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Animal welfare groups ready to restart anti-mulesing campaign



A wool classer throws a fleece of fine wool on a table (Will Ockenden)

It was an issue that tied up the Australian wool industry - the campaign ten years ago by animal welfare groups to end the practice of mulesing.

Mulesing is where parts of a sheep's backside are cut off to prevent flystrike, but it's a practice that some have labelled cruel and unnecessary.

A decade ago the issue came to a head with a global campaign to boycott Australian wool taken from mulesed sheep.

Mulesing is still a widespread practice in Australia's sheep industry and there's little global demand for wool that is not mulesed.

A study by Dr John Larsen from the University of Melbourne Veterinary Science Faculty shows there are alternatives to mulesing in the form of an insecticide.

Mark Pearson from Animal Liberation New South Wales says his group is preparing to increase the pressure on wool growers to find alternatives to mulesing as soon as possible.

Graham Wells is a stud merino breeder from Jerilderie in the New South Wales Riverina and says that growers will continue to rely heavily on mulesing as a way to manage flystrike.

He says breeding sheep to be less susceptible to flystrike results in them producing less wool.

Mark Pearson, executive director, Animal Liberation New South Wales; Graham Wells, stud merino breeder, at Jerilderie in the NSW Riverina; Dr. John Larsen, sheep vet in western Victoria, and from Veterinary Science Faculty, Melbourne University.

<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/telegraph/content/2013/s3711204.htm>