



14 August 2005

Important industry Statement

As a result of the significant breakthrough in lifting the international boycott last week, Australian Wool has a wonderful opportunity before it.

Wool growers, individually or collectively through industry bodies and or producer groups, may now choose to capitalise on this fantastic prospect to market wool as 'a new age' or 21st Century fibre.

The long time heralded claim of Australian Agriculture being 'clean and green' can now be amended in the case of Australian wool production to read 'clean, green, renewable and animal friendly'. This presents as a marketing dream to the modern moral and impressionable consumer driven market place.

It has thus been disappointing to witness the attacks on the "heads of agreement reached between PETA and AWGA over mulesing, before any sensible debate could even begin. The Australian Wool Growers Association reaffirms that it is not interested in political point scoring, but rather seeks to bring about a commercial focus to the business of growing wool. We would like to ensure that compulsory grower levy funds are allocated in tangible marketing and research projects that will deliver real wealth to Australian merino woolgrowers.

Most importantly, it is most reassuring to receive such warm praise from our international customers regarding this important welfare breakthrough. If the level of feedback received from our wonderful overseas customers is any indication at all, then manufacturers and international retailers are breathing a huge sigh of relief of what has been achieved by sections of the wool industry in trying to negotiate a sensible and rational settlement for all concerned.

While some have claimed that AWGA has 'sold out' and PETA have 'buckled under the legal pressure', all woolgrowers irrespective of political viewpoints will agree that something reasonable had to happen. The boycott crisis had and has to be brought to a sensible economic conclusion. Legally antagonising large animal rights groups does not make any commercial sense. What modern Australian business man or woman would want such a boycott to continue? Does anyone in their right mind think that our retailers overseas enjoyed the boycott, and would like the boycott for to continue for another 10 years? It was time to make a mature and sensible leadership decision to try and end such boycotts for wool retailers, all entities in the wool pipeline, woolgrowers and most importantly, for the public image of Australian merino wool.

The announced "heads of agreement" between PETA and AWGA was only possible in part because of this preparedness to have open dialogue, and in part due to the announcements by the Sheep and Wool Taskforce and AWI of their progress in the solution to ending mulesing.

Let's make it abundantly clear; it was the decision of the Sheep and Wool Industry Taskforce in November 2004 to end mulesing by 2010, not a decision by AWGA.

Again, it is clear that there will be alternatives to mulesing by 2010. AWI Chairman Ian McLachlan said this week that he hoped "not one, but a number of (mulesing) alternatives



AWGA - News Update

will be available to wool growers. We are working flat out on a range of alternatives and we are confident that we can not only meet but beat the 2010 deadline." Taskforce Newsletter 12/08/05.

This statement, plus others recently about collagen mulesing replacement technology, AWI press release, 24 June 2005, is very good news for our industry. The AWGA's "heads of agreement" only acknowledges these important industry decisions and achievements. Surely the industry agri - political leadership can not walk away from these facts.

Yes, the 'heads of agreement' deals with a phase out mulesing reduction program and audits, but let's be practical and level headed about this, AWGA directors, each and every one of them are also commercial woolgrowers, believe that these criteria are not unrealistic nor unachievable.

For instance, with the Australian merino's wonderful ability to produce a wether that is easily fattened, is it really necessary to mules that wether portion of your lambs that are destined for a life other than that of being a wool cutter?

As for the audit, yes there will be some reporting required but again it will be up to AWGA and other groups that support this agreement to develop a simple, effective reporting mechanism that is workable, not onerous, but accountable. Is this any different to any other Quality Assurance program? Let me assure each and every one of you that PETA will not be part of this audit program, rather recognised and reasonable independent parties will be engaged to do so.

I would urge all woolgrowers to take a moment to consider fully and thoughtfully of this wonderful opportunity of showcasing Australian merino fibre in a new light to the fashion world hungry for renewable, natural and ethically produced fibres. Lets face it, how can synthetic fibres compete with such a beautiful package that merino wool offers?

This may be our last chance for our industry to re market ourselves in this new century where morally and ethically produced products will dominate the retail fashion shelves for years to come. The door of opportunity is now open for you to join with us to help in the remaking of wool. The invitation is open to one and all to participate. A new and huge market is ready to support and buy all the ethically wool you can produce, freely advocated by ardent consumer groups worldwide.

Surely this is the best news we have heard for many years. I have great pleasure in offering all our wonderful woolgrowers such an invitation.

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