ethics Committee), which advised that such work required an AEC approval. The veterinarian and AWI subsequently submitted the required proposal.”

AWI’s Corporate Governance Statement states that “The AWI Board also monitors that the Company is conducting its affairs within the law and abides within the Company’s various charters and codes of conduct.” Also “The Board takes seriously the Company’s obligations to comply with all Federal, State and local government laws, as well as common law obligations.”

AWGA Chairman Martin Oppenheimer says there are serious concerns that AWI shareholders, in the lead up to the AWI elections, have been misled by claims made in relation to these “Silver Bullet” trials, which were conducted on live and dead sheep without the required Ethics approval.

“Mr van Rooyen told a woolgrower meeting in Victoria recently that if the protocol with the new research was breached then it was his fault.”

“Woolgrowers expect that any work commissioned by AWI is carried out in accordance with the law, high ethical standards and good corporate governance. The reputation of the Australian wool industry is at stake here.”

“Unless there is a satisfactory explanation why AWI failed to adhere to the relevant Codes or Laws, any AWI Directors involved must step down immediately.”

Martin Oppenheimer
Chairman AWGA 02 6777 2124 0413 580 040

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