

Better Choices

In this issue

- Better Choices audit program
- New way to list Better Choices wool in the National Wool Declaration
- Corporate social responsibility for improvement of sheep welfare
- Wool buyer Modiano embraces Better Choices



Better Choices audit program

The Better Choices audited welfare program assists woolgrowers who mules their merino lambs to satisfy the animal welfare concerns of international retailers. When you use pain relief on your mulesed lambs and register as a Better Choices woolgrower your current year's wool clip is certified and can be branded Better Choices.

Here is how you can participate:

- Ensure that pain relief is applied to all mulesed lambs on your property. The product is available from your veterinarian as a prescription – your vet will complete a form detailing the product's use on your property.
- Once you have used the product, call 1800 678 368 to register. When registered, you will receive a Better Choices producer kit, including instructions, a certificate and signage to enable you to promote your wool under the Better Choices brand.

When you choose to market your wool with the Better Choices brand you are assuring international garment retailers that their animal welfare concerns have been taken care of.

In turn, we aim to have international retailers support Australian wool producers who have made a better choice.



More information on Better Choices is available at www.betterchoices.com.au



New way to list Better Choices wool in the National Wool Declaration

In June 2008 a new National Wool Declaration (NWD) was introduced outlining a vendor's mulesing status. This will impact on how Better Choices wool is listed for sale.

The National Wool Declaration requires all wool to be identified as coming from mulesed or unmulesed mobs. It also indicates whether these mobs were treated with pain relief at the time they were mulesed.

When a property treats all mulesed lambs with pain relief, it is considered a 'Better Choices' property. It receives a certificate and is registered with the program for that year.

The certificate and registration number identifies the year in which the property commenced using pain relief.

Any producer with a current Better Choices registration is entitled to stencil all their bales and list all their wool under Better Choices, as a clear signal that **they have adopted pain relief.**

The new National Wool Declaration will see some registered Better Choices producers list wool

from lambs that were mulesed prior to their adoption of pain relief. In this way, the new National Wool Declaration will reinforce the Better Choices audit system and **clearly identify when the producer started using pain relief.** This will make it easy for wool buyers to support the most progressive wool producers.

Here is an example (see Table 1)

- **A.** Pain relief is not indicated for mobs in age groups 3 or higher because at the time they were mulesed pain relief was not being used.
- **B.** Producer has been consistently using pain relief and is registered with Better Choices.
- Producer is demonstrating a consistent change in mulesing practice and is entitled to brand entire clip Better Choices wool.

Table 1

This declaration is for wool pertaining to shearing completed on ____ / ____ / ____												
Tick Box <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the Owner/Manager has ceased ¹ the practice of, or does not perform mulesing ² on this Property <input type="checkbox"/>												
Mob No. (Refer specs)	Mob breaks (Bale numbers)		Age code	Breed code	Sex code	Contact ³ with shedding ⁴ breeds (Y/N)	Mob crutched (Y/N)	Crutched within 3 months prior to shearing (Y/N)	Mob Mulesed ⁵ (Y/N)	Tick <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> if pain relief ⁶ used	Record kept of chemical use (Y/N)	Office use only
	From	To										
1	1	3	1	m	m	n	y	y	y	B. ✓	y	
2	4	6	2	m	m	n	y	y	y		y	
3	7	9	A. 3	m	m	n	y	y	y		y	
4	10	12	4	m	m	n	y	y	y		y	
5	13	14	5	m	m	n	y	y	y		y	



Corporate social responsibility for the improvement of sheep welfare

Retailers today are increasingly focused on the production of the brands and products they promote. They actively consider ethical issues from fair trade and labour force issues to environmental impacts and animal welfare.

It is no surprise that retailers of wool garments consider animal welfare to be a key element of their wider corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies.

The aim is to ensure world's best practice is carried out on all animals that provide fibre or food to their business and their customers.

CSR by effective retailers encourages producers to meet current best practice while seeking continual improvement to an ultimate solution. In the case of mulesing, this will be the elimination of mulesing by genetically improving the sheep.

Currently, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Animal Liberation, Compassion in World Farming and the Australian Veterinarian Association all recognise mulesing as an essential procedure in lambs that are genetically predisposed to flystrike. They also support the immediate use of products to reduce the pain associated with mulesing.

Many retailers use a 'stepwise' approach to developing their CSR statements. This approach acknowledges that radical change cannot be achieved in a single step, and that certain problems need to be addressed over time. This is certainly the case when it comes to mulesing.

The four steps to ensuring mulesing meets retailers' corporate social responsibility

Step 1

In the wool industry the first step to improved animal welfare is to mules all sheep that are genetically predisposed to flystrike. The alternative is allowing genetically susceptible sheep to die of flystrike. This is detrimental to the animal's welfare and as such cannot be acceptable to those seeking to demonstrate CSR.

Step 2

With mulesing an important animal welfare procedure, the next step is to meet today's world's best practice and mules with analgesic. With a post-analgesic scientifically proven to reduce pain and improve wound healing, retailers' CSR must support this step. Once this new best practice is recognised, Step 1 becomes redundant.

Step 3

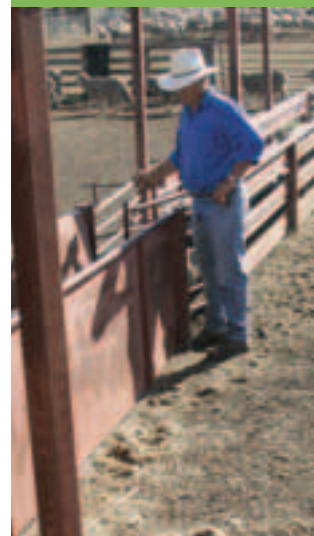
Recently the wool industry introduced an accreditation program that brings all contractors and woolgrowers who are mulesing to a new commitment on animal welfare, further lifting world's best practice. This provides another step for acceptance in the retailers' CSR.

Step 4

When pre-mulesing analgesia becomes available and is shown to be effective, then the retailers will need to accept this as world's best practice under their CSR. If this step totally eliminates the pain responses then this would be the final step. If alternatives to surgical mulesing are developed and provide a better welfare outcome than mulesing with pain relief, these would become the new default standard.

At all steps, the industry concurrently improves the genetics of the flock. If these sheep can be scientifically proven to be at lower risk of flystrike than a mulesed sheep, and the genetics and management programs don't introduce a detrimental outcome by causing more pain and suffering from increased crutching and handling, then this would be recognised as ideal.

This stepwise approach provides a logical approach to addressing the mulesing issue, and is a key principle of the Better Choices program.



Wool buyer Modiano embraces Better Choices

The largest wool processor in Europe, G. Modiano Ltd, has urged Australian growers to embrace pain relief and adopt the Better Choices program.

Based in London, G. Modiano Ltd buys more than 140,000 bales of the Australian wool clip each year. The company looks forward to the phase-out of mulesing by end 2010. In the meantime, it believes the industry should use all available means of reducing or eliminating pain during and after mulesing.

G. Modiano Ltd is prepared to lead the way in supporting Better Choices wool. "As supporters of the Better Choices project, we are ready to be the first to supply wool accredited by and fully traced back to this program," the company stated. "We therefore encourage growers to provide such wool in commercially viable quantities in order to be able to satisfy those retailers who demand it."



Modiano said: "We are grateful to Dr Meredith Sheil for the development of Tri-Solfen, which provides an interim solution for growers who need to mules and for retailers who remain faithful to wool."

Founded in 1957, G. Modiano Ltd is a global company supplying wool tops, greasy and scoured wool, with offices around the world including London, Bradford, Biella, Nejde, Istanbul, Melbourne, Sydney, Fremantle, Christchurch, Port Elizabeth and Shanghai. With wool processing plants in Italy and the Czech Republic, G. Modiano Ltd draws upon many years' experience of trading and processing wool.



Your local vet is



Better Choices® is a registered trademark of Bayer A.G. Leverkusen Germany.
875 Pacific Highway Pymble NSW 2073. BAY803007