



The AWEX SustainaWoolTM Integrity Scheme Manual



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INTRODUCTION

AWEX, in conjunction with its members, would like the wool-consuming-world to understand that its raw material suppliers (wool producers) take the utmost care of their animals and the environment. Not enough focus or energy has been placed on promoting the sustainable nature of the wool production system in Australia, particularly high-quality Merino production systems.

What is “Sustainability” and what is being achieved with the **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme?

In a general sense, this is the basic philosophy.

“To promote the production of the highest quality wool via the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.”

Sustainable management in the context of this Scheme means managing the use, development and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing and for their health and safety while:

- (a) Sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations;
- (b) Safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems;
- (c) Avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment; and
- (d) Managing livestock production systems involving the highest possible ethical, animal welfare and quality standards.



The wool consumer is increasingly demanding a higher level of traceability along the pipeline of the production system from which they buy. Not only does the product need to be of the highest quality, there also needs to be a compelling “story” behind the product clearly showing the highest level of environmental and social sustainability and animal welfare. AWEX understands that it has a major role in promoting the highly professional and ethical wool production systems of Australian wool growers. It also has the important role of advising growers of those production aspects that can be improved or enhanced for the benefit of the product and the production systems. The **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme is a tool which we want to share with all growers to help us work and grow together in an increasingly competitive landscape. AWEX wants Australian growers to stand out from the crowd – in the very best way.

The **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme is available to all Australian wool growers willing and able to demonstrate their production of wool with the highest quality production credentials. The information provided via the **SustainaWOOL™** documentation by each wool supplier will be forever linked with the wool produced from that particular property.

The Grower Checklist is a “self-assessment” document that each declarant signs with the full understanding and knowledge that they can be subject to audit at any time by a registered audit company or authorised entity. The AWEX **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme also works hand-in-hand with our National Wool Declaration (NWD), the highly respected industry-based declaration and audit system covering Mulesing Status and Dark Fibre Contamination in wool clips sold throughout Australia by auction or other means.

THE PROCESS

The SustainaWOOL™ Integrity Scheme is presented via three important documents.

1. The MANUAL
2. The GROWER CHECKLIST; and
3. The AUDIT CHECKLIST

Those seeking accreditation under the Scheme should firstly read the Manual and be comfortable that they understand its contents. This document covers the reasons behind the Scheme and the importance of promoting the Australian wool producer to the wider “wool using” world. The Manual explains the broader issues around Sustainability and Animal Welfare in wool production and emphasizes the key Requirements and Recommendations of the Scheme.

The next step towards accreditation is to complete the Grower Checklist. This document asks the declarant to respond to specific questions and/or statements relating to the main headings in the Manual. This is a legal document and respondents will need to declare (under signature) that their responses are true and correct. The declarant should answer knowing full well that they could be audited (desk-top and/or on-farm) at any time and as a result should be thinking about the records or documentation that might be required by an auditor to validate their responses. In fact, it is **recommended** that all those seeking accreditation should develop solid record keeping procedures as part of management “good practice”, as well as to assist auditors.

Declarants should work towards documenting the protocols followed on the farm which will assist, not only auditors, but in the training of staff. These protocols and other important documents should be readily available for reference by employees and family members.

The final document is the Audit Checklist. This is a very useful document which will help declarants to understand the requirements of any future audit. More importantly, the Audit Checklist can assist in the preparation of an appropriate record keeping system for the business.

Important Information Related To The SustainaWOOL™ Integrity Scheme Grower Checklist

1. ANIMAL WELFARE / ANIMAL HEALTH

Animal Welfare should centre around the animal's ability to cope with and even thrive within the land and environmental conditions in which it finds itself. Good animal welfare and animal health will require high level management by stock owners to prevent and treat disease, internal and external parasites and control the adverse effects of various predators. Adequate nutrition must be maintained, along with provisions for shelter, humane handling (to reduce injury and stress), and if need be, efficient and humane slaughter of stock.

The SustainaWOOL™ Integrity Scheme recognises the internationally recognised "Five Freedoms" developed by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) as representing the "ideal" health state:

1. Freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition;
2. Freedom from discomfort by providing adequate shelter;
3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease/parasites – based on prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment;
4. Freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour; and
5. Freedom from fear and distress.

Minimum standards for the treatment of animals, in this case sheep, are covered by the various Acts already in place in every State of Australia. If a property/owner has been prosecuted under any of the applicable Animal Welfare Government Acts, then this would immediately indicate that compliance has been breached and such

properties/owners would be ineligible to participate in the SustainaWOOL™ Integrity Scheme.

An Animal Welfare document prepared by Animal Health Australia (AHA) – the "Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines – Sheep" - has been endorsed (January 2016) by the Australian States and Territories. This document attempts to formalise a sound and acceptable Animal Welfare regime in Australia. From October 2017, animal welfare and biosecurity has been included in the Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program, which also references this AHA document.

Whilst supportive of these document's contents, the SustainaWOOL™ Scheme goes a step further in relation to mulesing. We recognise the desire of many growers, brands, and processors for the mulesing procedure to cease as soon as practicable and are strongly supportive of any research leading towards a "non-mulesed" Australian wool industry. The international community has sent a very strong message for this outcome to be the "end goal". However, the best possible welfare outcome for the animal must remain paramount in this discussion, so where ceasing to mules is not possible (at this time), accredited suppliers are required to use a registered Pain Relief product on all stock undergoing the mulesing process. If registered and readily available, the SustainaWOOL™ Integrity Scheme **recommends** for suppliers continuing mulesing, to use a pre-procedure analgesic pain relief product until a viable and effective alternative to mulesing can be found.

A CLEAR CHOICE FOR PROCESSORS AND BRANDS



The SustainaWOOL™ Integrity Scheme very clearly identifies those suppliers who do not mules (ceased or never mulesed) as SustainaWOOL™ **GREEN** suppliers. Those that continue to mules but are using a registered pain relief product are identified as SustainaWOOL™ **BLUE** suppliers. Wool users (processors and brands) are able to make a clear choice to source product through the

SustainaWOOL™ Integrity Scheme from the Green or Blue (or both) suppliers with the highest level of confidence. This clear division also allows **SustainaWOOL™** partner processors, brands and retailers to send strong commercial messages to both groups through strategically targeted contracts and special prices at auction. AWEX will work closely with both groups to disseminate information and share practical experience on achieving a non-mulesed outcome without jeopardizing the welfare of the animal.

The International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO) document International Specifications for Wool Sheep Welfare – 2016 also provides a very well-rounded reference point for the requirements of the international community on the subject of Animal Welfare, and AWEX fully endorses this document.

It is a **requirement** for accreditation that the following protocols are adhered to when performing Castration and Tail Docking. Castration must be carried out using the rubber ring method only. Tail Docking must be carried out using the rubber ring or cauterised (hot) knife methods only. Tail length should be sufficient to cover the vulva for ewes and the equivalent length for males. For both castration and tail docking, lambs must be a minimum of 24 hours old and maximum of 12 weeks old (without veterinary involvement) and the procedures must be performed by suitably trained and skilled personnel. If registered and readily available, the **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme **recommends** for suppliers to use a pain relief product during these procedures, preferably a pre-procedure analgesic.

AWEX understands professional wool producers will uphold the highest possible standards of care for their animals and care for the environment. This means that sheep are kept in the best possible health; that sheep have been given reasonable protection from the effects of disease, pests, predators and that appropriate corrective action is taken if sheep require treatment or relief from pain and suffering. The **SustainaWOOL™** document allows professional suppliers the opportunity to advise the world of the very actions that take place on their properties on a normal day-to-day basis to allow them to produce a quality product from their valued stock. Declarants should, however, be well aware that an auditor would require that random mobs of sheep be inspected to verify their health and welfare. An auditor will also need to verify that the

correct registered Animal Health products are being used and that label instructions are strictly adhered to. Proof of purchase of a registered Pain Relief product is a **requirement** for accreditation. A check of the general condition of stock (Body Condition Score or BCS as a guide), watering points (water troughs/creeks), general water storage facilities (dams/tanks), pastures and/or conserved fodder would assist an auditor to understand the level of maintenance of the health and wellbeing of sheep on the property.

Accredited wool growers will be **required** to provide to an auditor their Animal Health Plan (verbal or written). This should outline such items as an integrated parasite (internal and external) plan, likely health challenges and stock mortality minimisation strategies. The plan should clearly cover the protocols used by management to train staff in administering animal health treatments and the humane slaughter of stock. Up-to-date records of Animal Health Treatments are also a requirement of the **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme.

2. TRACEABILITY

The ability for wool purchased under the **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme to be traced back to its source is paramount to the Scheme's success. Not only does transparent traceability allow a solid conduit for individual "stories" to be told from properties or wool producing areas, but it also gives brands and retailers confidence in the integrity of fibre delivered to them under this Scheme. Many systems are already in place to trace a bale back to the producer such as the National Wool Declaration, the registered Farm Brand and Stencil, the Classers Specification provided by the grower to their respective broker, and the regulations already in place including the testing/sampling and displaying (showing) of wool for sale. The countermarking, documentation and various systems in place in the transport, dumping, packing and exporting of the bales allows the integrity of purchased wool to be upheld.

The **SustainaWOOL™** Grower Checklist also allows suppliers to nominate their ability to trace individual animals on their property. This shows an even deeper

level of care and also a responsibility towards high quality management of their flocks. It is a **requirement** for accreditation that all sheep on the property be identified with a secure form of individual identification and that mobs are routinely monitored and their location on the farm known and documented.

AWEX **requires** for accreditation under this scheme that a National Wool Declaration (NWD) be completed covering every bale of wool offered for sale. This verifies that there is full traceability under the AWEX's NWD Scheme for Mulesing Status and Dark and Medullated Fibre Risk (DMFR).

3. ENVIRONMENTAL CARE / CHEMICAL HANDLING AND STORAGE

The general thrust of this section of the Scheme is for declarants to successfully show that reasonable care has been taken to avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects on the environment. Some of these items are covered by State/Territory Government Acts such as the **requirement** for a Farm Chemical Users course to be completed by at least one person working on the farm. It also covers the requirement for an inventory of all chemicals to be kept as well as compliance with safe handling and storage requirements. Compliance with the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act (applicable to your particular State or Territory) is a **requirement** for accreditation under the **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme.

4. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The sustainability of farming communities requires the existence of a strong economic and social framework. The **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme champions the nurturing of strong employer - employee relationships built on mutual trust and respect. These bonds have the added benefit of strengthening the local communities through social integration and economic activity. The provision of adequate facilities and amenities for workers and their families on-farm is an important pillar on which this mutual



respect can be built. This could include, but is not limited to, reasonable accommodation (when required), access to first aid, and provision of clean and functional meal and toilet facilities. Compliance with all National and State Work, Health & Safety (WH&S/OH&S) legislation and regulations will be a **requirement** for successful accreditation.

Providing a safe workplace is also a **requirement** of the **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme. This includes general health and safety issues covering employers, employees and their children. It should also cover visitors whether for work or recreation purposes. Adequate training and protocols to support responsible use of agricultural machinery and animal handling equipment, stock handling and on-farm construction are also **required**.

Supporting certifications or licences should be maintained and furnished to an auditor where applicable.

Compliance to National and State employment legislation is a **requirement** of the Scheme to ensure the rights and conditions of employees are protected and respected



5. WOOL PREPARATION / SHEARING

Notwithstanding the importance of having a clean, green and ethical product, the quality of the wool and its preparation for sale is paramount to making this whole Scheme a success. The highest standard of quality should be the target for all involved in this Scheme and where this quality can then be augmented by the highest standards of animal welfare and environmental care, then the result is a comfortable, reassured and satisfied consumer. It is also true that no amount of preparation and classing can improve a poor quality/poorly bred raw product. Having the best possible genetics for the particular environment, sound management and healthy/strong stock is the solid base from which this whole Scheme can add value to the wool producer, the processor and the final consumer. From that point, AWEX **requires** that the wool is removed by trained and/or careful shearers (i.e. AWI's 5 Pillars of Shearing), the wool is prepared using the basic guidelines of the most current AWEX wool classer Code of Practice, and that the wool is classed by a Registered Professional or Owner woolclasser. It is a **requirement** that all bales be packed to AWEX specified weights

and specifications and that only AWEX authorised nylon packs in good condition (not repaired) are used. It is also a **requirement** that all bales be appropriately and clearly branded/marked, and that the Description used is truly representative of the contents of each particular bale. A fully completed NWD should be submitted covering every bale of wool being offered for sale. This Declaration should be made available to AWEX on request.

To ensure efficient but safe removal of wool, for operators and stock alike, it is a **requirement** that shearing shed and yard facilities be fully maintained to minimise the possibility of accidents and/or injury. The shearing shed environment should be safe, healthy, have adequate lighting and ventilation. All shearing and associated machinery should also be well maintained – not only before shearing begins, but regularly checked throughout the process.

The welfare of the animal should also be paramount throughout shearing. This includes, but is not limited to, minimising time off feed and water, confirming with shearers of their animal welfare responsibilities, and having protocols in place to treat animals for severe cuts or injury (including the use of a Pain Relief product where practicable). Shearers should be linked with the sheep they shear (i.e. counting-out pens) to create some accountability for the quality of their shearing.

6. HANDLING AND TRANSPORT

It is a **requirement** of the SustainaWOOL[™] Integrity Scheme that sheep are handled and treated humanely, with respect and without inflicting undue fear or distress on the animal. Handling may cover, but is not restricted to mustering, yard work, animal health procedures, surgical treatments, shearing, crutching or any other activities requiring close or disruptive interaction with sheep. In all situations, the health and wellbeing of the animal must be paramount.

The Australian Animal Welfare Standards & Guidelines – Land Transport of Livestock Edition 1, Version 1.1, 2012 provides the basis for correct handling of sheep during land transport in Australia. Livestock transport companies must operate under this code. The

Standards and Guidelines ensure that vehicles are safe/compliant and that the operators are trained and exhibit the skills to safely and humanely transport/handle livestock. Owners/managers should recognise that these Standards & Guidelines exist and it is suggested that their chosen carrier be reminded of their responsibilities under this code. Property owners moving their own stock in private farm vehicles and trailers should also recognise and adhere to this code. Minimisation of distress on the animal should be a priority when transporting stock, so issues of overcrowding, lengthy deprivation of water (especially in summer months) and biting/aggressive dogs should be prevented. **SustainaWOOL™** growers should adequately prepare stock before travel including the identification of stock that are unfit for travel.



7. COMPLIANCE AND THE AUDITING PROCESS

Auditing of the **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme will be conducted by authorised auditor(s), namely the AWEX's trained and experienced team. More information on the **requirements** for accreditation and what to expect from a desktop or on-farm audit can be found by reading the accompanying document titled **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme Audit Checklist.

Auditing is on a random basis with properties chosen from a database of all accredited farms by the AWEX auditing team. The auditing regime employed builds on the internationally recognized 'Acceptance Quality Limit' approach adopted for AWEX NWD farm inspections, where AWEX seek to detect a small proportion of non-compliant properties with high statistical confidence. **SustainaWOOL™** auditors are asked to achieve at least 50 farm inspections in excess of the 225 NWD inspections conducted each year to add more strength to the system.

The auditing regime used is applicable and justified due to the large size of the Scheme and to maintain low cost of entry for accredited properties.

CONCLUSION

The AWEX **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme has been designed to augment the marketing of the highest quality wool from Australia. It provides professional wool producers with the opportunity to show the world just how well they look after their stock and the environment. It is clear that sustainable wool production, including the highest levels of animal welfare, is more than just a trend - it is fast becoming a necessity to satisfy the discerning consumer. The **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme is a major tool to connect wool growers to discerning wool consumers, in all markets around the globe.

The completed, signed and dated **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme Grower Checklist document will remain in force as the true and correct record from each declarant until such times as an updated, signed and dated version is received by AWEX. A replacement document is required when changes to activities on the property make the original document no longer true and correct.

The AWEX **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme Growers Checklist is an evolving document. AWEX reserves the right to add to, or alter, items on the Checklist from time-to-time as is necessary to cover the changing requirements of our clients and the consumer. Any new version of the document will be made available to current and future suppliers to allow them to restate their declaration and update their accreditation.

Accredited suppliers will receive an Accreditation Number for their records. The contents of the **SustainaWOOL™** Integrity Scheme Grower Checklist will be linked to this exclusive Accreditation Number. It is recommended that this Accreditation Number be quoted on any Classer's Specification or NWD submitted by accredited properties.

For further details

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