

Mulesing was introduced to protect Australia's merino flocks from blowfly strike and is currently accepted under the laws of Australia's states and territories. It is performed consistent with the *Model code of practice for the welfare of animals—sheep*, which outlines required animal welfare practices to ensure animals are treated humanely and responsibly. Until suitable alternatives are found, mulesing remains an effective procedure for providing lifelong protection from flystrike to merino sheep.

Flystrike management is the highest research and development (R&D) priority of Australian Wool Innovation Limited (AWI), the industry-owned R&D organisation. Since 2005, AWI has directed more than \$25 million of industry and Australian Government money to research alternatives to mulesing. Progress made to date by AWI and other organisations includes:

- inclusion of breech wrinkle in the Australian Sheep Breeding Values, allowing woolgrowers to select bare-breeched breeding stock and fast-track their progress to reduce breech wrinkle in their flocks
- use of pain relief products where mulesing is still the best form of flystrike prevention
- commercial release of intradermal injections (expected in 2011 or 2012)
- development of an interactive web-based tool, www.flyboss.org.au, to help farmers select the best flystrike prevention strategy for their sheep.

The National Wool Declaration (NWD), administered by the Australian Wool Exchange Limited (AWEX), allows buyers to source wool that meets their animal welfare requirements. The government has provided nearly \$165 000 to AWEX to implement the NWD on-farm integrity program that will provide buyers with greater assurance of the verified mulesed status of the wool.

The flystrike issue is being managed through industry action, R&D and stronger communication between growers, retailers and consumers. While phasing out mulesing is a matter for the Australian wool industry, the government continues to encourage the industry to ensure that Australia remains a leader in animal welfare and production standards.