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Activists Protest Treatment of Sheep

<http://news.ninensn.com.au/technology/8451405/activists-protest-treatment-of-sheep>

An animal rights group has renewed calls to end the industry practice of stripping skin from sheep, with a protest in Brisbane.

Activists from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) Asia Pacific, dressed as sheep, braved rain in the city's main square on Saturday to speak out against sheep mulesing.

Mulesing refers to the removal of skin from a sheep's rear end to prevent flystrike, a potentially fatal condition involving maggot infestation.

PETA Asia-Pacific campaign coordinator Claire Fryer says it's a barbaric form of mutilation carried out on millions of sheep, often with no pain relief.

"It's not carried out anywhere else in the world," she said.

"New Zealand banned it years ago, and 20 per cent of Australian farmers have already banned it voluntarily."

Ms Fryer says the Australian wool industry has reneged on a pledge to ban mulesing and called on the federal government to step in.

"We are asking the government now to take matters into their own hands and enact a ban on it," she said.

Australian Wool Growers Association chairman Shane Edwards says sheep who undergo mulesing are better off than those that don't.

"The mulesing process is only taken out to assist the sheep to be protected from fly strike," he said.

"And until such time as the scientific world would be able to come up with an alternative, the wool industry or the sheep industry has no choice but to carry on mulesing for the best welfare of their animals."

Mr Edwards rejected alternatives suggested by PETA, including increased monitoring of the sheep to prevent flystrike and shearing around the sheep's rears.

He said the former method was too costly and the latter was even more painful to sheep than mulesing.

Another alternative, breeding sheep with barer rears, is being researched by the industry but is a long way off, Mr Edwards said.

"It is happening but you can't in one generation breed the bare breech for the entire national flock," he said.

"It would probably take 10 generations minimum."

Federal Agriculture Minister Joe Ludwig has been approached for comment.

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