

When quality and integrity matter



Interim Grower Standard | 1.0

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The Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme (AWSS) Interim Standard | 1.0 replaces The SustainaWOOL Integrity Scheme Standard | 8.0 and is effective as of 17 July 2024. From this date, audits are conducted using the Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme Interim Standard | 1.0.

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You may submit feedback to the Standard at any time by contacting us at australianwoolsustainability.com.au or emailing awss@awex.com.au. Points of clarification may be incorporated into AWSS guidance documents prior to the next Standard version publication. More substantive feedback or suggested changes will be collected and reviewed as part of the next revision of the Standard.

Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our offices are located and across the many lands where our work takes us. We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation in Sydney and the Wurundjeri people Kulin Nation in Melbourne. We also pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands throughout Australia. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging, and we extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We honour their enduring connection to the land, waters, and culture, and we are committed to working towards a sustainable future together.

Document History

Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme Interim Grower Standard 1.0 July 2024

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Definitions

Certification of Compliance – The recognition granted by the Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme indicating that a property, identified by its Property Identification Code (PIC), and wool has met the specified standards and criteria of the scheme.

Animal Wellbeing – The principles, outcomes and considerations of the internationally recognised Five Domains of Animal Welfare (nutrition, environment, health, behaviour and mental state).

Appropriate Pain Relief – The use of pain relief products that are registered with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) for use in sheep for the relevant procedure.¹ These can be found on APVMA’s PubCRIS.

Breech Modification – Animal husbandry procedures that modify or remove the wool-producing layer of skin around the breech area of a sheep, such as mulesing, but excluding tail docking.

Certification – The process of verifying that the PIC and/or wool meets the Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme standards.

Certificate/s – Documents issued by the Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme. Certificates will be issued for; PIC Certification of Compliance and bale Certification of Compliance.

Expert Panel – An independent advisory group appointed to provide strategic guidance and expert advice on the development and implementation of the Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme Standards.

Operator – The person or persons in the business responsible for ensuring the Requirements of the Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme are met.

Outcomes – The intended results achieved by implementing the corresponding Requirements.

Pillars – The fundamental principles or focus areas of the Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme.

Registered Animal Health Products – Products must be registered in Australia by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).

Regulatory Requirements – The set of laws, regulations, standards, and guidelines established by the federal government, as well as state and territorial authorities, including local governments, to govern and control activities within various sectors.

Requirements – Practices which must be complied with to achieve Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme Certification.

ResponsiWOOL – Certification of the Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme, assigned to properties that adopt recognised Breech Modification practices and use Appropriate Pain Relief

SustainaWOOL – Certification of the Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme, assigned to properties that do not practice Breech Modification or for properties that have ceased Breech Modification practices.

¹ The Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme recognises that a combination therapy approach provides a greater level of pain relief, which could be considered “best practice”.

Purpose and Vision

The Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme (AWSS) connects Australian wool growers with supply chain stakeholders from around the world who share a common vision - of a wool industry that can celebrate and specify the highest standards of sustainability, integrity, and wool clip preparation, using technology to improve efficiency and enable traceability.

AWSS is a response to the global market's demand for sustainable, traceable, and high-quality wool – and responds in a way that reflects Australia's unique production systems, stringent regulatory standards, and industry best practices.

Developed for and owned by the Australian wool industry, through the Australian Wool Exchange Ltd (AWEX), AWSS provides credible, digital traceability inputs from farm to first stage processing. AWSS ensures on-farm practices have been adopted and can be verified for responsible environmental stewardship, wellbeing for sheep, care for people, customers, community and industry, as well as high-quality wool preparation standards.

Our Purpose:

To inspire and inform Australian wool growers on world-class sustainability practices and provide assurances to the supply chain on the integrity and quality of Australia's sustainably grown wool.

Wool growers, who's on-farm practices meet the Requirements and who maintain evidence of their farming and wool preparation practices, as outlined in the AWSS Interim Grower Standards, are eligible to have their wool certified under AWSS as either SustainaWOOL or ResponsiWOOL.



Introduction

About the Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme

The AWSS is an Australian-developed, voluntary Standard that certifies individual Australian properties as participating in and adhering to the Standards of the program.

Wool bales from Certified properties that meet the schemes quality clip preparation, traceability and integrity Standards are eligible for Certification in line with the Certification of the source property.

The key principles of AWSS are:

- i. To support traceability
 - AWSS Certification is at the Property Identification Code (PIC) level.
 - Use of industry data capture and identification tools WoolClip and eBale are mandatory.
- ii. To support inclusivity
 - Recognising the complexities of wool production in Australia, AWSS offers two types of certification: SustainaWOOL & ResponsiWOOL. These differ only regarding the use of Breech Modification for flystrike risk management.
- iii. To support integrity
 - In recognition that every property and farm management system is unique, AWSS only certifies individual properties at PIC level.
 - AWSS Standards are developed in consultation with the Expert Panel. AWSS Standards:
 - reflect Australia's diverse production systems, natural environments, climates and challenges,
 - comply with State and National Regulatory Requirements, and
 - industry best practices.
 - AWEX audits the Australian Auction Catalogue prior to sale, and Non-Auction wool on request, for compliance to AWSS Requirements.
- iv. To support quality Clip Preparation
 - Wool must be prepared by a registered Wool Classer and conform to the Code of Practice for the preparation of Australian wool clips. Wool Classer registration and pre-sale wool classing integrity audits are undertaken by AWEX.

Scheme Management

AWSS is managed by AWEX, an industry not-for-profit service provider.

Leveraging AWEX's decades-long expertise and independent verification of farming practices and wool clip preparation, and in developing bespoke wool industry technology innovations, AWSS is focused on uncompromising integrity from farm to fibre, empowered by technology for credibility and efficiency.

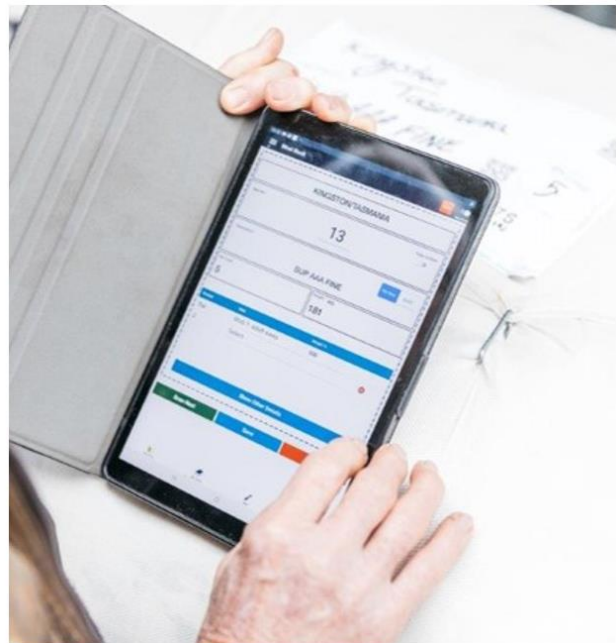


About the Australian Wool Exchange

Established in 1993, AWEX is a trusted service provider to the global wool supply chain, delivering services that strengthen, inform and increase confidence in the quality and integrity of Australian wool.

AWEX provides products and services that underpin the integrity of Australian wool and wool production practices including:

- Wool Classer Standards and Classer Registration
- WoolClip, Australia's Digital Wool Specification & On-Farm Data Capture Platform
- Wool Pack Standards & eBale Wool Packs
- The National Wool Declaration (NWD) Integrity Program (ISO 9001 certified)
- Wool Operations, Auction Management and Integrity Services
- Wool Market Intelligence
- The Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme (ISO 9001 certified)



Scope

AWSS certifies Australian wool producing properties against five Pillars, demonstrating:

- responsible stewardship of natural resources,
- health and wellbeing of sheep,
- care for people, customers and communities,
- vitality and resilience toward industry,
- quality clip preparation, data integrity and traceability.

The Pillars of AWSS



Auditing

Farm compliance:

AWSS-certified properties meet AWSS Standard Outcomes and Requirements supported by evidence, self-declarations and a mandatory annual desktop audit. On-farm audits are conducted by trained auditors. A minimum of the square root of Certified PIC's will be audited annually.

Quality compliance:

Registered Wool Classer stencils are maintained and validated by AWEX.

Every lot of wool offered for sale at Australian auctions, is subject to pre-sale audit by AWEX. Only those lots which meet AWEX 'P-certification' standards are eligible to be certified as SustainaWOOL (Scheme code 'SW') or ResponsiWOOL (Scheme code 'RE').

Wool offered for sale via Non-Auction methods is, on request, able to be AWSS certified. Only lots which meet AWEX 'P-certification' standards are eligible to be certified as SustainaWOOL or ResponsiWOOL.

Integrity compliance:

- Australian wool Auction Catalogues are audited weekly against AWSS integrity Requirements for lots listed as SustainaWOOL (Scheme code 'SW') or ResponsiWOOL (Scheme code 'RE'). The wool is from an AWSS certified property (PIC) at the time of preparation and sale,
- Wool clip Specification documentation must be completed in WoolClip,
- The National Wool Declaration must be completed in WoolClip,
- Wool must be packed in eBales with bales scanned into WoolClip.

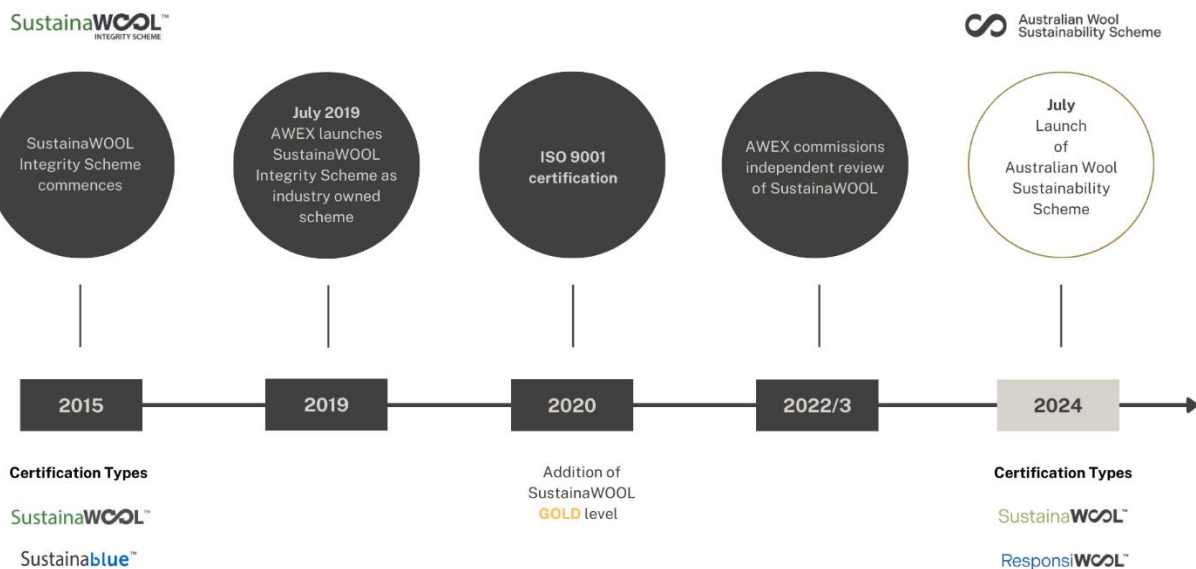
Background: an industry-led scheme

In 2023, AWEX recognised changes to the SustainaWOOL Integrity Scheme were required to meet the rapidly changing market expectations regarding sustainability, quality, and integrity. The findings of an independent review resulted in the decision for AWEX to transition the SustainaWOOL Integrity Scheme (SWIS) to AWSS from July 2024.

AWSS has been developed in consultation with the Australian wool industry and its customers to provide quality and integrity assurance of Australia's wool producing farms for the benefit of wool growers and supply chain stakeholders.

AWSS is a fit-for-purpose scheme for Australia, recognising the complexities of sheep wellbeing management and environmental sustainability.

Scheme Evolution



Certification types

The Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme offers two types of Certification: SustainaWOOL and ResponsiWOOL.

AWSS Standards apply to both SustainaWOOL and ResponsiWOOL.

The Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme is inclusive of different wool production systems in Australia, whilst importantly maintaining clear separation for customers for whom purchasing “non-mulesed” wool is important.

SustainaWOOL™

For properties that do not practice breech modification or for properties that have ceased breech modification practices.

ResponsiWOOL™

For properties that adopt recognised breech modification practices and use appropriate pain relief.

AWSS only recognises:

- mulesing that meets AA requirements under Australia’s National Wool Declaration (NWD), (OR)
- use of liquid nitrogen (LN) with the use of appropriate pain relief



Compliance

Compliance with the AWSS is determined through:

1. Successful application including Operator declarations, evidence and desktop audit.
2. Desktop catalogue compliance review of wool lots offered for sale as either SustainaWOOL (Scheme code 'SW') or ResponsiWOOL (Scheme code 'RE') against quality and integrity Requirements:
 - I. Current and correct property Certification
 - II. NWD completion
 - III. Wool clip documentation completed in WoolClip
 - IV. eBales scanned in WoolClip
 - V. Valid Wool Classer Stencil
 - VI. Wool prepared to the Code of Practice for the preparation of Australian wool clips.
3. On-farm inspection, with a minimum of the square root of Certified PIC's audited annually. Operators must:
 - Provide auditors with access to the farm, ensuring employees are available for interview, and all sheep are available for inspection.
 - Provide all necessary details to permit determination of compliance and commit to remedial actions where identified.

Following completion of an audit, the compliance level is determined, and Operators are advised of the outcome.

1. Compliant

- All items comply, accreditation maintained and certification requirements met.

2. Conditional Compliant

- Minor issues identified which must be addressed within 3 months.

3. Non-compliant Level 1

- Significant issues identified that must be addressed. Accreditation placed on hold and wool cannot be sold as SustainaWOOL or ResponsiWOOL.

4. Non-compliant Level 2

- Serious issues are identified. Accreditation is removed and wool cannot be sold as SustainaWOOL or ResponsiWOOL.

Pillar 1: Caring for our environment

INTRODUCTION

Wool is a natural, biodegradable, renewable fibre that can support environmental sustainability goals. Australian wool growing enterprises have unique opportunities to employ sustainable and regenerative practices that enhance biodiversity, improve soil health and fertility, and contribute to carbon sequestration.

It is critical that Operators monitor and measure the impact of livestock operations on their natural resources and use this to inform decisions on implementation of practices that aim to optimise the condition, and address degradation risks, of their natural capital.

AWSS requires certified growers to evidence practices maintaining or improving natural resources, acknowledging the importance of:

1. Individualised Ecosystem Management - Each property is unique and typically contains a diversity of landform, soils, and biodiversity.
2. Long-term Environmental Stewardship - Management emphasis should be on land stewardship, where the farm is managed in such a way as to leave it in a healthier, more productive, resilient, and biodiverse state for the next steward or generation.
3. Adoption of Sustainable Practices - There are established practices that support the ongoing sustainability of farming land – growers are encouraged to develop the knowledge and skills to implement these practices effectively and successfully

PRINCIPLE

Farm and enterprise management actively enhances soil health, biodiversity, and water quality, manages greenhouse gas emissions, and increases farm productivity and resilience, ensuring long-term sustainability and environmental stewardship.

REQUIREMENTS

OUTCOME	REQUIREMENT
1.1 Risks to the environment are identified and managed.	1.1.1 A comprehensive assessment of enterprise environmental risks for the property has been completed.
	1.1.2 A documented fire and flood risk management plan has been completed for the property.
1.2 Animal health and crop and pasture protection chemicals are stored, handled, applied and managed safely and responsibly and in accordance with legal requirements.	1.2.1 A relevant person is allocated responsibility for overseeing chemical use.
	1.2.2 The person responsible for overseeing chemical use has completed a Farm Chemical Users course within the past five years.
	1.2.3 An inventory of farm chemicals is maintained, including a minimum of: product name, quantity, batch number, and expiry or manufacture dates.
	1.2.4 All chemicals used for crop, pasture and livestock treatments are stored securely in accordance with label/manufacturers' directions.
	1.2.5 Fertiliser and pesticide application is done in accordance with APVMA registration and label/manufacturers' directions.
	1.2.6 All chemicals are disposed of as required by law, and in accordance with label/manufacturers' directions.
1.3 Soil health and functionality is enhanced through sustainable land management practices.	1.3.1 Soil testing is undertaken to identify any remedial actions required to manage soil health and fertility.
	1.3.2 Action is taken when necessary to manage soil health and fertility.
	1.3.3 Stocking rates are managed according to carrying capacity of grazing areas to achieve sustainable land use outcomes.
	1.3.4 Ground cover is maintained to prevent soil erosion, maintain soil carbon, and encourage pasture persistence and productivity.
1.4 Biodiverse ecological communities are measured and	1.4.1 All activities undertaken on the property comply with relevant state and National legislation regarding natural resource management.

monitored to ensure they are protected and enhanced.	1.4.2 Flora is monitored and managed to ensure diversity of species, and number of plants appropriate to the region, land type and enterprise.
	1.4.3 Potential adverse effects on ecological communities are assessed, avoided, remedied and mitigated.
	1.4.4 Invasive species are managed to minimise negative impacts on biodiversity, soil, native plants and animals, and productivity.
	1.4.5 Development activities, including clearing, should only proceed in accordance with local, State and National regulations, and with relevant legal consent from local and/or regional authorities.
1.5 Water resources are used responsibly and efficiently to maintain quality and availability.	1.5.1 Strategies are implemented that support healthy waterways and protect them from erosion.
	1.5.2 Strategies are implemented to optimise water use efficiency.
1.6 Net Green House Gas emissions are managed to minimise climate change impacts.	1.6.1 A carbon calculator is used to estimate net emissions from the property.
	1.6.2 Opportunities to minimise GHG emissions intensity per kilogram of clean wool on this property are assessed for implementation.

Pillar 2: Caring for our sheep

INTRODUCTION

The responsible operation of a profitable wool growing enterprise is built on a foundation of optimal sheep health, welfare, and management.

Planned and proactive management of sheep is required to address challenges from diverse farm and seasonal environments, disease, and predation, concurrently, while ensuring appropriate nutrition, shelter, handling to minimise injury and stress, and if need be, destruction is applied.

AWSS recognises the Five Domains Model for animal welfare assessment as an important framework when considering animal wellbeing.:

1. Nutrition.
2. Environment.
3. Health.
4. Behavioural interactions.
5. Mental state.

PRINCIPLE

Sheep benefit from optimal health and welfare throughout their lives, as evidenced by low incidence of disease, optimal growth rates, and overall wellbeing.

REQUIREMENTS

OUTCOME	REQUIREMENT
<p>2.1 Personnel have the skills and resources to plan and implement optimal health and welfare practices.</p>	<p>2.1.1 Personnel responsible for handling livestock have and apply the skills to work with animals according to National Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines and state animal welfare regulations.</p>
	<p>2.1.2 Shearing related injuries to sheep are recorded and treated appropriately.</p>
	<p>2.1.3 Animal treatments are administered by trained and competent personnel in accordance with label and/or written veterinary directions and relevant legal requirements.</p>
	<p>2.1.4 Livestock are excluded from any dangerous or potentially contaminated sites on the property.</p>
<p>2.2 Sheep experience low incidence of disease and mortality rates.</p>	<p>2.2.1 Health treatment programs are implemented to mitigate instances of disease and infection.</p>
	<p>2.2.2 Effective treatments for health issues are administered as early as possible.</p>
	<p>2.2.3 Disease and mortality records are maintained to enable trends to be tracked and analysed.</p>
	<p>2.2.4 Cases of unexpectedly high mortality rates or disease incidents are investigated so that preventative measures can be implemented where necessary.</p>
	<p>2.2.5 Declared pest animals that prey on livestock, are managed in accordance with National guidelines and state and territory regulations.</p>
<p>2.3 Sheep experience good health and wellbeing and exhibit normal behaviour due to the adoption of evidence-based health and welfare practices.</p>	<p>2.3.1 Sheep are provided with food and water of a quality and quantity to meet their physiological needs and maintain good health.</p>
	<p>2.3.2 Sheep are provided with shade and shelter against weather, such as trees.</p>
	<p>2.3.3 Sheep are free to exhibit normal, healthy behaviours.</p>
	<p>2.3.4 Containment feeding facilities, where needed, are designed, constructed, and competently operated in</p>

	accordance with the guidelines contained in the Australian Animal Welfare Standards.
	2.3.5 Sheep must not be shedded or individually penned for the purposes of specialist fine wool production.
	2.3.6 Sheep are not subject to long-term close confinement (held in a race or single pen).
	2.3.7 Personnel are competent in breeding ewe management and sheep body condition score assessments to inform practices to optimise sheep health and wellbeing.
	2.3.8 Practices are implemented to optimise reproductive efficiency, minimise reproductive losses, and ewe, lamb and weaner mortality.
	2.3.9 Working dogs are appropriately trained, controlled, muzzled where necessary, and well-treated according to National Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines and state and territory animal welfare regulations.
	2.3.10 Breech Modification practices are only utilised for the purpose of managing flystrike risk.
	2.3.11 All Breech Modification practices to reduce fly strike risk, if applied, are done according to relevant National Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines and state and territory animal welfare regulations.
	2.3.12 All Breech Modification, if applied, must be accompanied by Appropriate Pain Relief to minimise pain and distress.
	2.3.13 Tail docking and castration is conducted by 12 weeks (about 3 months) of age.
	2.3.14 Tail docking, when carried out, leaves the appropriate length of tail to ensure residual tail length when healed is sufficient to cover the vulva in ewe lambs (at the 3rd to 4th palpable joint, or the tail-side ends of the caudal folds, wethers should be docked to the same length).
	2.3.15 Castration occurs using a rubber ring, unless on veterinary advice.
	2.3.16 Dehorning, disbudding and substantial horn trimming is conducted by competent operators according to National

	<p>Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines and relevant state and territory animal welfare regulations for animal welfare purposes only.</p>
	<p>2.3.17 Ear marking or branding is only done for identification purposes in accordance with current legislation and best practices.</p>
<p>2.4 Sheep experience minimal stress and no undue suffering during handling, transport and destruction.</p>	<p>2.4.1 Livestock destruction is carried out in such a way that it causes rapid loss of consciousness and minimises pain and distress to the animal.</p>
	<p>2.4.2 All reasonable efforts are made to minimise stress and the risk of injury during handling and transport.</p>
	<p>2.4.3 Transport service providers are only selected where they meet applicable transport safety standards for the loading, unloading and transport of stock.</p>
	<p>2.4.4 Ramps and forcing pens used for livestock transportation are compliant with AS 5340:2020 Livestock loading/unloading ramps and forcing pens.</p>

Pillar 3: Caring for our people and our community

INTRODUCTION

People, and the rural and regional communities in which they work and live, underpin the continued development and success of the Australian wool industry.

AWSS advocates the nurturing of strong farming-family, and employer–employee relationships built on mutual trust and respect, enabling succession, and worker retention and attraction. These bonds have a positive impact on local communities through social integration and economic activity.

The provision of adequate facilities and amenities for workers and their families on-farm, and positive psychosocial benefits, including workplace satisfaction, and mental and physical safety, are important pillars on which this mutual respect can be built.

Many wool growing enterprises are family run, and it is important to support and enable the complexities of these businesses, including having conversations around individual and business goals, and developing robust succession plans.

The Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme recognises the importance for Operators to:

1. Have a duty of care to members of the business to balance responsibilities and support their individual development.
2. Commit to providing a safe and healthy workplace.
3. Foster a supportive community within the workplace where all people are respected and have rewarding work experiences.
4. Pursue continuous improvement and adaptability within the business.

PRINCIPLE

The Operator supports the health, wellbeing, professional development, and diversity of the members of their business.

REQUIREMENTS

OUTCOME	REQUIREMENT
<p>3.1 Personnel experience a safe workplace, and their physical health and mental well-being are actively supported</p>	3.1.1 Compliance with all relevant State and National Work Health & Safety (WH&S) is maintained.
	3.1.2 A WH&S plan is implemented and reviewed.
	3.1.3 All personnel receive an induction for all farm sites.
	3.1.4 The business has personnel that are identifiable first aid officers that have completed formal first aid training.
	3.1.5 All personnel can access regularly maintained first aid resources.
	3.1.6 Staff are supported to access physical and mental healthcare services, initiatives and programs.
	3.1.7 Facilities, infrastructure, equipment and machinery are regularly inspected and maintained to ensure they are safe for people and animals.
<p>3.2 Personnel are appropriately trained and are supported to pursue opportunities to upskill and achieve individual goals.</p>	3.2.1 Personnel are competent in the skills required for them to fulfill their responsibilities.
	3.2.2 Personnel are provided with training in how to operate on-farm machinery and equipment.
	3.2.3 Personnel are provided with opportunities for work-related development and hands-on experience.
	3.2.4 Annual performance reviews are undertaken with all staff.
	3.2.5 Relevant personnel are involved in meetings to discuss strategic business goals and alignment of personal goals.
<p>3.3 The business complies with all relevant State and National employment laws, including those preventing modern slavery, and supports a diverse workplace.</p>	3.3.1 Fair wage laws and awards are complied with.
	3.3.2 Staff are provided with the opportunity to take leave and holidays in accordance with employment laws and relevant awards as a minimum.
	3.3.3 Relevant National and state and territory anti-discrimination laws and regulations are complied with.

	3.3.4 Workplace diversity is valued, respected, and actively supported.
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Pillar 4: Caring for our industry

INTRODUCTION

The Australian wool industry is a significant contributor to the Australian economy. Australian wool growers are recognised globally for their strategic and innovative thinking, and adoption of technology and best practice.

AWSS recognises the future of the industry relies not only on environmental stewardship but also on wool growers:

- Cultivating and transferring skills and knowledge within the industry.
- Participating in industry programs and initiatives.
- Prioritising biosecurity prevention and response activities.
- Adhering to a Code of Conduct.

By prioritising the growth, retention and development of human capital, wool growers can achieve significant productivity, efficiency and profitability gains. By doing so, the industry can safeguard its expertise, adapt to emerging challenges, and capitalise on new opportunities.

Wool growers are encouraged to adopt practices that not only enhance their own capabilities but also contribute to the broader industry's knowledge base. By engaging in industry programs, including research and development initiatives, extension programs, and advocacy efforts, growers can contribute to the collective advancement of the industry, fostering innovation and production improvements.

Growers are urged to implement robust biosecurity measures on their properties and take part in emergency animal disease prevention and response initiatives to safeguard the broader agricultural industries and the public.

AWSS members must adhere to a Code of Conduct to represent and advocate for the industry with integrity, reinforcing trust and credibility with stakeholders and consumers.

PRINCIPLE

The business supports the sustainability of the Australian wool industry through encouraging the cultivation of skills and knowledge, and engaging in activities that progress and protect the industry's productivity and integrity.

REQUIREMENTS

OUTCOME	REQUIREMENT
4.1 Human capital is supported and managed efficiently.	4.1.1 Relevant personnel share their knowledge and skills within the business and broader industry.
	4.1.2 Relevant personnel are provided the opportunity to engage in training and mentorship initiatives.
4.2 Industry productivity is improved through collective advancement in research and innovation, and its extension to wool growers.	4.2.1 Research and development into on-farm practices and innovations that improve operations and productivity are assessed for practical implementation.
	4.2.2 Relevant personnel engage in industry relevant extension and adoption activities to apply practical outcomes from research, development and innovations on-farm.
	4.2.3 Relevant personnel engage with local, state or national industry groups, for example: grower groups, state farming organisations, Landcare or natural resource management groups, or peak industry bodies to advocate for industry priorities.
4.3 Biosecurity activities are prioritised.	4.3.1 State and National biosecurity legislation and regulations are complied with.
	4.3.2 The property has a documented biosecurity plan that addresses; managing and recording movement of stock, people equipment and vehicles entering the property risk of introducing and/or spreading infectious diseases, and prevention and control of animal diseases on farm.
	4.3.3 On-farm biosecurity activities are prioritised to prevent endemic and emergency animal disease incursions.
	4.3.4 Personnel engage with endemic animal disease activities, and comply with local, state and National emergency animal disease prevention and response activities.
4.4 Operators practice ethical behaviour, protecting the integrity and reputation of the wool industry.	4.4.1 The AWSS Code of Conduct (See Appendix 1) is adhered to.

Pillar 5: Clip preparation and integrity

INTRODUCTION

Just as a sustainable stewardship of natural resources seeks to avoid harm and maximise productive potential, the same applies to wool produced on farms – including consideration of the needs of buyers and processors in the wool supply chain.

Poor clip preparation practices can limit processing potential of wool lots, increase risks to purchasers, and ultimately reduce buyer competition and price realisation for wool.

The Code of Practice for the preparation of Australian Wool Clips (COP) is an Australian industry document that describes the recommended practices and standards to which wool should be prepared. The COP aspires to three objectives:

1. To prepare uniform, consistent, reliable, predictable, low risk lines of wool suitable for the diverse needs of wool processing; and thus, maximise competition,
2. To present a product free of contamination; that is
3. Correctly documented, described and packaged.

Traceability is also of increasing importance. Using on-farm digital data capture tools allows traceability to be more efficient, reliable, and undertaken with speed from source of origin.

For these reasons, quality clip preparation standards and digitally enabled traceability are required for all involved in AWSS, meeting the collective responsibility to support confidence in the quality and integrity of Australian wool.

PRINCIPLE

Adopting high quality clip preparation and on-farm integrity tools increases buyer confidence, enhancing competition and market access.

REQUIREMENTS

OUTCOME	REQUIREMENT
<p>5.1 Wool is prepared to the Code of Practice for the preparation of Australian wool clips.</p>	<p>5.1.1 Dark and medullated fiber risk (DMFR) for wool is mitigated through crutching Merino sheep within three months prior to shearing.</p>
	<p>5.1.2 An inspection of the shearing shed has been completed to ensure the shed meets the wool shed preparation requirements in the Code of Practice for the preparation of Australian wool clips, with adequate amenities, lighting and ventilation, and well-maintained shearing machinery.</p>
	<p>5.1.3 Contamination of wool is mitigated by ensuring prior to shearing the shearing shed has been inspected, and procedures for avoiding wool contamination are communicated to wool harvesting personnel.</p>
	<p>5.1.4 Prior to shearing, responsibilities for preparing wool are communicated to wool handling personnel.</p>
	<p>5.1.5 Shearers have been made aware of their responsibilities to support quality clip preparation including avoiding second cuts and identifying contamination.</p>
	<p>5.1.6 Stock are taken off feed and water prior to shearing, according to industry standards for the class of stock and what has been agreed between the Operator and contractor.</p>
	<p>5.1.7 Where Grower Declaration is “Yes” on the National Wool Declaration for ‘contact with shedding breeds’, the wool is correctly prepared and described.</p>
	<p>5.1.8 Bales/lines meeting AWSS Certification are prepared by a registered Wool Classer according to the Code of Practice for the preparation of Australian wool clips.</p>
	<p>5.1.9 Where sheep marking substances have been used, they have been used according to the manufacturer’s instructions, declared in WoolClip, and when identified during wool classing, are removed.</p>
	<p>5.1.10 All greasy wool offered for sale must be packaged in unused nylon eBales which comply with AWEX Standards.</p>

<p>5.2 Key provenance and traceability data has been declared on-farm using industry digital data capture tools.</p>	<p>5.2.1 The property where the livestock are kept has a registered Property Identification Code (PIC).</p>
	<p>5.2.2 All livestock are correctly identified with a National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) approved identification tag aligned with relevant State and National regulations.</p>
	<p>5.2.3 All livestock movements on to the PIC are recorded in the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) and are accompanied by National Vendor Declarations (NVDs).</p>
	<p>5.2.4 All livestock consigned off the PIC are accompanied by an National Vendor Declaration (NVD).</p>
	<p>5.2.5 Wool harvesting occurs outside of any withholding periods applicable to animal health treatments.</p>
	<p>5.2.6 All fodder and supplements introduced onto the property are documented and accompanied by a Commodity Vendor Declaration.</p>
	<p>5.2.7 The Operator holds a WoolClip Farm Account, where business and PIC information is entered.</p>
	<p>5.2.8 The National Wood Declaration (NWD) is completed for all mobs/wool from the PIC offered for sale in WoolClip.</p>
	<p>5.2.9 A digital Wool Book is kept as a record of all bales for every shearing.</p>
	<p>5.2.10 eBale QR codes are scanned into WoolClip to record the eBale ID.</p>
	<p>5.2.11 All wool bales are marked according to the Code of Practice for Wool Classing, including having labels completed with all required information, classed bales are stamped with Wool Classer ID, and all bale label information, including the eBID (QR Code), is captured via WoolClip on farm.</p>

Glossary of Terms

Auction Catalogue – A public sale catalogue produced for the selling of wool at auction containing information of the wool offered for sale.

Animal Welfare - the physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies.²

Bale – A standardised, compressed bundle of greasy wool, packed in a Wool Pack, usually weighing between 120 to 204 kilograms.

Body Condition Score (BCS) – A numerical system used to assess the fat and muscle reserves of sheep, crucial for evaluating their health, welfare, and productivity. In Australian sheep, the BCS typically ranges from 1 (emaciated) to 5 (obese), with scores based on palpation and visual inspection of key areas such as the spine, ribs and loin. Maintaining an appropriate BCS is essential for optimal reproductive performance, wool production and overall well-being of the sheep.

Castration – The removal or disruption of the function of the testes by use of a rubber ring or excision.

Clip Preparation – Preparing greasy wool for sale, by a registered Wool Classer or Classing House to the standards described in the Code of Practice for the preparation of Australian wool clips.

Code of Practice for the preparation of Australian wool clips (COP) – maintained and issued by the Australian Wool Exchange Limited, the COP provides technical explanations for wool classing concepts and includes essential and recommended practices.

Contact with Shedding Breeds – Mated to or run in the same paddock as shedding sheep / lambs or their crosses.

Crutching – the practice of removing wool from the hindquarters and tail of sheep.

eBale – Wool packs with embedded RFID/QR code technology which allocate a unique identification number to each wool pack. eBale IDs are managed by the Australian Wool Exchange Limited.

Flystrike – Flystrike is caused by fly larvae (maggots) being laid on the sheep and infesting and feeding on tissue. Left untreated, flystrike typically results in a slow, painful death to the animal. The Australian blowfly (*Lucilia Cuprina*) is responsible for initiating over 90% of all flystrike.

Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) – LPA is the on-farm assurance program that underpins market access for Australian red meat. LPA National Vendor Declarations (NVDs) provide evidence of livestock history and on-farm practices when transferring livestock through the value chain. Each time livestock is moved off a PIC they must be accompanied by some form of movement documentation, linked to the unique identity of the property (see Property Identification Code)

² Terrestrial Animal Health Code, 2024, World Organization for Animal Health, Chapter 7.1 Introduction to the recommendations for animal welfare.

Mulesing – The removal of skin from the breech and/or tail of a sheep using mulesing shears.³ Mulesing is a once-for-life procedure used to provide protection against breech flystrike risk.

National Wool Declaration (NWD) – A voluntary Australian industry declaration that allows Owners/Managers to provide information on the Mulesing Status and Dark and Medullated Fibre Risk (DMFR) of their mobs of sheep and lines of wool. The NWD is supported by the NWD Integrity Program managed by AWEX, which includes desktop and on-farm audits of declarations.

Non-auction wool – Wool traded through non-auction methods for example, private treaty, direct selling, physical forwards, forward basis contracts and online selling.

P-certificate – assigned to Australian wool from an individual grower comprising bales from one clip that is classed on farm by a registered Wool Classer (or in store by a registered Classing House), that meets or exceeds the preparation principles of the Code of Practice for the preparation of Australian wool clips.

Property Identification Code (PIC) – A Property Identification Code (PIC) is an eight-character code allocated by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) or an equivalent authority in each state or territory to identify a livestock-producing property. Producers must have a PIC to move livestock on and off a property.

Registered Wool Classer – A person who has qualified as a Wool Classer and is registered with the Australian Wool Exchange Limited.

Scheme Code – A two to four letter code that identifies wool belonging to a Quality Assurance or Membership Scheme in Australian Auction Catalogues.

Shedding Breeds – Sheep breeds that shed highly medullated fibre. See Sheep Breeds Compendium App for a full list.

Tail Docking – A husbandry practice involving the removal of a portion of a sheep's tail to improve hygiene and prevent flystrike.

Wool Classing – grading and preparing greasy wool to meet the diverse needs of processors including uniform and predictable lines of wool, that are free of contamination, correctly described and packaged, and accurately documented.

Wool pack – Specifically designed packaging made of nylon to pack and transport wool.

³ According to the Animal Health Australia Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep

Appendix 1

Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme Code of Conduct

Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme (AWSS) Certification requires producers to adhere to a high standard of ethical, environmental, and social practices. This Code of Conduct outlines the expectations and measurable actions that individual producers must follow to achieve and maintain Certification. Adherence to this code ensures the sustainability, quality, and integrity of the wool production industry.

High-Level Code of Conduct

- i. Ethical Business Practices
Expectation: Conduct all business operations with honesty, integrity, and transparency.
- ii. Environmental Stewardship
Expectation: Implement and maintain practices that protect and enhance the environment.
- iii. Animal Welfare
Expectation: Ensure the whole-of-life wellbeing of all animals under care.
- iv. Worker Welfare and Community Engagement
Expectation: Promote the physical and mental well-being of workers and contribute to the local community.
- v. Biosecurity and Farm Management
Expectation: Maintain high standards of biosecurity and farm management to protect livestock, the public and the environment.
- vi. Continuous Improvement and Innovation
Expectation: Commit to continuous improvement and adopt innovative practices to enhance sustainability and productivity.
- vii. Reputation of Industry
Expectation: Ensure all stakeholder interactions are conducted ethically and respectfully.

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The AWSS recognises and is aligned to Australian industry and sector programs, including the Australian Sheep Sustainability Framework, Australian Agricultural Sustainability Framework and industry programs such as Livestock Production Assurance (LPA), the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS), and National Wool Declaration (NWD).

An independent Expert Panel has been created that brings a broad expertise, from organisations across Australia, and includes producers, consultants and researchers.

This Panel has been appointed to provide ongoing guidance and advice on the latest in sustainability science and principles, to guide AWSS standards and evidence metrics, and AWEX would like to make special acknowledgement of their ongoing contributions.



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