

**CODE OF PRACTICE**

**FOR THE WELFARE OF SHEEP**

**HOUSED FOR WOOL PRODUCTION**

**MAY 2008**

## **CONTENTS**

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Introduction	3
Scope	3
Development Process	3
Selection of Sheep	4
Food and Water	4
Environment	5
Pen Density	6
Management Practices	6
Biosecurity	6
Endorsement	7

## **Introduction**

The *Code of Practice for the Welfare of Sheep Housed for Wool Production* is a voluntary code that aims to:

- specify the minimum standards of management and husbandry required to maintain the welfare of sheep housed for wool production (text within the boxed area of each section of the code)
- provide industry guidelines for livestock producers and handlers, beyond the minimum standards, to assist them to minimise threats and risks to the welfare of sheep housed for wool production (text outside the boxed area in each section of the code)
- inform all those responsible for the care and management of sheep housed for wool production about their obligations.

## **Scope**

The standards and guidelines are applicable to all sheep housed for wool production, which includes sheep housed for ultra fine wool production and sheep housed in preparation for sale and show.

The housing of sheep for ultra fine wool production began in the early 1970s when it was noticed that animals kept in sheds for drought-feeding produced an extremely high quality fibre, free from many wool faults found in grazing sheep.

There are approximately 40 ultra fine wool housing systems in Australia, which are concentrated in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland involving an estimated 25 000 sheep.

Ultra fine merino wool is a luxury fibre used in the manufacture of high quality fashion garments.

## **Development Process**

This document was developed in consultation with key industry bodies including WoolProducers Australia, Sharlea Society of Australia, Australian Superfine Wool Growers Association, Australian Association of Stud Merino Breeders, state farmer organisations and housed sheep producers.

The *Code of Practice for the Welfare of Sheep Housed for Wool Production* commenced 1 May 2008.

## 1 Selection of Sheep

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| 1.1 | Sheep that do not adapt to the housing environment within a reasonable period of time must be removed. |
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- 1.2 Sheep should be closely monitored when introduced into the shed to ensure they are eating and have adapted to the diet.
- 1.3 Special attention should be given to shy feeders. Management options to accommodate shy feeders may include reducing pen density, sheep composition within pens and trough design.

## 2 Food and Water

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| 2.1 | Sheep must be provided with daily access to feed that maintains their health and meets their physiological requirements. |
| 2.2 | Sheep must be provided with an appropriate level of roughage.  |
| 2.3 | Sheep must have unlimited access to fresh drinking water in appropriately positioned drinking facilities.                |
- 2.4 Sheep should be provided with coarse fibre - for example straw - and fed in a way that stimulates the need for sheep to use their oral organs and browse. This has been found to reduce the incidence of wool biting.
- 2.5 When sheep are housed in multiple pens, feeding systems should be designed to reduce bullying and encourage shy feeders. There are a number of ways to achieve this, including:
- increasing the length of troughs; and,
  - place vertical bars (polled sheep only) on the feeding trough to stop sheep standing sideways, thereby reducing the number of sheep that can feed at one time.
- 2.6 If sheep are to be fed a high grain diet within the housing system, a minimum of fourteen days is needed for the rumen to adapt to the new ration. Grain and/or pellets should be slowly introduced and fed with roughage to reduce the likelihood of sheep experiencing digestive upsets such as grain poisoning.
- 2.7 Drinking equipment should be inspected daily to ensure its correct operation and that pipes, taps and ball valves are not blocked.
- 2.8 Open water troughs should be checked daily and cleaned regularly to prevent faecal contamination and build up of feed/dust material.

### 3 Environment

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| 3.1 | Housing systems must be designed to ensure effective ventilation, preventing the accumulation of harmful concentrations of gases.  |
| 3.2 | Faeces and urine must not be permitted to accumulate to the stage where there is no clean area and dry area for sheep to lie down. |
| 3.3 | Lighting must be adequate to allow inspection of all sheep.  |
| 3.4 | All housing must have fire prevention measures in place.   |
| 3.5 | An appropriate emergency exit plan must be in place for both humans and animals.   |
- 3.6 Effective ventilation will assist in the removal of excessive heat, moisture, carbon dioxide, dust, noxious gases and infectious organisms from the environment.
- 3.7 Sheep within the housing system should be protected from feral and wild animals.
- 3.8 Shed flooring should be designed and maintained in a way that minimises slipping and the risk of injury.
- 3.9 Shed flooring should be designed and maintained in a way that reduces the build up of manure.
- 3.10 Natural or artificial light should be made available to all sheep for a minimum of 9 hours per day.
- 3.11 Sheep housing should not be subject to flooding and protected from other adverse weather conditions.

## 4 Pen Design

4.1	Minimum space allowances for intensively housed sheep are:												
	<table><thead><tr><th>Pen</th><th>Space allowance (m<sup>2</sup>/head)</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Single</td><td>0.9</td></tr><tr><td>Multiple &lt; 8</td><td>0.9</td></tr><tr><td>8-15</td><td>0.8</td></tr><tr><td>16-30</td><td>0.6</td></tr><tr><td>31 or more</td><td>0.5</td></tr></tbody></table>	Pen	Space allowance (m <sup>2</sup> /head)	Single	0.9	Multiple < 8	0.9	8-15	0.8	16-30	0.6	31 or more	0.5
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4.2	Sheep housed in single pens must be able to see, hear, smell and touch neighbouring sheep.												
4.3	Where sheep are housed in single pens solid paneling must not be used between adjacent pens.												

- 4.4 Where sheep are housed in single pens paneling should be designed to maximise visual, aural, olfactory and physical contact with neighboring sheep.

## 5 Management Practices

5.1	Sheep must be inspected at least once per day.
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5.2 All sheep should be treated for internal and external parasites if required before entering the housing system.

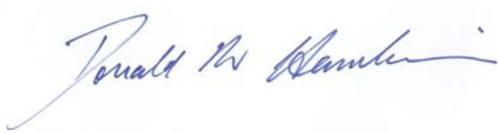
5.3 All sheep should be vaccinated against Clostridial diseases and Caseous Lymphadenitis before entering the housing system and given an annual booster thereafter.

5.4 Foot paring should be undertaken as necessary.

## 6 Biosecurity

- 6.1 When purchasing livestock, producers should require vendors supply a sheep health statement.
- 6.2 All new sheep being introduced into the housing system should be quarantined for at least seven days to ensure they are free of any condition that could spread to other sheep within the housing system.
- 6.3 Where possible, limit unnecessary movement of people into the housing system.
- 6.4 All stock feed should be free of contamination from livestock, vermin, wild birds, feral and domestic animals.
- 6.5 Sheep within the housing system should be protected from feral and wild animals to reduce the risk of the spread of disease.
- 6.6 A disease risk management plan should be in place to prevent the introduction of pests and diseases into the housing environment.

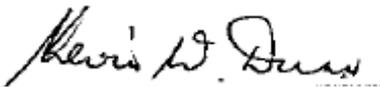
This *Code of Practice for the Welfare of Sheep Housed for Wool Production* is endorsed by the following key organisations representing the Australian wool industry.



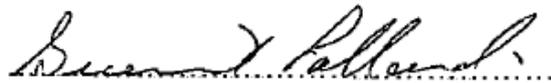
Don Hamblin  
President  
WoolProducers Australia



Will Roberts  
President  
Australian Association of Stud Merino  
Breeders



Kevin Dunn  
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Australian Superfine Wool Growers  
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Bruce Pollard  
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