



SHEEP WOOL

The international sheep wool industry is worth approximately USD 2.5 billion¹ and involves the production of over almost 2,000 million kilograms of wool each year produced by around 1.2 billion sheep². While the wool industry presents multiple animal welfare concerns, a key focus for many animal protection groups is the intensely painful and outdated animal mutilation called mulesing, a practice only carried out in Australia and currently a staggering 86% of wool from the country is from mulesed sheep³.

The high level of public support for **the mulesing campaign of FOUR PAWS**, the extent of media coverage of the issue, and the number of brands communicating their concern are all testimony to the level of public concern about the issue.

Over 300 brands have committed to banning mulesed wool, including:

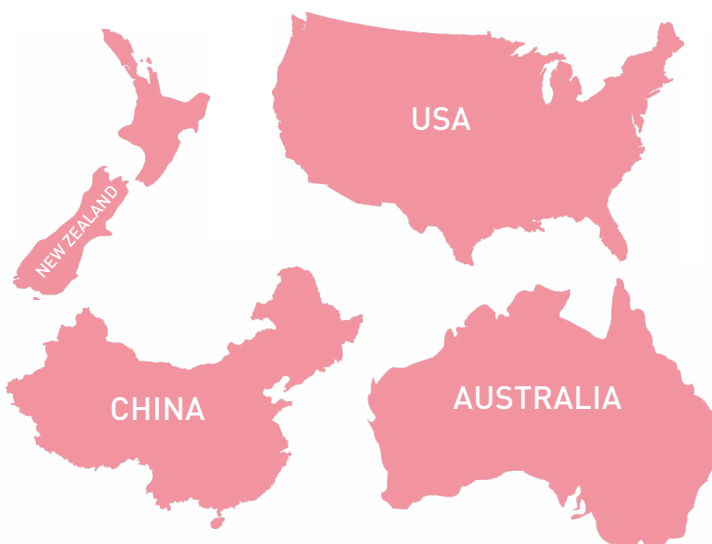
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| ADIDAS | MARA HOFFMANN |
| BURBERRY | MYER |
| CALVIN KLEIN | PUMA |
| COUNTRY ROAD GROUP | RALPH LAUREN |
| GUCCI | REFORMATION |
| H&M | TIMBERLAND |
| HUGO BOSS | TOMMY HILFINGER |
| KATHMANDU | ZALANDO |
| LEVIS | ZARA |

"Puma is not using wool from mulesed sheep; we are working at sourcing only from Responsible Wool Standard certified wool suppliers by 2025."

Puma animal welfare policy

INDUSTRY ACTION

LARGEST PRODUCERS⁴



LARGEST IMPORTERS⁵



WHAT BRANDS CAN DO



Refine

Utilise the best available animal welfare certification initiatives⁶ as outlined in **FOUR PAWS Animal Welfare Policy Guidelines in Textiles**, to exclude mulesed sheep wool and improve the welfare of sheep used in the wool industry. For brands who continue to use sheep wool, we actively encourage you to participate in multi-stakeholder initiatives to improve the level of overall animal welfare ensured within the certifications currently available.



Reduce

FOUR PAWS calls on all brands to set goals to reduce their use of animal derived materials. Whilst certification can help to ensure better animal welfare, any use of animals for commercial means brings inherent risks to their welfare.



Replace

The best way to protect animals from suffering in the fashion industry is to move to animal-free alternatives. Replace wool with alternatives such as certified organic cotton, recycled polyester, lyocell, hemp and modal blends^{7, 8}.



Be transparent

Brands must provide accurate information about their commitment to sheep welfare and communicate both their position on mulesing and how they intend to uphold their commitment. By communicating this information alongside what certification initiatives are used to help ensure animal welfare overall, brands can equip consumers to make an informed choice.

This information should form part of a robust and comprehensive overarching animal welfare policy, which is clearly communicated to suppliers.



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An international YouGov poll commissioned by FOUR PAWS in 2021 shows that over three quarters (77%) of adults globally agree that companies sourcing wool should phase out their use of mulesed sheep wool.

Animal welfare issues

- To obtain more wool from each sheep, many have been selectively bred to have excess skin. This makes them susceptible to a serious condition called flystrike. There are numerous pain-free ways to prevent flystrike, but some farmers continue to undertake the barbaric process of mulesing which involves lambs of 6-12 weeks of age being restrained while shears are used to remove large pieces of skin from their buttocks. This extremely traumatising mutilation is usually undertaken without adequate pain relief and anaesthesia (and no post-surgical treatment) and is currently performed on most Merino wool-producing sheep.
- Painful surgical procedures, such as castration and tail docking, are undertaken without adequate, or sometimes any, pain-relief⁹.
- Each year over one million Australian sheep¹⁰ are exported to the Middle East for slaughter. These animals experience a torturous journey, crammed together in soaring temperatures and in weeks of accumulated excrement on ships that are inherently high risk, simply to be brutally slaughtered without prior stunning once they arrive at their destination.

- Australia has one of the worst lamb mortality rates in the world. It is estimated that 10-15 million newborn lambs die annually from inadequate supervision and shelter, predation, birthing complications, diseases, and natural causes in Australia alone^{11, 12, 13}.
- Sheep also regularly experience the stressful process of shearing. For a prey animal, such as sheep, being forcefully restrained in a recumbent position is a traumatic experience. Workers move quickly to shear as many sheep as possible in the shortest period, and injuries, which receive no treatment, are common.
- Overall, many of the sheep's basic needs, including access to adequate food, water, veterinary care, the freedom to express natural behaviour and experience positive mental states can be neglected.

Environmental concerns

Environmental sustainability is increasingly important to consumers¹⁴, but wool, despite being a natural and renewable fibre, causes significant negative environmental impacts that include land deterioration, water contamination or overuse¹⁵, and the use of fossil fuel energy sources throughout its production. It is also a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions through methane production¹⁶. The environmental impacts of wool are calculated via the Sustainable Apparel Coalition's Higg Materials Sustainability Index, which shows overall wool performs poorly^{17, 18}.

FOUR PAWS calls on fashion companies to stop using mulesed wool; to reduce the amount of animal derived materials used overall in favour of sustainable animal-free alternatives; and to ensure that the animals which continue to be used within domesticated animal supply chains enjoy an excellent state of welfare.

For more information, review the [FOUR PAWS policy development guidelines](#).

“ *Together we can drive an animal-friendly fashion future, and create a world where people treat animals with respect, empathy and understanding.* ”



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