

National Wool Declaration Integrity Program



we know wool



Q&A

Questions&Answers

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Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry**

This project is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry under its Promoting Australian Produce program

1. What is the National Wool Declaration?

The National Wool Declaration (NWD) was introduced in 2008 to provide information to the market in response to inquiry from the users and buyers of Australian wool. The NWD is a declaration from the woolgrower about information on mulesing status and dark and medullated fibre risk, which cannot be objectively measured. The information obtained from the NWD is transferrable down the pipeline and can be used by buyers of Australian wool in their purchasing decisions and provide market signals to woolgrowers.

2. Why do I have to sign the NWD?

The signature of the Owner or Manager is critical in having a valid declaration as they are responsible for the information provided. Shearers, woolclassers or selling agents cannot sign on behalf of the Owner/Manager.

3. Why inspect properties?

The NWD Integrity Program (NWD-IP) is a critical factor in providing confidence to buyers, processors and retailers in the declared information provided by the NWD.

4. Who is conducting the NWD-IP?

The Australian Wool Exchange (AWEX). AWEX is an independent, not-for-profit company which develops standards, quality assurance programs, market reports and information systems on behalf of the Australian industry.

5. What does the NWD-IP involve?

The NWD-IP determines the accuracy of declarations through cross-checking documentation (i.e. NWD, Classer's Specification and sale catalogue data), verifying the purchase of Pain Relief, and on farm Inspections of sheep to confirm mulesing status.

6. When is the NWD-IP conducted?

Desktop audits are conducted weekly with approximately 1000 conducted per year. In addition, 100 declarations of Pain Relief are verified. Commencing in September 2010, on farm inspections of declarations for Non Mulesed and Ceased Mulesed are being undertaken on 225 properties each year.

Selection for an on farm inspection

7. Why am I being inspected?

By completing and signing the NWD you agree to participate in the NWD-IP and therefore may be subject to a desk top audit or an on farm inspection.

8. How did I get selected for an inspection?

The properties included in the NWD-IP are selected at random. All declarations of Non Mulesed or Ceased Mulesed are eligible for on farm inspection. This process means that properties of any size and in any location around Australia may be inspected.

9. When will I be inspected again?

As selection is at random, all properties will be 'eligible for selection' each year regardless of previous inspection results.

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10. Who is paying for the Inspections?

The inspections are funded by AWEX (with co-funding provided by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, under its Promoting Australian Produce program, until 30 April 2011).

Contact prior to an on farm inspection

11. Who are the AWEX inspectors?

The AWEX inspectors are regionally based and all have an agricultural background with a strong emphasis on sheep and wool production. They understand the various farm management issues that can impact on when an inspection may or may not be possible.

12. When is the initial contact made with the Owner/Manager?

The inspector will telephone each Owner/Manager a few weeks before a visit to arrange a suitable date and time. Occasionally, a call may be made at short notice; this may happen when a property is selected in an area where a number of inspections are being carried out.

Once the arrangements are in place, the Owner/Manager will receive a letter from AWEX that details the Inspection appointment and provides a copy of the relevant NWD and Classer's Specification and a brochure explaining the NWD-IP.

13. What happens if the sheep have been sold?

In these circumstances, the Inspector will ask for proof for sale of these sheep (i.e. Account sale or National Vendor Declaration). If requested, a copy of this evidence must be sent to AWEX by post, fax or email.

On farm inspection process

14. Why is a signature required to say that the mob is the one declared on the NWD?

All audit processes require checks and balances to ensure that the data collected is true and correct. This simple step signifies to the Inspector that the Owner/Manager is willing to go through the Inspection process.

15. What is required to prepare the sheep for inspection?

The nominated mob(s) needs to be brought to sheep yards with a race so that the inspection can be conducted efficiently. For mobs greater than 200, 200 sheep will be examined; while for mobs less than 200, the entire mob will be examined.

16. What are you looking for during the inspection?

The inspectors closely examine the sheep for any distinctive scars on the breech and/or the tail region of a sheep that result from mulesing. This unique scarring can be differentiated from shearing cuts or other breech modification techniques.

17. What happens if my declaration is incorrect?

There can be a number of reasons why a declaration might be wrong or incorrect. This can be anything from an honest mistake, a mistake in understanding the question(s) asked, or a deliberate and misleading error. In all circumstances, the buyer will be notified by AWEX as they have purchased the wool with the understanding that the declaration was correct.

18. How long will an inspection take?

The inspection takes from 1 to 2 hours, depending on the length of the wool and the cleanliness of the sheep. Time is also available for the Owner/Manager to discuss the NWD and the integrity program with the inspector.

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Outcomes from an on farm inspection

19. Does that Owner/Manager get to see a report on the inspection?

Yes, after completing the inspection, the inspector will write a report. At this time, the Owner/Manager is able discuss any aspect of these observations and add comment for inclusion in the report. Inspectors then send their inspection report to AWEX. Based on the written observations, AWEX sends a formal report back to the Owner/Manager listing the outcomes of the inspection in terms of compliance.

20. Is the result of the inspection going to be made public?

When an inspection is compliant (the Inspection of the sheep found that their mulesing status was consistent with the declaration), the information recorded during an inspection and the formal report will be confidential between AWEX and the Owner/Manager.

The list of properties to be inspected is confidential. The inspectors will not report on the outcomes of any inspection to other growers, classers, brokers etc.

However, in cases of Non Compliance, both the broker and the buyer(s) of the wool may be informed.

21. Will I be fined if my sheep are Non Compliant?

No fines will be applied by AWEX to the outcomes of an inspection. AWEX will keep all records in the strictest confidence.

22. What traceability is there after auction/sale?

The NWD information is provided on a lot-by-lot basis in the catalogue and is electronically transferred to the buyer of each lot after the sale. A number of companies who purchase wool from non mulesed sheep either request a copy of the NWD for the wool they have bought or ask AWEX to provide a certificate of inspection.

General queries related to flystrike

23. Where can I get the latest up-to-date information on all aspects of flystrike and flystrike prevention?

State Departments of Agriculture or Primary Industries have their own websites; for example:

- www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/371631/Update-on-the-Australian-Wool-Industrys-Breech-Flystrike-Prevention-Program.pdf

A wide range of information can also be found at the Sheep CRC website:

- www.flyboss.org.au