



MODIANO

G. Modiano Limited

Broad Street House, 55 Old Broad Street, London. EC2M 1RX
Telephone: 020 7012 0000 Fax: 020 7374 6468 E Mail: laurence@gmodiano.com

SHEEP MAY SAFELY GRAZE

An Open Letter to:

Mr Krishan Hundal (Head of Technology) & Mr Richard Gillies (Plan A & CSR Director)
Marks & Spencer
Waterside House
35 North Wharf Road
London W2 1NW

Cc Sir Stuart Rose, Executive Chairman, Mr Mike Barry, Head of CSR, Marks & Spencer

9th July 2009

Dear Messrs Hundal and Gillies,

I write to you both as the largest wool processor and supplier in Europe, as well as a director of Australian Wool Innovation.

I refer to your June letter to your fabric suppliers in which you state that to maintain your "commitment to uphold the highest possible animal welfare standards in our wool business, we (M&S) have set a target that by the end of 2010 all of the wool bought for our menswear business will come from non-mulesed sources at no additional on-cost to the supply chain."

In your definition of non-mulesed you include wool from sheep that have not been mulesed and wool from farms which have ceased mulesing, but still have mulesed sheep in their flock.

You declare the date as non-negotiable. Dates can change. Facts can not.

I regret to write that as a long-term and loyal partner to the wool industry your letter is as counter-productive to wool's commercial interests as it is to those of M&S and its Plan A ambition to support ethical consumerism.

The only countries which produce superfine wool in any meaningful quantities are Australia, South Africa and Argentina. At present only 1.75% of wool (less than 4m clean kgs) which measures 19 microns and finer Australia-wide qualifies for the categories acceptable to you. South Africa produces 5m clean kgs and Argentina 8m kgs of wool 19.5 microns and finer, compared to Australia's 76m. As most of your wool menswear will be made using superfine wool, I believe you will struggle to source sufficient quantity to meet your new target, especially if other retailers decide to follow your example. As for your unwillingness to pay a premium, this will be decided neither by you nor your suppliers, but by the laws of supply and demand.

Australian wool growers have made it very clear what they think of such demands. They are voting with their feet and abandoning wool in their thousands. In 2004 the Australian sheep population stood at just under 100 million. It is forecast in 2010 to reach 70m. When consumer demand normalizes, wool prices are likely to shoot up violently. I believe this will happen sooner rather than later.

You declare to uphold the highest possible animal welfare standards and yet you are prepared to place your interests over those of an animal which, according to the most eminent scientific bodies in Australia, if allowed to remain unmulesed, stands a high probability of flystrike, whereby their flesh is consumed by maggots until they are either saved or allowed to die the worst of deaths. Even PETA, from its demand to breed bare breeched sheep, recognises the terrible danger of flystrike in Australian sheep.

I have to confess that until Animal Liberation Australia made public mulesing as it was then practiced I, as a major wool participant, was not aware that it existed. I found the manner in which it was carried out painful to watch, and I am sure most growers felt the same. The old directorship of AWI, instead of accepting Dr Sheil's early proposal to develop effective pain relief (with private funds she eventually developed a post-mulesing anaesthetic which now has 60% take-up among growers), decided to take PETA to court in one of the most ludicrous and costly exercises in the history of the wool industry. The upshot was the 2010 deadline agreement in which AWI and WoolProducers declared that Australian growers would cease mulesing by December 31st 2010 (in effect 2011), even though there was no viable alternative. Even though they had no legal redress over growers who continued to mules. AWI's credibility was seriously compromised and growers made their anger plainly felt when the old regime was voted out in November 2008. Regrettably the new board inherited a hornet's nest of angry growers, processors, retailers and animal activists.

But the truth cannot be changed.

AWI has spent A\$20m to find a solution without much success, and I can assure you that unless St. George (the patron saint of shepherds) performs a miracle there will be no alternative to mulesing by 2011.

PETA knows it. Animal Liberation Australia knows it. The RSPCA knows it. The BRC and NRF know it. And so do you.

The only real alternative is to breed plain-breeched sheep. Efforts are already well under way, but as it has taken 200 years to breed the unique properties of the Australian merino, it will take a decade or two to develop a sheep which carries a smooth bottom too.

In the meantime, I regard as the highest priority the avoidance of animal suffering. That does not entail, I am afraid, the cessation of mulesing, just as a responsible doctor would not shy away from the inoculation of a screaming child in a disease-ridden region.

AWI's top scientific goal is to develop as quickly as possible an effective analgesia which would be administered prior to the mulesing procedure, thereby eliminating all pain before and after. This measure is being supported by the President of IWTO (International Wool Trading Organisation), by Animal Liberation Australia, and by the majority of Australian wool growers, who should be encouraged for their progressive reforms rather than harrassed with impossible demands. It remains to be seen whether it will be supported by PETA and the brands they threaten with boycott calls. It is my sincere wish that they do.

Last week I recommended to the AWI Board the immediate creation of a Flystrike Prevention Committee, to include growers, scientists, veterinarians, animal welfare groups, retailers and anybody else who wishes to resolve this issue in good faith and open dialogue.

Australia is a dry country. As farmers abandon wool the only real option available to many is the breeding of sheep for meat. What is a better life for a sheep? To be allowed to roam freely in open paddocks for ten years, producing wool, safe from flies, safe from the slaughterhouse. Or to be killed and butchered at six months of age and end up on our tables? PETA must realise that the land will always hold sheep, only different sheep.

Yesterday HRH the Prince of Wales gave the 2009 Richard Dimbleby Lecture, entitled 'Facing the Future'. The gist of it was how the world has preferred to maximize economic development at the expense of human societies and nature. That we should learn from nature's ability to develop sustainable ecosystems, and that we tamper with them at our peril.

Of all the fibres available to us wool is the one which responds best to the arguments for a sustainable ecosystem. Moreover, it is the oldest fibre known to Man, the most versatile, the most comfortable, the most enduring, the most able to cope with a changing environment. The most beautiful.

We should not fear the truth. We should not ask for what is not possible. Rather we should be telling ourselves how lucky that such an animal was created. How important it is to do what is right for this animal. And how we should be telling people in the world at large that they too can share in its beauty.

As the Prince of Wales intimated, if we look after Nature, Nature looks after us.

Yours sincerely,

Laurence Modiano